



SHE SAID

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women, lesbians,
and feminists
speak about youthlove

What are the Kids Club anthologies?

Sexual attraction to youth, youth sexuality, adult/youth relationships, and the age of consent are all topics - grouped under the word "youthlove" for convenience - which inspire a multitude of emotions and opinions depending on who you talk to. Though not an overwhelming amount, there is still a plethora of intriguing material that has been written on the subject. While more negative and antagonistic analyses of these subjects aren't difficult to come by, positive, neutral, and engaging discourse around the topics are less likely to be found by the average person.

Therefore, this is the second in a series of anthologies which are an attempt by me to put together and distribute a variety of often overlooked viewpoints concerning these subjects. So much information and many opinions about these topics are hard to find, restricted to academics or people lucky enough to be able to visit archives, and spread far across many publications and disciplines.

These collections are by no means exhaustive or definitive; due to my mother tongue, they will unfortunately be Anglocentric and limited almost entirely to pieces originally written in English.

I hope these anthologies can be of use to those attracted to youth, those interested in a fuller range of opinions on these topics, academics and researchers in search of historical documents, and those who wish to further understand the attraction to youth and issues surrounding the age of consent and adult/youth relationships.

It is my sincere hope that these anthologies will contribute to further understanding of these topics and spur discussion of the subjects that go beyond a simple anti or pro view and fully engage with the questions and issues that arise when these conversations occur.

Also available:

Anthology #1: out of the mouth of babes - youth speak about youthlove

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she said -women, lesbians, and feminists speak about youthlove-

Youthlove is typically seen as a "men's game," something which isn't discussed by women. Feminism - and those who espouse it - has long been thought to be incompatible with support of and neutral analysis of adult/youth relationships and sexual attraction to youth. However, to take these assumptions to heart ignores the history of female involvement in the youthlove conversation and dismisses the insight that feminist theory brings to the table.

This anthology presents a variety of viewpoints from the late 70s to the mid 2000s by women, lesbians, and feminists. The authors range from those involved in the youthlove movement or those whose lives have been affected by youthlove all the way to those who are just trying to get a clearer picture of the subject.

While the writers touch on a number of topics, one of the most important things the authors bring to the table is an exploration of gender, sexuality, power, and how they intersect both individually and in society.

*** This anthology contains references to and descriptions of both consensual and nonconsensual sexual acts**

CONTENTS

Sexual Politics, the New Right, and the Sexual Fringe, <i>Gayle Rubin</i>	1
A Feminist Look at the Place of Female Child-Adult Relations in the Politics of the Lesbian Movement, <i>Chris Bearchell</i>	7
To Miss with Love, <i>Fiona Sandler</i>	10
Whose Power? Whose Consent? <i>Eric Presland</i>	13
Speaking Out on "Women/Girl Love"-Or, Lesbians Do "Do It," <i>Beth Kelly</i>	18
Wimmin Loving Girls Loving Wimmin, <i>Nadia</i>	23
Lesbian Feminist Responses to the Politics of The Body Politic, <i>Becki Ross</i>	25
There Can Be No Emancipation of Women Without the Emancipation of Children, and other pieces, <i>Kanalrattenkommune</i>	33
Cross-Generational Sex: the Radioactive, Red-Hot Potato, <i>Susan Henderson</i>	37
Toward a Feminist Position for Boy-Lovers, <i>Camilla</i>	39
Our Sexuality, Ourselves: Power and Empowerment, <i>Cindy Patton</i>	46
Censorship, Pedophilia, and Panic, <i>Yasmin Nair</i>	51

Sexual Politics, the New Right, and the Sexual Fringe

Gayle Rubin

Gayle Rubin is a feminist, activist, and cultural anthropologist best known for her studies of urban gay life and subculture. She's well-known for the sex-positive feminism she championed during the feminist sex wars of the 70s and early 80s, writing about topics such as sadomasochism, pederasty, prostitution, and pornography. This essay appeared in the February 1978 issue of The Leaping Lesbian, a short-lived magazine published in Rubin's hometown of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

It is difficult to perceive broad historical trends while one is living through them. But while historians have license to wait until the dust has settled, those who are politically engaged need to understand the times with somewhat more urgency. In recent years, the shape of sexual politics has been changing in ways that present new challenges to the women's movement and the gay movement. Sexuality is the arena of feminism and gay liberation: we are contesting the structures into which society has organized desire, gender, and reproduction. Lately, that arena has been drawing a crowd. The heightened level of attention has brought attendant problems - new and complex issues, an organized opposition, and new lines of battles. At the same time, the rhetoric of feminism and gay liberation has not changed much in the last decade. I do not think that our received wisdom is adequate to the current situation. In the interests of provoking more discussion, I will hazard a few observations as to the state of politics in the late 1970s.

More specifically, I want to speculate about the implications of the recent population explosion of groups expressing a political stake in sexuality. From the right have come Anita Bryant¹, assorted religious fanatics, Ku Klux Klansfolk, Nazis, and a large collection of right-wing politicians, organizers, and fundraisers. From the opposite direction, there are a number of voices claiming legitimacy for various stigmatized sexual behaviors, including prostitution, pederasty, transvestism, transsexuality², sado-masochism, pornography, and the kind of public cruising engaged in by some male homosexuals. This combination of extremists and exotics has created a political situation as difficult as it is fascinating. It has, among other things, placed the most despised sexual minorities in an uncomfortably strategic position. It calls into question the attitude that women, lesbians and gay men have a monopoly on sexual oppression. It challenges us to develop a politics of sex more adequate to the complexities of sex.

For almost a century, it has been women, lesbians, and male homosexuals who have comprised the most vocal and organized opposition to the social, ideological and legal structures of sexuality. More recently, a veritable parade out of Krafft-Ebing has begun to lay claim to legitimacy, rights, and recognition. There are now political organizations for prostitutes, pedophiles, and sado-masochists. There are men who argue that sex in public parks and restrooms is the forefront of gay liberation. There are the periodic protests of transvestites and transsexuals against the shabby treatment to which they have been subjected both by society

and at the hands of the feminist and gay movement.

In general, the arguments of this second-class sexual citizenry parallel those of the feminist and gay movements. Each group claims to be unfairly stigmatized, harassed, and in many cases subject to arrest. Those minorities protest the prevailing stereotypes which, they say, have little resemblance to the social reality of their lives and practices. Prostitutes, pederasts, transvestites, and sado-masochists have all argued at various times that they do not lead stunted lives, do not harm others, are perfectly capable of healthy relationships, and should not be considered by definition to manifest some defect of personality.

Ultimately, the aim of these new voices and organizations is to gain legitimacy in society at large. However, much of the agitation thus far has been directed towards gaining acceptance within the more established women's and gay movements. There the response has ranged from hostility to neglect. Feminism and gay liberation have always been uneasy when faced with even more stigmatized deviations than their own. This wariness has been justified by reference to the politics of anti-sexism. But the feminist critique has never been applied with absolute impartiality, or we would have to judge all sexuality as it now exists - including our own - for the ways in which it has been deformed by a sexist social system. Instead, we make exemptions, as for instance when lesbianism is not subjected to potential self-criticism.

I would suggest that we extend a similar tolerance toward the more stigmatized minorities, reserving judgment until we can undertake a more considerate examination. From our own experience we are familiar with the ways in which prejudice and ignorance prevent a rational response to deviant behavior. The level of blind hatred faced by the more stigmatized groups far exceeds that directed at ordinary lesbians and gay men. If we are not careful, we will be using feminist politics to rationalize and perpetuate harmful stereotypes that originate not in feminism, but in our puritanical heritage.

Unfortunately, recent changes in the political climate have made a reassessment of stigmatized sexual behavior all the more difficult. It seems that things are closing down; that options are shrinking; that it will be hard enough to defend the tenuous gains of women, lesbians and male homosexuals. In addition to a general ambience, we face a powerful and well-organized right-wing mobilization. The tactics of this opposition include a form of sexual red-baiting and propaganda of exaggeration reminiscent of Hitler. At a time when feminists are called lesbians, when homosexuals are portrayed as child molesters, and when child "molesters" are presented as the four horsemen of the apocalypse, it would seem suicidal to try to defend the more exotic sexual minorities.

I would like to argue the exact opposite. It has never been more imperative that the women's and gay movements develop more sensitivity to the problems, humanity, and legitimate claims of stigmatized minorities. If not, we will be contributing to a sexual witch hunt. The actions of Anita Bryant and of the "pro-family" forces at Houston³ are only the most widely publicized aspects of the current sexual reaction. A more subtle and insidious repression is occurring elsewhere. It is in the pattern of arrests as well as in the results of referenda. It is in the new laws to regulate pornography and sexual behavior that have been spreading throughout legislative bodies. It is in the new journalism of self-concerned sexual muckraking.

Although the reaction is aimed at feminism and gay liberation, both the women's and gay movements are relatively strong and enjoy some measure of popular support. Pornography, prostitutes, lovers of young people, hustlers, and men cruising for sex in public places are easier targets. Starting in the months before Dade, there has been a marked increase in the tempo of arrests for sex offenses. Locally and nationally, police have opened season on alleged prostitution, child molestation, and public cruising. Many people have lost jobs and face sentences ranging from minor to years in prison. While feminists and garden-variety gays are

not exactly secure, it has been the more legally vulnerable, more stigmatized, and *less easily defended* groups which have sustained the highest casualties.

Man/Boy Love

The issue which exemplifies these trends most dramatically is that of sex between adults and young people. "Boy-love" seems to be for Anita Bryant what communism was for Joe McCarthy. Gay men are reluctant to defend pederasts for fear of being confused with them. Feminists are wary of the subject out of concern to end the sexual abuse of young people, and out of an awareness of the ways in which social power infects intimate relationships. Thus neither feminism nor gay liberation was prepared to respond when a national hysteria over the sex lives of the young developed in the months preceding the Miami vote.

In the spring of 1977, a torrent of stories about child pornography, prostitution of young people, and sexual molestation appeared in the national media. The media campaign was characterized by systematic distortions. Ignoring statistics which indicate that most sexual abuse of young people is heterosexual, the media and police quickly focused on male homosexuality. For instance, the program on *Sixty Minutes* (telecast May 15, 1977) contained a few pictures of heterosexual child pornography, and endless footage of teenage boys hustling in Hollywood.

The lack of sociological sophistication displayed by both the media and the police was unnerving. There was a lot of talk of "national conspiracies" to draft boys into white slavery. From such data as actually appeared, it could be deduced that the "conspiracy" consisted primarily of the kind of contacts through ads, letters, and word of mouth which characterize virtually every sexual sub-culture in the country. The "national conspiracy" was no more than the rudimentary social organization of a sexual sub-group. By such criteria, the personal ads in the *New York Review of Books* would constitute a national conspiracy.

Exaggerations abound. Publications which are to the pedophile community what *off our backs*⁴ is to the women's movement, were described as hard-core pornography. Any group which took a stand in favor of sex for young people was branded as a bunch of sex maniacs. The media and police betrayed an incapacity to distinguish between rape and consent, lovers and mobsters, children of five and "children" of seventeen.

That campaign may have increased public concern over the real abuse and exploitation to which many young people are subjected. But the most visible and immediate results were considerably less salutary.

The media campaign shared with the sex statutes the concept that sex in general, and homosexuality in particular, are inimical to the well-being of the young. By emphasizing protection of the young and ignoring the rights of the young, the campaign undoubtedly set back the aspirations of youth liberation. Youth liberation has argued for some time that young people should have the right to have sex as well as not to have it, and with whom they choose. The statutory structure of the sex laws have been identified as oppressive and insulting to young people. A range of sexual activities are legally defined as molestation, regardless of the quality of the relationship or the amount of consent involved. A crackdown on statutory molestation is not the best way to defend the rights of youth, in the absence of finer distinctions between abusive situations and loving ones. This sort of distinction is rendered difficult but not impossible by the disproportionate social power of the actors.

The incipient political mobilization of pedophiles was another victim. Over the last few years, there have been occasional articles in the gay liberation press which claim that most relationships between men and boys are consensual, loving, and beneficial to the young people involved. It has been argued that such relationships are to be distinguished from abuse just as

rape is distinguished from love in other contexts. There are journals of "pederast liberation"; and out-of-print classics of boy-love are being reprinted. This "kiddie porn" campaign made the position of this movement rather untenable.

The atmosphere generated by the media campaign encouraged authorities to step up repression against sex offenders. In addition to numerous arrests of men on charges of molesting boys, the police increased their harassment of prostitutes and of men cruising public restrooms. The arrests and job dismissals function as exemplary lynchings. The apprehension of a few vulnerable individuals warns others that the cost of deviance have been raised, and serves to spread intimidation more generally.

The "kiddie porn" campaign manipulated concern over the welfare of young people to rationalize legal attacks on sexuality. Politicians cannot afford to oppose much of the new legislation introduced in the wake of the media stories, but groups like the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] have criticized many of the proposed laws for containing dangerous restrictions on civil liberties and freedom of expression. Above all, the campaign unleashed a wave of anti-homosexual propaganda just when Anita needed it most. The lurid stories seemed to substantiate her charges that homosexuality and child molestation were closely linked. At the same time, worry over the outcome of Miami made it difficult for gay people to protest the distortions of the media or to defend those who were arrested. We may never know how much the media campaign contributed to the defeat of the Miami ordinance, or how many innocent people were incarcerated for statutory offenses in those months.

While I would not claim that Save Our Children conspired conspicuously with right-wing police and a sensation-minded media to attack the gay movement, there is a disturbing coherence to events. The most recent episode in this continuing pattern of repression is the assault on *The Body Politic*, a gay liberation newspaper from Toronto, which printed a thought-provoking essay in which boy-love was defended⁵. Subsequently, three members of the collective were arrested on obscenity charges. A police raid for "evidence" resulted in the confiscation of twelve cartons of material, including subscription lists, manuscripts for publication, letters, records, and even the paper's checkbook. Costly legal fights are now in progress.

Simple Justice

The recent career of boy-love in the public mind should serve as an alert that the self-interests of the feminist and gay movements are linked to simple justice for stigmatized sexual minorities. Such groups have been mobilizing in the margins of the sexual left for some time, but their presence can no longer be ignored nor their claims dismissed.

In addition to such strategic considerations, there are other reasons to pay attention to stigmatized sexual expression. The existence of political organizations for groups such as prostitutes, pedophiles, and sado-masochists, is a manifestation of a deeper change. Throughout the culture, sexuality and sexual liberation in a broad sense are becoming important issues.

An increase in sexual awareness is evident in the imagery of movies, music, and advertising. In the 1950s, sex was so taboo that popular culture presented it mainly in the form of love, romance, and single beds for married couples. In the 1960s, popular imagery became explicit, at least in the portrayal of heterosexuality. In the 1970s, the erotic imagery has diversified. There have been television programs with lesbians, gay men, transsexuals, and prostitutes (including a "card-carrying member of COYOTE"⁶ on *Police Woman*.) Leather is a hot item in fashion photography and on the covers of record albums. Ads play upon semi-conscious fantasy that goes well beyond the women who fawn over the men who wear Aqua Velva. New Wave Rock characteristically celebrates sexual deviation, and there are songs that

refer to sex offenders, bondage, transvestism, and anal sex.

Some of the newer erotic imagery can be attributed to the reaction against feminism, as for instance the ads which suggest violence against women. But much of it represents a return of some of the diversity of human sexuality from the shadows to which it had been banished. Sometimes it seems as if the entire society - left and right, feminists and fascists, journalists and dress designers - had suddenly discovered its fantasy life. This return of the repressed contains a lot of untamed energy, some of which is feeding the wave of sexual reaction we have witnessed in recent months. Thus far, it has been primarily the right which has responded to this profusion of erotic form. The Anitas have labeled it dangerous and subversive. The Total Women⁷ attempt to capture it within conventional structures.

It would be a great loss to leave it to the reactionaries to orchestrate a societal response to this widening of sexual consciousness. The women's movement has always been suspicious of sex, and for good reason since sexuality is the locus through which women's oppression is managed. But rational paranoia can easily become a form of erotophobia.

It is too easy to say that transvestism maintains conventional sex roles, when it also subverts them. It is inappropriate to accuse transsexuals of male privilege when transsexuals as a group suffer enormous social abuse. We must not be too hasty to condemn anonymous blow jobs in public restrooms as displaying everything that is wrong with male socialization when men are being arrested for such activities. It would be a mistake to dismiss sado-masochism as the epitome of sexual hierarchy without some appreciation for the aspects of erotic sensitivity which it contains. We must not reject all sexual contact between adults and young people as inherently oppressive. We should welcome the efforts of prostitutes to substitute knowledge of their actual experience from irrelevant rhetoric.

The sexual fringe is a scary place. Its inhabitants are despised. Its activities are considered criminal. Those who do not live there are advised that it is a dangerous place to visit, a realm of violence and psychopathy. But the fringe is also a repository for all the varieties of sexual expression which have been rejected by society. While some of that experience should stay in the limbo to which it has been consigned, much of it is worth reclaiming. There is a lot of wisdom, and a lot to learn, out on the fringe.

I am not suggesting that we abandon our critical capacity or feminist politics, or that the personal is not political. On the contrary, I am proposing that a commitment to the notion that the personal is political requires a more complex political assessment of sexual diversity, based on case-by-case examinations. Both the mobilization of the sexual fringe, and the politicalization of sexuality, challenge feminism to develop a politics which can be pro-sex while remaining anti-sexist.

NOTES

1. Aninta Bryant is a singer turned political activist most famous for her "Save the Children" campaign which started in 1977. The campaign was started in order to repeal a local ordinance in Miami-Dade County, Florida which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation; however, Bryant did not stop there, going on to campaign all around the country on the subject of gay rights and liberation. While the campaign was a success (though the decision was later overturned in 1998), it spurred gay activists from all over North America into action, and they led a nationwide boycott against the orange juice which Bryant was a spokesperson for. The boycott, also supported by celebrities including Barbara Streisand, Bette Midler, and Vincent Price, led to her breaking off with the Florida Citrus Commission as well as eventual financial trouble.

2. As Rubin stated in a look back on her writing, transsexuality is not intrinsically sexual. In "Blood Under the Bridge: Reflections On 'Thinking Sex'," she writes, "Since transgender studies did not yet exist when I was writing 'Thinking Sex,' I had limited resources with which to respond to the nasty vein of antitranssexual sentiment that had developed within feminism in the 1970s... Although I wanted to undermine the foundations on which such antitrans screeds were built, there were many alternative strategies I might have used."
3. In November 1977, the National Women's Conference was held in Houston, Texas, an event where delegates discussed issues pertaining to women in society, such as child-care, reproductive freedom, education, and aging. In response, a pro-life, pro-family conference attended by over 15,000 was held in the Houston Astro Arena, five miles from the site of the National Women's Conference.
4. *off our backs* was a radical feminist periodical which began in 1970 and finished publication in 2008. The content mainly consisted of news, commentary, and discussion within the feminist community. Not to be confused with *On Our Backs*, a lesbian erotica magazine which parodied the name.
5. George Hannon, "Men Loving Boys Loving Men." *The Body Politic*, December 1977, p 29-33. A further look at the article, including the events before and after its publication as well as reflections on the criticism and comments the piece elicited, appears in "Men Loving Boys Loving Men Again," *The Body Politic*, April/May 1979, p 21-27.
6. COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) is a sex workers rights organization founded in San Francisco in 1973 by feminist and former sex worker Margo St. James.
7. "Total Women" is a reference to the work of Marabel Morgan, an author who wrote evangelical Christian self-help books for married women (including *The Total Woman*) and gave seminars on the same subject.

"I Was Fifteen, She Was Forty-Three..." A Feminist Look at the Place of Female Child-Adult Relations in the Politics of the Lesbian Movement

Chris Bearchell

Canadian gay liberationist Chris Bearchell was an activist for lesbians, feminists, sex workers, and queer youth. She co-founded the Lesbian Organization of Toronto and is well-known for the rallying cry "No more shit!" which she shouted on the streets during a demonstration against bathhouse raids. This piece appeared in the Dykes column of the May 1978 issue of The Body Politic, a mostly gay newspaper where she was one of the few lesbians on the writing team.

Donna lives in a small town in staunch Presbyterian Ontario where everyone knows everyone else, and where "it's difficult to be unconventional and almost impossible to be a lesbian." Sharon was a teacher at her public school. "She first taught me sixth grade. I guess I was attracted to her then - though I didn't think of it in sexual terms. But then I didn't think of anything in sexual terms at the time." Sharon was a married woman - her husband was also a teacher - and she had two children. At the time, she was more than twice Donna's age.

The first woman Donna was actually involved with, however, was Jean. "I worked away from home the summer I was fourteen. I met Jean and was really impressed by her. But it's hard to imagine going to bed with a school friend's mother. It was the next summer before I actually had the nerve to do it. I was fifteen - she was forty-three. She was a beautiful woman, but our relationship was fraught with contradictions. I wanted it and initiated it, but I also felt guilty and fearful; I knew Jean's life as a forty-three-year-old wife and mother of seven children was complicated enough without the added burden of a lesbian relationship with a fifteen-year-old kid."

Meanwhile, Donna had maintained a regular correspondence with Sharon. "It seems quite strange, looking back on it, the way we cultivated our friendship. Real child-adult friendships are probably quite rare. We wrote letters even though we only lived a few miles apart; that made it seem a bit furtive, too. I guess we had to be content with melodrama when we had so few opportunities to see each other and when there were no acceptable forms for expressing what we felt for each other. That is, until I came out for the first time."

By the following summer, Sharon and Donna had been able to contrive some way of spending time together. "I had just turned sixteen when I told her about Jean and me. In retrospect, my 'big confession' seems sort of unreal. We had been out canoeing and had gone ashore on a small island. It sounds very romantic, doesn't it? I was a regular little conspirator. Only it didn't turn out exactly the way I'd planned. I was more or less saying to Sharon 'Alright, if you feel the same way about me as I feel about you, don't be afraid. You aren't leading me astray; You aren't taking me anywhere I haven't already been.' Her reaction seemed

mostly to be shock. I guess I wasn't the most tactful sixteen-year-old."

But Donna's "coming out" about her relationship with Jean eventually did have the desired effect. "Sharon later told me that she felt strongly, almost magnetically drawn to me for those few minutes on the island and that her own responses were what really shocked her. Ours was her first lesbian relationship and seemed, for her, to carry all the significance of a first exploration of her sexual identity."

"But again, I felt guilty. Partly because of society's condemnation, should the nature of our relationship ever become known. But more because, although Sharon's sexual orientation is to other women, she has chosen to live a heterosexual lifestyle. And I was a threat to her family - her security. Again, I wondered if maybe I wasn't taking more from her in emotional support and understanding than I could return."

While relationships between lesbians and women much older than themselves are not uncommon, the extent to which Donna and her lovers survived perhaps is. Donna told me about another woman, Kelly, from the same small town, who has not been so lucky. "When she was twenty-one, Kelly was involved with a young woman of fourteen. The pressures brought to bear on their relationship moved them to foolhardy action: they ran away together. The young woman's family had them caught and returned. Life became even less bearable for them under the increased scrutiny, so they tried and failed again. For her second attempt at 'abduction' Kelly was threatened with prosecution. Her last desperate escape attempt was suicide. It proved more successful than the others." Donna has no doubt that there are more casualties than we will ever know.

Donna's feelings and experiences are not unique. But there are many lesbians who choose to overlook them, who tend to view such relationships with the same hostility that the straight world applies to all lesbian and gay relationships. Some of us are tempted to view child-adult interactions as "a problem," the way the psychiatric professions traditionally view homosexuality. Some of us use it as "an issue" with which to score political points against men.

Laws such as the "age of consent" and "statutory rape" provisions of the Criminal Code, which attempt to regulate the sexual behaviour of youth and children under the pretense of protecting them, may have disastrous consequences for non-coercive adults such as Kelly, or even Sharon and Jean. But their most frequent victims are the children themselves, and especially female children. Just as rape laws historically view a woman not as a human being in her own right, but as the potentially "violated" property of a man (husband or father), so children are viewed as their parents' possessions. Children, especially young women, who explore their sexuality are deviating from the pre-ordained path of their socialization which allows for sexual activity only after the age of eighteen and even then, ideally, only within the bounds of "holy matrimony." They are forming meaningful relationships outside the confines of biological definitions and are stepping outside the bounds of parental authority. If a young woman rejects not only parental authority and anti-sexual attitudes but compulsory heterosexuality as well, she may be thrice condemned.

For any and all of these "crimes" many a young lesbian has seen the insides of reformatories and other "correctional" institutions. The most common use of age of consent and statutory rape laws is thus to assert control over "uncontrollable" and "incorrigible" "girls." No one protects these women from the cops, the courts, the Children's Aid Society, the parole officers, or their parents. Above all, their parents; less than a year ago this column contained an account of a high school lesbian whose parents (both teachers, one a guidance counselor) threatened her with aversion therapy if she refused to break off with her lover¹.

It is certainly true that children are subjected to the power of adults: daughters to their

father's sexual advances; both sons and daughters to the physical and economic power of either parent; and all children to the social, cultural, and legal power of institutions like schools and courts. Yes, an older lover might exercise some of those powers too, though perhaps with less intent, and surely will less social authorization. The point is that the laws as they stand do not, and were never intended to, protect children. They were and are a means of control that backs up the more insidious, less formal controls of the family structure and socialization.

One possible consequence of statements by some participants in the child-adult relationships discussion is a backing away from support for the gay movement's demand for *abolition* of age of consent laws. Those who argue only in favour of *uniform* age of consent laws (straight relationships are now legal at 18; gay people have to wait until 21) would be, in many instances, upholding the illegality of Donna's or Kelly's relationships. I can remember after leaving home - years before it was legally permissible in Alberta - seeking out the advice of a radical lawyer only to have my worst fears confirmed: even as a certified coherent, self-educated, gainfully employed human being I was almost entirely without rights, especially in all matters sexual. I couldn't get into bed with a lover without hearing heavy boots on the stairs.

There may be feminists and lesbians who, because of their experiences with male power, suspect that child-adult relationships have more serious consequences for male children. As a feminist I have to remind any woman with those hesitations that male children, unlike their sisters, are the inheritors of male privilege. They will out-grow the oppression they experience as children. Most of us do not have sufficient experience with the development of male sexuality to pass a harsher judgment on relationships between boys and men than on relationships between girls and women. Only an honest evaluation of our experiences as children will help us in our attempts to understand children's sexuality.

My first intimate relationship was with an eight-year-old girl, when I was the same age. One occasion in particular was fun, thoroughly sexual and ultimately a disaster. Naive (even for eight-year-olds), we were oblivious to our surroundings and the consequences of our joy until it was too late and we were caught. The most profound thing I learned from that experience had little to do with sexuality and a lot to do with taboos, guilt, and parental hysteria and power. The experiences of boys and young men are, I'm sure, not much different. Some of them may be braver, more aggressive and self-assured in relating sexuality and in resisting adults, which may account for their greater willingness to enter into child-adult relationships at a younger age. But guilt feelings are still ingrained, more often by parental and social reaction than by the relationship itself.

We must remind ourselves, those of us who began at an early age to question and to rebel against socialization that while fourteen- or fifteen-year-old women seem just that - young *women* - to us, this isn't necessarily the view of the dominant culture that we live in. For the straight world out there a fourteen-, fifteen- or sixteen-year-old is a child for whom any kind of sexual expression is sinful, sick or criminal whether it is gay or straight, with an adult or a peer. To the great "them" out there, a fifteen-year-old "girl" involved with a teacher or a camp counselor is a child in the grasp of disgusting corruption, no matter how mutual or loving the relationship. This perverse attitude says that sex is primarily reproductive and that the law has the right to interfere with this aspect of our lives, whether it is to deny women control over their bodies, to give preferential treatment to "legalized" relationships, or to outlaw lesbian or gay sexuality altogether. Any vestige of these attitudes has no place in either the gay or lesbian movements.

NOTES

To Miss With Love

Fiona Sandler

This series of interviews has four lesbians recall early crushes on and sexual experiences with older female teachers and was compiled for the June 1993 issue of Shebang, a monthly lesbian magazine from the UK.

When I first saw Sandy, I was completely overwhelmed by her. I was 14 and she walked into the classroom smoking a cigarette and wrote "Fuck" on the blackboard. She was American and that didn't happen at our school. It was an ex-private boys' school and we were only the second intake of girls. They had to ship in female teachers – and it was considered churlish not to have at least five boyfriends.

My crush started off slowly and got bigger and bigger. I would write her poems in my essays. One time I'd written a poem all about where she lived – I'd found out and looked in the window. She read out the whole poem to the class. At the end I'd written: "I worship you so much, I have you on a pedestal." She said: "The only reason you've got me on a pedestal is to look up my skirt" and threw it at me. I was mortified.

She suffered it for a long time, about two years. After one school disco I rang her up, said I had a problem and that she had to come and pick me up. She did; it was about 2am and she took me to Safeway's car park. I told her I was in love with her and that I didn't care, I just wanted to kiss her – and I made her snog me in the back of her maroon mini. I told her that I knew I was always going to feel like this about her, I didn't fancy anyone else and I couldn't get her off my mind. She said: "Look, nothing's permanent," drove me back to my mum and dad's, gave me two Polo mints, said, "You'd better suck these" and that was that.

We used to hang out a bit together but it was all in my head. She knew about it but kept me at arm's length.

In the meantime, I had become friendly with my French teacher and her husband, who also taught at the school. She was 25 and had just made the transition from student to teacher. I really fancied her and we became closer. For about a month her husband turned a blind eye – but then he went back to Paris.

One day I was at my house with my French teacher when my mum unexpectedly came home and opened the door. Her hair literally stood on end. I was naked, changing a record, with my French teacher lying on the bed – the last time they'd seen each other was at a parent and teacher night. I thought it was hilarious – 15 and my whole world was shattered. My mum ran next door to get our neighbours, who were police, to arrest us. She wouldn't let us leave the house until my dad got home. When he arrived, he threw her out and told me that either I changed or left; he didn't want my little brother turning into a poof. I knew I couldn't change, so I went and lived with my teacher.

At the time, I was adamant that I wasn't gay. I didn't think I was gay until I was about 19, even though I had slept with loads of women. I thought I was bisexual.

In my second year, when I was 12 or 13, a new teacher came along, Miss Rogers. She was just gorgeous and when she asked me to play for the hockey team, I immediately said yes. It meant playing three or four times a week after school and getting up really early on a Saturday. I hated the game but she was the coach, so I knew she would be there. I'll never forget the one time when our school won, I'd scored both goals, and at the end she came up and gave me a big hug. She was so happy and I was on cloud nine for days and days.

All this constant hockey playing kept on until my fourth year, when she asked me if I would try out for the Edinburgh Young Ladies' hockey team. The situation was totally out of hand. I was playing hockey all the time to impress her, but I never enjoyed the game. It was just to be where she would be. I said yes, of course, because she was going to coach me personally. The try-outs were between three and four months away, and it meant a lot of time with her.

I was constantly attempting to get her attention. I dyed my fringe red so she would notice me. The hockey uniform was long green socks and I would wear one long green sock and one long white sock just because I thought there might be the remotest possibility that she would one day come up and ask me why my socks didn't match.

She was always so nice to me. She was a big Gerry Rafferty fan, so I went out and bought all his albums. I remember constantly listening to Baker Street and it still always reminds me of coming home from hockey practice.

A week before the try-outs, I went for a coffee with her after practice. I asked her if she was with anyone and she said yes, and that she and her boyfriend were building a house together. I couldn't believe it. She had to repeat it all again and then she told me they were engaged and planning to get married. That moment was the end of my hockey career. I never tried out – I gave it up completely.

I was 15 and heartbroken but I'm pleased I went through it. It was my first serious thing for a woman and it did make me know I was a dyke – I went out with my first girlfriend a couple of months later.

I went to a big comprehensive school in the north of England and stood out in some ways for being popular and quite bright. Getting towards 16, I had the usual traumas of being different – I knew what lesbians were, but I certainly wasn't into the idea of being one.

I assumed that none of my peers knew what was going on but one teacher did and she kept me behind one day. I was nervous, thinking I had done something wrong. She said she had noticed I'd changed – I wasn't laughing as much – and that she was concerned. Was anything wrong? I said no, she accused me of lying and I flounced off. This was reported and I was told to apologise for being rude. I went along and she confronted me: "Maybe I should put it to you like this – you're not like the other girls, are you?"

This hit the nail on the head for me. I just sat there and went to pieces in front of her, I couldn't string a sentence together. She thought I needed to talk to someone about it, so she set up us meeting under the guise of extra exam tuition. I went to her house after school once a week and she would literally talk at me for an hour. My parents thought it was brilliant that she was taking an interest.

After the third time, she said to me: "Maybe I ought to tell you that I find you very attractive." I had mixed feelings about it – I felt very honoured but I didn't have the emotional capacity to deal with it. I did have a crush on her, which is probably what brought me to her attention, and if it had been left to run its course, that's all it would have been.

As it happened, we did have a relationship but I was a nervous wreck at school. Her O level was the only one I failed. We saw each other for about 10 months and not a soul knew, which was very stressful. I had to lie to my parents and my friends, and everyone wanted to

know who the mystery man was.

The relationship ended when she said that I had to choose – either live with her or go. She didn't want anyone to know, she just wanted me to come and live in her house. At 16, I was too young to cope with it; she was 12 years older. I thought: "I just can't live like that." Basically I was scared. If I asked her what would happen if we were found out, she'd say: "Nobody will find out if you keep your mouth shut." The power she had was amazing.

Looking back now, I view the relationship as a good thing. It made me realise there were other people out there like me. It enabled me to know that I could make the choice but it also confused me in some ways. It was too much too soon. I was so young and inexperienced. I had moments, though, when I thought: "This is love."

The teacher I fell in love with seemed really young – she was 26 – had huge tits and was there when, at 14, I was feeling very vulnerable, just after my father had died.

I collected things she threw at me to shut me up, like bits of chalk; she threw a keychain once. I kept them in a little box in the attic. I had about 50 notes she'd written. I kept asking to go to the toilet to get them. I would trace her handwriting and smell the paper. I raked in her drawers at breaktime and memorised pieces of information about her. I knew all her registration numbers and the names and addresses of all the places where she had taught.

I would watch her play hockey – she was an international player. I was the only person standing and cheering in the rain. Once her clogs were stolen on a school outing and I lent her my trainers. I lied and said I only lived around the corner, and walked home in my socks just so she would have her feet in my training shoes for three whole hours.

When I told her I was in love with her, she said: "I'm very flattered but I'm not a homosexual. There's nothing wrong with being one, though. When you leave school, you'll meet more people like that but right now there aren't any."

I wrote massive passionate letters to her which I used to get her to read out loud to me at breaktime. She never got a break; I would always go up to the staff room to give her another letter: "I love you, I want you, I really fancy you. If I don't spend my life with you, I will die. I need to have sex with you." She'd then keep the letter, saying she was afraid of it falling into the wrong hands.

Summer holidays were the worst, I didn't get to see her for six weeks, but I'd phone her four times a day. I would cycle to school to stare into the biology lab where she taught during termtime. I used to try to smell her in class and if I smelt her up close – she smelt of Rive Gauche perfume and tobacco – I'd want to faint, I was so in love with her.

I failed all my examinations because I loved her. Whenever she left the exam hall after supervising a test, I would leave as well, even if it was only 10 minutes into the exam, and follow her along the hall just to have three minutes alone with her.

We still meet up sometimes. She says it was the notes she couldn't handle because she thought they would ruin her teaching career. She could cope when I was 13 or 14 but when I got to 16 and more mature, she couldn't. We both went through such a lot together that we share a special place in each other's hearts.

Being in love with her made me feel that being gay meant never being able to get who I wanted, any woman at all. It would always mean unrequited love, me in the background staring at some woman who was untouchable. I thought my whole life would be like that.

Whose Power? Whose Consent?

Eric Presland

Eric Presland, now known as Peter Scott-Presland, is a writer most well-known for his work in theatre as both writer and director, establishing the gay theater groups Consenting Adults and Homo Promos. He was also a columnist for London's Gay Capital newspaper and involved in the Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action. This piece is one of a few essays written exclusively for the 1981 anthology The Age Taboo.

The trial of Tom O'Carroll and other members of the Pedophile Information Exchange in early 1981 was ostensibly under the Post Office Acts (sending "obscene material" through the post) and for Conspiracy to Corrupt Public Morals. What was really at stake was pedophilia itself, and within the gay and women's movement the debate has been raging as to whether sexual relations between adults and children, and the active encouragement of such relations, should be seen merely as an attempt by males to expand their sexual empire, or, in the words of Francesco Ascoli, should be seen as "an arrow of libido directed at the fetus,"¹ and an essential part of the liberation of desire.

The vast majority of women seem to believe the former, and within the pro-pedophile movement, much of the strategy has either been to incorporate a feminist perspective into its demands, or else to play it safe by concentrating on the purely civil liberties issues like freedom of association and freedom of speech. Even within the pedophile movements, there are splits. On the one hand, Tom O'Carroll, in his book *Paedophilia: A Radical Case*, appeals for the "respectability" of pedophiles in a vision which presents the pedophile as a kind of superior scoutmaster or social worker², from a totally male perspective. On the other hand, the Campaign Against Public Morals [CAPM] sees the liberation of child sexuality as fundamental to the undermining of patriarchy and capitalism³; their book *Paedophilia and Public Morals* presents the pedophile as revolutionary, while O'Carroll gives us the pedophile as reformer.

However, it seems to me that neither understands the full force of the emotion and the logic of the women's movement's objections. There is something dismissive about the way male pedophile writers deal with them, which comes from not having the same kind of experience of sexual harassment from a very early age.

I believe it is important to face up to feminist objections without being dismissive. The law invoked for the PIE trial (indeed, resurrected for the purpose after gathering dust for over 100 years) is liable to become a stick to beat all gay and feminist organizations, and both movements must recognize that. In the eyes of the Right, we are all "corrupters of youth," in that we aim (I hope) to fill young people with ideas which undermine the status quo. Furthermore, governments operate by "divide and rule," and pedophilia will be seized on as an issue which can split the gay movement from the women's movement - or indeed fragment either. In this case, it very nearly happened.

In the last six months, the pressure to isolate pedophiles as a lunatic fringe has been enormous. It endangers the support of the straight left so carefully built up over the last five years ("Think of all those trad unionists with children!"); it jeopardizes the prospect of law

reform ("I can't tell that to Members of Parliament"); it alienates the vast majority of apolitical gay men. During the collection that CAPM organized at a gay club, we had to deal with down-right abuse as well as fear ("It's people like them that give gays a bad name"). It would be easy to give in to that, but I prefer to continue talking positively about pedophilia, because I feel a certain sense of loyalty to the gay 8-year-old that I undoubtedly was.

His name was David Morell, and he lived about half a mile beyond my house. We used to walk home from school together and he used to come in for a glass of milk and a slice of cake. We would go upstairs to my room to read comics, play war-games (ugh!) and have pillow fights. One day, in the middle of such a fight, I found myself suddenly overwhelmed by emotions which had no names, but which made my heart pound faster and my mouth flush. Next thing, I was lying on top of him, kissing his mouth and face and neck. He fought back, as it was something that frightened him; he soon made his excuses and left. The next day, I was summoned to see my teacher, who told me I was not to talk to David again, because "we were a bad influence on each other." And for the rest of the term, David gave me sorrowful looks from the other side of the wire netting which surrounded the few square feet of our play area. Later he told me he didn't know what was happening either. In that state of confusion and guilt, I entered puberty, to deny for the next ten years all the needs which had begun to emerge.

Looking back on it now, I see that what I really needed at that early stage of my awareness was a relationship with a nice pedophile; my contemporaries were stumbling as much as I was.

I stress this personal starting-point, because the gut antipathy which many feminists feel in this debate arises in the first place from the fact that virtually all women experience unwanted attention from men at a very early age - as most children do from adults. Who does not remember the crucifying embarrassment of receiving sandpaper kisses from distant relatives? But that, of course, is family, and therefore different. The attentions female children receive are of a rather more insistent nature. Alison Hennegan⁴ has described vividly her feelings of squirming dislike and fear when being dandled on uncles' knees while they surreptitiously stroked thighs and knickers; all the while having to pretend to like it. (Children are taught to seek adult approval, therefore the concept of real consent is fraught with difficulty in this area.)

One noticeable aspect of the current debate is the relative absence of children's voices. We are all talking about "them" and what "they" want or need. Given the pitiful state of our sex education, it is hardly surprising; nor would we necessarily get answers even if we asked them. We keep children in ignorance, we refuse to talk to them as equals, we don't take them seriously, and as a result most of their emotional life is kept secret from us. In reality I imagine that what children want or need is as various as what anybody else wants or needs, but until we start listening to them - and indeed positively creating the climate in which they want to talk to us - we won't know. Until then, if they remain silent, we can only talk about the children we were. That is where many women writing about pedophilia are starting from, and that is where I start also.

Briefly, then, I take the feminist arguments to focus primarily on heterosexual pedophilia, and the nature of male sexuality, inherent or learned. In a society where all institutions conspire to place women at the mercy of men, relaxing the laws governing sexual conduct merely gives men greater power over more women. Men as a sex suffer from the "want/have" syndrome: the idea that merely wanting something gives one an automatic right to have it. The idea is central to consumer capitalism and our sexual indoctrination. Rape is the extreme example of this, but it extends through the institution of marriage to the self-pitying "I-love-her/him-therefore-s/he-ought-to-love-me" conversations in pubs over the fifth pint. Gay men are no better than straight men in this respect. They are brought up as men too, and many merely

extend their sexism towards other gay men. Homosexual rape does occur; I suspect it is far more common than anyone in the gay community cares to admit. From the macho of some clubs to the jibes about "puritan" feminists in gay male left-wing magazines, the gay male world shows a general reluctance to give us its power. And women who try to work within mixed organizations experience equal difficulty getting a word in edgewise whether the group is gay or straight; the members of most male gay organizations show an unwillingness to listen to each other only matched by their eagerness to interrupt each other. It is not surprising, therefore, that women with an interest in children of either sex should be reluctant that those children be subjected to such rough treatment. And it is no use bleating that "*I'm not like that.*" Laws, ethics and attitudes all deal with the rule, not the exception. The whole enormous energy of the Women's Movement and its researches over the last twenty years has come up with the one resounding unanimous conclusion - what is wrong with the world is Men. Many women have given up on us as a sex altogether - and understandably. Nor can any of us claim to have escaped our conditioning so entirely as to merit uncritical acceptance. Men have a long way to go to establish their credentials with the women's movement if they are to be listened to. In short, they have to prove their willingness to relinquish power.

If these arguments are based on a perception about power, then any counter-arguments must also address themselves to the same question. In our hierarchal society, women, though subordinate to men, hold (delegated) power as adults over children. The predominately-male pedophile movement is therefore seen as yet another masculine attempt to pre-empt some of the little power that women have; just as the gay men's movement over the years has attempted to co-opt the energies of the women's movement from time to time. The feminist objections and fears are based on astute observation and bitter experience of the way things are now, and the facts of their case cannot be denied.

The question is: are sexual relations between adults and children *in themselves* likely to serve the feminist cause as well as the interests of men and children? I believe they are.

Use or abuse of power is, on a theoretical level, controlled and directed by doctrines of "rights." Economic power is confronted by the assertion of the "right" to the fruits of one's own labor, or the "right" to an independent income irrespective of work; legal power is opposed by the extension of civil liberties. Similarly, patriarchal sexual power is undermined by the assertion of the right to control one's own body regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, etc. That must include both the right to say "yes" and the right to say "no." I would have thought that a movement which so effectively challenged anti-abortion bills on the slogan "A Woman's Right to Choose" would have great sympathy for "a child's right to choose." The pedophile movement is at its weakest when it switches attention from the child to the adult, but the issues of children's rights and child-adult sex are inextricably entwined. Some children, given the choice, will choose to have sex with adults. I certainly would have. Others will not. Neither group has the power to make their choice effective at this point.

One does not further the cause of creating mutually caring or pleasurable relationships by setting up arbitrary limits within which relationships may take place (e.g. within the family) or by denying their possibility altogether. Indeed, to do so perpetuates one of the sources of male power. The language of "protection" and "innocence" is precisely that used to subordinate women in the nineteenth century. And for the oppressed to use the machinery of the oppressors may be advantageous in the short term (e.g. gays using the courts for redress) but in the long-term it is self-defeating.

We are all taught to think of sexual activities and feelings as being "special." They are bound up with ideas of love, romance, privacy, etc. The social system which harnesses those feelings is obviously trying to channel them into getting married, raising a family, and

becoming another producing/consuming unit. But even those of us who have no interest in becoming part of that chain have internalized some of the teaching to the extent of carrying those attitudes into our new relationships. It is a rare gay person, woman or man, who never feels jealous. Many gays still believe in the concept of "love." Very few of them would say that going to bed with someone is no different from having a meal with them; it "means" something else. And yet there is no absolute reason why this should be the case.

Maybe after many years of evolving our new ways of relating, we will decide that our sexuality is different from the rest of our emotional life. In the meantime we need to recognize what is a result of our sexual conditioning, what purpose it serves, and where it comes from. Our sex education is designed to teach us not sex, but fear; fear of strangers (outside the family), fear of our emotions and fear of our bodies. It enshrines the separation of our sexual feelings from the rest of our lives. Our laws relating to sexual offenses similarly enshrine that separation. Many people, especially women, feel that sexual offenses deserve their special status, but I can only speak of my own experience.

Having been both raped and beaten up on different occasions, I too felt at the time that the rape, though physically less painful, was more "damaging"; I felt that it was a theft of some part of my personality, that I had in some obscure way been diminished as a person. I would have welcome a heavy revenge - though of course I didn't report it, as I also felt ashamed, and that I had in some way "brought it on myself." Two years later, after much thought, I have concluded that my reactions reflected my conditioning, and that the "special category status" I gave to that part of my being which was involved had actually inflicted more harm than otherwise occurred. Further, I now believe that these laws, ostensibly designed to protect, both encourage the crimes involved and persuade people to keep quiet about them. By preserving and creating the "mystique" they exacerbate the feelings of loss and guilt; they are part of a cycle of repression that produces victimizers and victims. There are no "sexual" crimes, there are only crimes of violence; that is the obverse side of a view that wishes to see all sexuality integrated into the rest of life.

There is another source of disagreement between pedophiles and many feminists: What constitutes "sexual behavior"? Pregnancy, suckling and physical closeness between a mother and her baby can be intensely pleasurable. Disturbingly so, since some mothers stop breast-feeding because they are frightened by the sensations it arouses. Most other women would deny fiercely that those feelings are "sexual." I find it odd that the women's movement, having spent so many years affirming women's sexuality in a wider, non-genital-oriented sense, should in this instance seem to contract the definition toward a more traditional masculine perspective.

In general, I prefer "sexual" as a term to describe the widest spectrum of sensual contact between people. Words can be used tactically, and the tactics of the wider definition are more useful both to the women's and gay movement. One early aim of the Gay Liberation Front⁵, now sadly lost as gays become another defined (and therefore contained) pseudo-ethnic minority, was to liberate the "gayness" in all people. GLF was concerned with breaking down the traditional masculinity of its own members, fighting sexism within and without, and reaching out to a wide variety of caring and equal relationships, including relationships which broke age barriers. Much of that concern has gone, the focus has shifted, but "polymorphous perversity" remains a desirable and profoundly subversive ideal. Similarly, one result of the current discussion of adult-child relations will, I hope, be a recognition that the majority of adults, women and men, experience some degree of erotic attraction in the widest sense towards children, and that this attraction can and should be expressed as part of their and the children's joyous human potential. That children are intensely sexual beings has been so extensively demonstrated over the last thirty years that it shouldn't require further comment.

Conversely, to define pedophiles as "those who seek genital contact with people under a certain age" makes them a tiny minority (as small as the group of people that loathes children). It classes them as predominately male (the verb "seek"), and by rigid classification it does some of our own lords-and-masters' dirty work for them: it plays into the hands of the psychiatrists who, by placing the live and wriggling human personality behind the iron bars of their compartments of Victorian pseudo-scientific labeling, implement yet more of the "divide and rule" strategy. Far more constructive to look at the ways in which we can all be called "pedophile"; to recognize those erotic or sensual feelings we feel towards the young, to be true to those feelings we remember from our own childhoods.

Therefore I would suggest that any coherent platform on pedophilia which unites the gay and women's movement must include the following:

- a) A broad definition of sexuality on the lines discussed above, which includes genital sex, but is not exclusively concerned with it.
- b) A child's right to say "yes"; to choose who s/he associates with, and in what way;
- c) A child's right to say "no." We must become, in the words of the educationalists, "child-centered."

An effective right to say "no" will only exist when enshrined both in law and general social morality. It will only happen when society talks and listens to children. And the pedophile movement will only gain widespread support if it puts equal emphasis on both aspects of the choice. But in these terms it should be seen that there is common cause between the gay and women's movement.

To go from the general to the particular is a large step, since we're talking about nothing less than a social revolution. At present it is difficult for adult women, let alone children, to say "no," and the laws designed to let them do so are derisively enforced. If men are in earnest about relinquishing their power, they must prove it, not only by supporting pedophilia and children's rights, but by saying clearly that they support the campaigns of the women's movement to give women control over their own bodies and lives.

In short, they must demonstrate as a sex that they are learning to take no for an answer.

NOTES

1. This exact quote, and the likeliest place that Presland found this quote, appears in Mario Mieli's *Homosexuality and Liberation: Elements of a Gay Critique* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1980). Mario Mieli was a leading figure in Italy's gay movement in the 70s, and helped to found Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano (Italian Revolutionary Homosexual United Front), better known by the acronym F.U.O.R.I! (Come Out!).
2. Tom O'Carroll, *Paedophilia: The Radical Case* (London: Peter Owen, 1980).
3. Campaign Against Public Morals, *Paedophilia and Public Morals* (London: Campaign Against Public Morals, 1980), p 8-13
4. Alison Hennegan is an English academic, journalist, and gay activist whose academic work mostly focuses on queer themes in English literature.
5. The Gay Liberation Front was the name of several gay liberation groups, the first of which was started in New York in 1969; groups with the name sprang up all over North America and the UK. The groups took a radical approach to the idea of sexuality and were also involved in addressing other social inequalities and supporting leftist organizations.

Speaking Out on "Women/Girl Love"- Or, Lesbians Do "Do It"

Beth Kelly

Beth Kelly is a lesbian feminist and activist who spent much of her early activism based in Massachusetts, writing for Boston's Gay Community News and working as a spokeswoman for Boston's Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee. She now works in academia and politics as the chairperson of the Advisory Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues in Chicago. This essay was first published in Gay Community News in their March 3, 1979 issue.

It's time. For years now I've thought I believed in the feminist credo "the personal is political." But until the current commotion in GCN [Gay Community News] over women's reactions to the issue of boys loving men (or vice versa), I never really understood what it could mean to know that your most intensely private moments were nothing more than the threads in the widely woven fabric of political experience that enfolds us all. I'm in my late twenties, have been lesbian all my life, and have been "out" for about five years now. I feel compelled to respond to Nancy Walker's ambitious statement that "gay women...hardly ever want anything to do with girls"¹ and to Amy Hoffman's gut level - albeit later modified - reaction of "Lesbians don't do that!"² to the Revere case³.

Both Walker and Hoffman are, simply, wrong in their assumptions. I know, because I've "done it" - as a girl and as a woman. Now, the time has come when I must share some of my memories and experiences with the larger community. Things I had preferred to think of as too impossibly personal to speak of with anyone have become highly charged, politically volatile issues affecting us all. Taboos on childhood sexuality when it blossoms at all, or on adolescent sexuality that crosses age boundaries, are so deeply entrenched in our culture that for years I was ashamed and afraid to admit, even to myself, that I was involved in an explicitly lesbian relationship when I was between 8 and 11 years old.

The first woman I ever loved sexually was my great-aunt; our feelings for each other were deep, strong, and full. The fact that she was more than fifty years older than I did not affect the bond that grew between us. And yes, I knew what I was doing - every step of the way - even though I had not, at the time, learned many of the words with which to speak of these things.

Aunt Addie was a dynamic, intelligent, and creative woman - who refused, all her life, to be cowed by convention. In an extended family where women played out "traditional" housewifely roles to the hilt, she stood out, a beacon of independence and strength. She was a nurse in France during the First World War, had traveled, read books, and lived for over twenty years in a monogamous relationship with another woman. Her lover's death pre-dated the start of our sexual relationship by about two years. But we had always been close and seen a great deal of each other. In the summers, which my mother, brother, and I always spent at her seashore home, we were together daily. In other seasons, she would drive to visit us wherever we were

living, and often stayed for a month or so at a time.

She taught me to knit and do embroidery. But she also encouraged me to run races and climb trees and dared me to swim out past the breakers, as she did. Addie was *exciting* to me, a child of the middle fifties. I was desperate for female role models who could show that there were alternatives to my mother's situation. I had begun to observe my parents' stormy and stultifying marriage close at hand, and was becoming keenly aware of my mother's mounting frustrations and the complex ways in which she took out her resentment on those closest to her. I didn't want to be like her. I craved the proof of other possibilities that Addie demonstrated, and even inspired outright.

I was precocious, intellectually and physically. At eight my breasts were budding; by nine I needed a bra. Puberty was well behind me before I turned ten. Tall for my age, and clumsy, I was no good at team sports, and most of the kids at school considered me "too brainy" or "weird" to associate with. I was generally out of synch with my time and my peers. I don't know what I gave Addie in return for the loving affections I know I received. Perhaps I symbolized promises that something of her would live on, carrying dreams for a future that she wouldn't see. I think that the time we shared, the love we felt and expressed for each other was something of an idyll for each of us as we grew in different directions. Addie was clearly aging; her lover was dead, and she had to face the possibility that her own days could end very soon. I was fast approaching what was to be a turbulent adolescence. For a while, we found refuge - together.

I adored her; that's all there was to it. I had never been taught at home that heterosexual acts or other body functions were dirty or forbidden, and I'd been isolated enough from other children to manage to miss a lot of the usual sexist socialization learned in play. It never occurred to me that it might be considered "unnatural" or "antisocial" to kiss or touch or hold the person I love, and I don't think that Addie was terribly concerned by such things either. I *do* know that I never felt pressured or forced by any sexual aspects of the love I felt for her. I think I can safely say, some twenty years later, that I was never exploited physically, emotionally, or intellectually - in the least.

Unfortunately, my mother took a rather different view. One summer night when I was eleven, she happened upon Addie and me together in my bed. There was an ugly, violent scene. I learned, for the first time, how it felt to feel real shame, the physical and mental anguish of guilt. I also began to learn how to hate myself. I was confused and withdrawn; I shunned Addie's attempts to smooth things over with my mother, to draw me back into trust, if not into love. I hurt her deliberately, and probably cruelly. I pushed her, and what we had been to each other, far into the background of my life, where she remained until she died. I did my best to repress all memories of our physical relationship, even as I embarked on lesbian liaisons with other young women.

We never had the chance to talk about any of these things, and I'm sorry about that. Addie died when I was twenty, and barely on the threshold of affirming the self that I am now. I had left her completely alone. I can only now admit that I never really stopped loving her, regardless of the time and energy I spent trying to deny what we had been to each other. The analytic adult in me would like to compile reasons to categorize the emotions in hindsight, checking off reactions, as though life were lived by multiple choice alone. The child I was so many years ago had the wisdom, it seems, to let such worries be, and trust only in what was simple, natural, and real.

It has always seemed to me that people know when sex is a right thing for them to be doing, when mutually consented to, regardless of who else may or may not share or understand that knowledge. It took some hard object lessons before I finally learned how unusual

such logic is in this world. Despite the cultural messages to the contrary that I eventually *did* receive, I knew that it was possible for a person to be aware of her own physicalness in a sexual way long before the social timetable of "maturity" says she should be - and to be able too to act on her awareness. And I know that now, with all my "grown-up" being. Although for several years I succumbed to social sanctions against lesbian and childhood sexuality, and felt ashamed for having had such experiences, I have come to realize the need to affirm them as part of the rich texture of both human experience in general and my own conscious reality in particular.

Growing up was difficult for me. I was often confused by and afraid of my own sexuality. But even the cultural pressure and problems I was faced with at adolescence, when all I know from experience came into conflict with what I was being taught (or pressured into doing by my peers), could never negate the wonder and beauty that marked my earliest sexual feelings and expressions of love that they found. Whom I had loved, and when, and whom I would choose to love were not at the heart of my troubles. And in learning to say "yes" to myself as a lesbian, and to live without self-hatred on my own terms, I found that I could only affirm my memories, and take from them a private strength and joy, regardless of what other people could understand - or not.

One night a couple of years ago the woman I was seeing asked me how old I'd been when I realized I loved women. I answered "about nine or ten," which seemed to shock her slightly, but she pressed for details, wondering how I could have "known *that*, so young." I responded as honestly as I could. She was disgusted, and told me so very quickly. At first I was hurt and confused by her reaction, but a bit later I realized that her repulsion reflected more on our shared situation as women in a masculist, patriarchal culture than it did on my own history.

If, in a cultural context, women *qua* women are devalued because of our sexuality, it is hardly surprising that we often feel compelled to deny the heart of our oppression. I have found sex, and sexuality, to be very threatening to many lesbians, perhaps most insidiously among those of us who are politically active and aware. It's a real double whammy. First we're told we're worthless as women - next we become *twice* so for loving each other. Women have had to say "no" to sensuality for two thousand years (at least); lesbians have had to put up with such things as clitoridectomies and public burnings as punishments for expressing our sex. A collective female urge to deny much of what we understand as sexual, and concomitantly painful when "out of the bedroom," becomes understandable, if not necessarily desirable.

It is extremely difficult for me to write about these things, knowing that what I say may and probably will be misread and mistaken by people whose lives haven't run parallel to mine. Part of the point that needs to be made, I think, is that we cannot ever judge others on the basis of our own experience, which is of necessity limited in many different directions at any given time. That similar sorts of judgments have been made in the past, are being made daily all around us, and are in many instances made *against* us as lesbians or gay men only serves to reinforce the painful potential that's inherent in setting up individuals as arbiters over each other's lives. The more we remain isolated in our own histories, afraid to speak of things that cut against the grain of all we have been taught, but are nonetheless valid elements of our common human experience, the more we encourage oppression in all its forms.

The dangers of silent isolation were brought home to me in a different, but graphic, context recently. Shortly before Christmas, a graduate seminar that my friend Kevin (who is gay) and I had attended met for the last time prior to the holiday break. As usual, five or six of us gathered in the professor's study; someone had brought in a tub of homemade eggnog laced with rum, others had brought good things to eat, and the atmosphere was rather festive. When Dr. Smith's twelve-year-old son, Brian, interrupted with a telephone message, his father asked

if he would like to stay and taste the eggnog.

Brian ended up sitting with us until the meeting ended. His presence was familiar; throughout the term, Brian and his older brothers had sat in on several of our meetings. Members of the seminar, including Kevin and myself, had also stayed for dinner with the family on several occasions.

We had come to know Dr. Smith's sons fairly well and to enjoy their company - they were bright, easygoing kids, fun to have around, especially among graduate students, who are sometimes inclined to take life a bit too seriously. For instance, a couple of weeks earlier, Kevin had talked at length with Brian at the dinner table one night after class. He mentioned to me afterwards that it was a refreshing change from the anxiety-laden discourse that prevails among aspiring scholars. Now, as our discussion of minute historical points progressed, I began to notice a sort of electricity in the air, with the "current" running from Brian in Kevin's direction.

I looked closely at the boy. His face was alive with interest and aware sensually, and the physical point of his intentions was clear. This was obviously more than a schoolboy crush; it was clearly sexual in ways we might ordinarily consider "adult." I was stunned. A twelve-year-old? Sexually attracted to my "grown-up" friend? What was I watching? My mind spun - until I caught myself up quickly. A second glance at Brian showed that I was looking through a mirror, telescoping time and space, seeing somehow not just the boy, but myself as well, long ago - realizing, with a rush of memory, that I'd once shared the same sort of feelings.

Almost immediately, my eyes met Kevin's. He is a gentle, sensitive man who likes children, and relates well to them. He once taught fourth grade, and has worked in a day care center. I knew that he was both aware of Brian's signals and very disconcerted by them. As soon as the seminar ended, the two of us went off to talk about what had happened.

For all of his contact with children, Kevin had never before been in such a situation, and he was confused and frustrated by what had just occurred. He wondered how it would be possible for him to continue to deal with Brian, supporting the validity of the boy's feelings, when the basis of what had been a completely casual, friendly relationship was clearly changing, at least in Brian's eyes. And while any sexual involvement in his relationship with Brian seemed unimaginable, it was not impossible for Kevin to picture only slightly different circumstances where explicitly sexual issues would arise and would have to be faced.

How to deal with that, should it happen, remains a troubling - and yet unanswerable - question. Kevin and I agreed that there is nothing inherently wrong with a sexual facet being added to a relationship between an adult and a young person, if that is what both individuals involved desire. Problems arise, however - mostly out of the social climate of our time. "Cross-generational" relationships often cause strong overreactions in others, who judge them from the outside. This can have disastrous consequences for the people involved.

In fact, given the double force of the common stereotypes of gay men as child molesters and cultural taboos on childhood sexuality, a mere notice of Brian's interest by another member of our seminar would have led to trouble. The boy's feelings would have been held against Kevin, who, as an adult, would be considered responsible. Even worse, Brian would have been told, in no uncertain terms, that his feelings were wrong and that he was no good for holding them - just as I had been, twenty years earlier.

Where does all this leave me? Leave us? I can only empathize with all of the young women and men out there now, who are being and will be sold short by adults who will not or cannot face these issues. Although much has changed for lesbians and gay men in twenty years, we seem to be so hung up on trying to protect ourselves and our hard-won gains that we are willing - and quick - to deny powerless others the right to be and affirm themselves sexually. I don't think that the issues involved in childhood, adolescent, or cross-generational

sex can ever be considered on anything other than an *individual* basis - by people whose minds are open to a just possibility.

In sharing my own experience here, I don't intend to imply *in the least* that children and teenagers are *not* used and abused exploitatively and cruelly in sexual relationships by older individuals. Nor do I condone or forgive such actions; they are simply reprehensible. What I *am* trying to do is present another, less sensational side, on which silence has been kept for far too long. No issues as serious as those now at hand can be fairly judged without a balanced view.

I would like to see more rational explanation and exploration of the points I've tried to raise here, in a climate more conducive to reciprocity and communication than currently seems to exist. I would like Nancy Walker and her supporters, who would rather sweep sexual relationships under the rug of adult privilege, to read this with open minds. I must reiterate that lesbians have no room for righteous indignation.

It's time for gay men and lesbians who have had no experience with these matters to take their cue from Marshall McClintock⁴, "shutting up, listening, and learning" from those of us who *do*. The issues are delicate and difficult, there's no denying that. But we cannot avoid them, like it or not. Nor can we continue to oppress others as we have been - or *are* - oppressed ourselves. It's time to stop selling out young people, and to begin being honest, with ourselves and with each other.

NOTES

1. Nancy Walker, "Men and Boys: Appropriate?" *Gay Community News*, January 13, 1979, p 5
2. Amy Hoffman, "Part of the Process," *Gay Community News*, January 27, 1979, p 5
3. Revere, Massachusetts was the site of a 1977 sex panic in which authorities believed that the city was the site of a child-sex ring after district attorney Garrett Byrne announced the arrest of 24 men on charges of statutory rape. The authorities set up a special tipline for citizens to anonymously call into to report men having sex with boys under 16 years of age. The radical gay magazine *Fag Rag* set up the Boston/Boise Committee (a reference to a similar panic in Boise, Idaho in 1955) to counteract the tipline and the attorney; the North American Man/Boy Love Association grew out of the committee in 1978.
4. Marshall McClintock was the co-founder of Harpur Gay Alliance, a gay and lesbian group at SUNY Binghamton in the 1970s

Wimmin Loving Girls Loving Wimmin

Nadia

Not much is known about this author or piece - perhaps not even its origin. This piece was republished in the Fall 1988 zine Coming On, compiled by Kenn Quayle and others from the Queer Anarchist Network. It is probable that it was sourced from the London-based anarcha-feminist zine Feminaxe.

"It is so frustrating and alienating to have to deal with ageism in the lesbian community, to have my lover teasingly called a cradle robber, to be considered not sexual because I am 15, to be turned away from dances because I am a child to some womyn. I am so often painfully aware of ageism. Even some of my dyke sisters are amazed that I am who I am, now. Sometimes my age becomes a barrier between us, and then we relate on a level that I don't want there. I don't want to be a token, or a curiosity, or a person of less worth because of my age."

... Mehia

The existence of sexual relationships between younger and older lesbians is never recognized. The subject is even more of a taboo than gay men's sex below the 'age of consent'; although both sorts of relationships have existed for a long long time. But the conviction of a woman in France in 1980 for having loved a teenage girl will always be suppressed because it challenges the purity and innocence of wimmin and girls; girls' sexual role as the virgin waiting to be broken in by men, and the power relationship between adults and young people.

The power imbalance between adults and young people make sexual relationships between the two dodgy territory - when does consent end and exploitation begin?

Yet surely this is a question which would be asked of almost every relationship, as well as whether a relationship is equal if dependency is involved? Are any relationships as equal as they claim to be? (i.e. being a lesbian doesn't automatically free you from bad relationships) Of course any exploitative relationships are wrong - lesbian or otherwise.

Only when young people cease to be made vulnerable and are given back the control over their own bodies to explore sensuality and sexuality and are treated not as possessions of adults but as autonomous individuals with ideas and desires of their own, will anything nearing an 'equality' be possible. This certainly isn't the case right now.

But until children are liberated along with the rest of us I hope it is important to recognize that children are denied any form of sexuality or sexual expression; and that sexual excitement is an OK thing to happen between people, from babies through to grannies, and it isn't just for heterosexual couples to produce offspring.

Protection and prohibition aren't ways of freeing wimmin or children from the domination of the male prick. Education and empowerment are where our strengths lie. We all have a lot to learn from children's freedom and honesty with themselves about sexuality - which adults are so keen to destroy to keep up this cycle of sexually fucked-up adults fucking up children and fucking up the world.

AGEISM is being young, dependent and poor, being a young single mother receiving little benefit. It is being unable to control our own destinies because of a number, even when we *know* we're ready, it's having something forced upon you when you know you're *not*. It is having to sacrifice everything you believe in and *wait*.

AGEISM is prohibiting masturbation, prohibiting sexual contact with others, withholding information on sex, sexuality, abortion, rape, VD. It is not being taught how to protect yourself in any sense. It is not being told what menstruation is until you're bleeding. It is always being at an awkward stage! It is prohibiting ALL sexual activity of the very young, especially lesbian and gay relationships. It is social workers locking you up when they think you are in 'moral danger'...

It is being shoved into care or foster family or your own family when you don't want to be there. It is not being able to live where you want.

AGEISM goes on and on and just when you think it's over...

AGEISM is the glorification of youth as a happy dream time full of birthday parties and teddy bears.

AGEISM is denying ageing and being old. It is old wimmin incapacitated into invisibility, hiding their poverty and loneliness. It is the exploitation and intimidation of the old by the drug industry and by doctors. Ageism is not being 'with it' over 55. It is a grandmother labeled senile for making one mistake. It is being told you don't know your own mind anymore. It is people whispering behind your back because they think you can't hear. It is not being sexy because your skin is wrinkled. It is as much being shoved off to a pensioners house when you're old as being shoved off to bed when you're young.

AGEISM is running rampant throughout both mainstream and 'alternative' culture.

AGEISM is bothering me all the time. What about you?

Like Apples and Oranges: Lesbian Feminist Responses to the Politics of *The Body Politic*

Becki Ross

Becki Ross is a Canadian academic-activist whose work focuses mainly on sexuality, sex work, and queer issues. Her writing first appeared in queer magazines such as Rites and Xtra! before she moved on to appearing in academic journals and writing non-fiction books. She now teaches as a professor of Women's and Gender Studies and Sociology. This piece was written for the May/June 1993 issue of FUSE, a Canadian arts and culture periodical.

A number of historians and theorists have recently remarked on the embattled relations that have persisted between post-Stonewall lesbian feminists and gay male activists. This is a revisitation of one site of contestation: the 1977 police raid on *The Body Politic* (a now defunct radical gay liberation monthly with an international readership) by Project P - a joint Metropolitan Toronto/Ontario Provincial Police anti-pornography squad. This is a replaying of the debates that swirled around the article "Men Loving Boys Loving Men," focusing on the sharpening of lesbian feminist sexual discourse against and in contradistinction to gay men's sexual discourse. Indeed, the raid served as a lightning rod for the articulation of competing discourses on issues of sexual practice, representation and the role of the state in legislating matters of sex and morality. The focus on dominant lesbian feminist responses allows one to recapture one moment in the consolidation of a white, middle-class Lesbian Nationalist identity and community. It also allows a contextualization of the subsequent fracturing of hegemonic lesbian feminism in the 1980s and the emergent possibility for new queer alliances in the 1990s.

Lesbian Feminists Enter the Maelstrom

On November 21, 1977, *The Body Politic* mailed out issue no. 39 to subscribers and bookstores. The issue contained "Men Loving Boys Loving Men" by Gerald Hannon - the third in a series of three articles on consent and youth sexuality¹. Written from the standpoint of a boy-lover, the tone and content of the article suggested competing desires to confess, to educate and to provoke. And provoke it did. In five consecutive columns leading up to and following the publication of issue no. 39, Claire Hoy of *The Toronto Sun* vilified "radical homosexuals" and their "rag," *The Body Politic*². Referring to homosexuals as "filthy garbage" and "child rapers," he called for immediate police action against the newspaper. The office of *The Body Politic* was raided on December 30, 1977, one month after issue no. 39 had appeared on newsstands³, and charged under Section 164 of the Criminal Code - use of the mail to distribute immoral, indecent and scurrilous materials.

In early 1978, a formal meeting of the Lesbian Organization of Toronto (LOOT - the city's largest constituency of lesbian feminists) was held to discuss the "Men Loving Boys Loving

Men" crisis. Most LOOT members accused *The Body Politic* of bad timing in publishing the article. Lesbian, gay and feminist communities were still reeling from orange juice queen Anita Bryant's anti-homosexual "Save Our Children" crusade launched in July 1977, and the reported "homosexual orgy slaying" of twelve-year-old Emanuel Jaques in a Yonge Street establishment in August 1977. The ensuing moral panic organized through the media not only focused hostility against the entire gay community, it provided rationale for an escalation of the "Clean Up Yonge Street" campaign (similar to the Times Square and Tenderloin clean-ups in New York and San Francisco) orchestrated by police, politicians and downtown real estate developers.

By being published when it was, many lesbian feminists argued, "Men Loving Boys Loving Men" endangered the gay civil rights campaign which at that time seemed to be gaining momentum. Bluntly told, void of nuance, the article worked to feed and reinforce the myth of the homosexual child molester, and thus some lesbian feminists claimed, provided right-wing organizers - Renaissance International, the Catholic Church, Positive Parents, the Western Front (later the League Against Homosexuals) - with fuel for their backlash and served to grease the wheels of Antia Bryant's powerful anti-gay, anti-feminist and "pro-family" machine.

More importantly, though, on a deep emotional level, the article evoked shock and disgust among lesbian (and straight) feminists. At several public forums, lesbian feminist speakers denounced cross-generational sex as abusive and nonconsensual, and they condemned its exploitive portrayal in *The Body Politic*. Refusing the libertarian defense of the magazine by high-profile writers like Margaret Atwood and June Callwood, a number of lesbian feminists spoke out against the sexual, economic, physical, and emotional inequalities between gay men and young boys. In interviews they remember being furious with the romanticization of adult/child love. Former psychiatric nurse and youth counselor Pat Murphy was a vocal critic:

"[Gay men] didn't see the relationship between power and sexuality... they'd have sexual relationships with a young kid they'd taken to McDonald's for a hamburger and they'd say he's all willing and likes it... It was all romantic sexuality that was to their own advantage. It's like paying five bucks at McDonald's for an all-day blow job."⁴

Disallowing the "Men Loving Boys" article as a "celebration of sex," members of LOOT railed against the lack of power and privilege of the young boys. Not only, they argued, did Gerald Hannon's standpoint assure a foregrounding of adult male sexual desire, it secured the erasure of meaning/s that the boys themselves attached to cross-generational sexual encounters. In the aftermath of the raid, the statement formulated by a number of activist lesbians during anti-Bryant organizing - "pedophilia is neither a lesbian nor a feminist issue" - was recapitulated with a renewed, steely confidence. Feelings of rage cut across ideological differences that were beginning to fragment LOOT lesbians into socialist and radical feminist camps. A long-time member of the Revolutionary Marxist Group (later the Revolutionary Workers League), Amy Gottlieb recalls that:

"...there was a general feeling that [the article] was awful and terrible and how could men do this to boys and there must be something wrong with these men and they're really beyond the pale, and no wonder we didn't want to have anything to do with them. I know for myself, I was pretty outraged at the time."⁵

Former collective member of *The Body Politic*, Ed Jackson remembers his shock and dismay and the intensely negative criticism of "Men Loving Boys" voiced by many lesbian feminists (and, not insignificantly, some gay men)⁶. However, he is quick to note the absence of any gender-mixed infrastructure within lesbian and gay political organizing during this period which may have furnished a context for productive dialogue.

Re-Aligning Memory

Asked to recall their feelings about the "Men Loving Boys" debacle, a number of former LOOT members told of their girlhood experiences of unwanted, forced sexual pain and humiliation at the hands of straight adult men. In addition, a number of lesbian feminist leaders added the knowledge that they had gained from work with sexually abused women and children in hostels, rape crisis centers, counseling clinics, prisons and psychiatric hospitals. And it was, it seems, to a large degree these stories that influenced the reaction to the article (an example of the privileging of first-person narrative that was characteristic of dominant feminist ideology).

Spokeswomen for the Lesbian Mothers Defense Fund (LMDF) were among the most vigorous and persuasive critics of cross-generational sex. Positioning themselves as moral guardians and recasting maternal feminist rhetoric of the nineteenth century, they argued for the "innocence" of children. Adult lesbian feminists, members of LOOT contended, were not child molesters, nor did they sexually desire children. As Amy Gottlieb recalls, "There was a need to say we were really different [from gay men] and by implication, we wouldn't do this with young girls."⁷ In interviews for this piece only one narrator mentioned having had sex with an older woman, while two women mentioned the sex they had experienced with under-age female partners. Perhaps a compulsion to disengage from the messiness of one's past in the service of a politically consistent present prevented others from disclosing similar acts. Even the lesbian "crush" popularized by singer/songwriter Meg Christian's "Ode to a Gym Teacher" (Olivia Records, 1974) was eulogized in language reminiscent of nineteenth-century ennobling of same-sex romantic friendships. Ultimately, notwithstanding Jane Rule's heretical wish to "make adults easier to seduce," breaking the cross-generational taboo was incongruent with 1970s right-on, reciprocal, relational love between adult, women-identified women.⁸

In light of their own personal and increasingly political awareness of male sexual violence, many lesbian and straight feminists were suspicious of claims to consensual sex, whether straight or gay. As stated by Susan Cole, "Gay men were interested in eliminating age of consent laws so they could many, many dozens more holes into which they could plug their penises."⁹ Cole and others were not encouraged by the stories that some gay men, as teenagers, delighted in the sexual education they sought and received from older men, or that virtually all boys, as males, are taught to view themselves as sexual subjects. That intergenerational sex among males often entailed a positive and genuinely different experience from intergenerational heterosex was not something with which women, lesbian or straight, identified.

However, while most activist lesbians were scornful of what they understood to be "anonymous," "penis-fixated," "recreational" and "public" gay sex-at-any-cost, gay liberationists Chris Bearchell and Konnie Reich remember the envy they felt (and still feel) toward the richness of gay male sexual possibilities.¹⁰ Comprising a tiny minority in the late 1970s, Bearchell, Reich and others were drawn to the complex dynamics of dominance and submission, lust and fantasy played out in some segments of the (white) gay male community, and made vivid in the sexually anarchic work of filmmaker Kenneth Anger, writers John Rechy and John Preston, and artist Tom of Finland. The majority of LOOT members felt, though, that the worst forms of heterosexual power imbalance, objectification and insensitivity were intrinsic to gay male sexual activity. To LOOT members, the pursuit of young boys exemplified the vulgar opportunism already present in a gay male world that obsessively sought new, increasingly commercial outlets for sexual pleasure. As Darlene Lawson quipped, "Would it really destroy the lesbian movement in this community or country if *The Body Politic* was not operating?"¹¹

The Conundrum of the State

Against that hegemonic feminist current, a small collection of lesbian activists, many of whom had participated in the Stop Anita Bryant Coalition in the summer of 1977, argued that *The Body Politic* and the freedom to publish, more generally, must be defended. In particular, the five women who joined The Body Politic Free the Press Fund insisted that lesbian feminists needed to take a strong, principled stand against the danger of state control in the form of sexual censorship as well as bath and bar raid, police intimidation and entrapment. The lines, though, were not clearly drawn.

Lesbian feminists of all political stripes condemned the police seizure of twelve shipping cartons full of materials from *The Body Politic* office and the laying of charges against Pink Triangle Press. They were shaken by the blatant incursion - the depth and severity of which were then unknown to lesbian feminist institutions. And yet at the same time, in another context, many of these activists were exerting pressure on state agents to forbid the public screening and distribution of what they deemed "offensive" sexual materials. One month prior to *The Body Politic* raid, a band of feminists from LOOT and the newly formed "Snuff Out Snuff" (SOS) contingent descended upon mayor Crombie's office demanding the closure of the film "Snuff" at Cinema 2000. In a letter to *The Body Politic* in 1978, Pat Leslie cautioned against support for state censorship laws which "could conceivably be used against us."¹² And yet, at the same time, Eve Zaremba, Susan Cole and others began to argue for the necessary involvement of the state (via the Criminal Code, customs regulations and censor boards) to legislate against "pornographic material" that, according to Cole, not only "taught the hatred of women," but also "promoted child abuse."¹³ In concert with feminist anti-porn organizations in the United States which also formed in late 1977, Zaremba, Cole and others began a call for state-administered penalties against the owners of the commercial porn industry - "the purveyors of violence against women" - a call which foreshadowed the infamous Minneapolis Ordinance designed by anti-pornography crusaders Catharine MacKinnon and Andrew Dworkin in 1983.

As Darlene Lawson avowed during the January 1978 debate on *The Body Politic* at the LOOT headquarters, enlisting the state to censor such "damaging" accounts as "Men Loving Boys Loving Men" was not only conceivable, it was a justified strategy. Ironically, it was one that also appealed to ring-wing lobbyists. Only weeks earlier, *Toronto Sun* columnist Claire Hoy demanded the repeal of two small Ontario Arts grants awarded to *The Body Politic* on the grounds that "our taxes our helping to promote the abuse of children" (a demand that anticipated Jesse Helms' homophobic assault on the NEA [National Endowment for the Arts] in 1989 and *Toronto Sun* columnist Christina Blizzard's attack on the "flagrant misuse of state funds" by the AIDs Committee of Toronto in 1992).¹⁴

In effect, then, lesbian and feminist criticism of all forms of male sexuality in the '70s led to both tacit and openly declared support (alongside moral conservatives) for state regulation of male homosexual pornography, and by extension, all gay male sexual expression. Having taken this stance, and without a pornographic tradition of their own, it is perhaps not surprising that lesbian activists did not mount a coordinated protest against the police seizure of *The Joy of Lesbian Sex* in the same raid on *The Body Politic* offices in late 1977.

Gender Loyalty

Reflecting upon the mid-to-late 1970s, the territories occupied jointly by lesbian feminists and activist gay men seem much more troubled than the mezzanine of the King Edward Hotel, Bowles Lunch, the Melody Room after-hours club or Hanlan's Point beach shared by semi-

secret queer subcultures in the 1950s and '60s. Requests to join gay men on the front lines stirred fears in post-Stonewall lesbian feminists of being railroaded into positions prematurely or of having their agenda co-opted by a slick, more experienced gay male leadership. Further, political lesbians in the '70s were not overly keen on joining forces with gay men given the spotty evidence of gay men's anti-sexism, measured in part by poor attendance at abortion rallies, anti-violence protests, International Women's Day events, strikes by women workers, and so on. Faced with scarce resources, the legacy of invisibility and the goals of coming out proud and united, white lesbian leaders were consumed by the desire to construct empowered, cultural identities and "gomer-free" wanderground: a forceful and utopian lesbian feminist mythos enacted to bind women together. They grappled with inventing language not only to describe and analyse sexism and heterosexism, but to give voice to the particularities of lesbian oppression and the need for women-only space.

Throughout the '70s, immersed in campaigns to end men's sexual violence, neither lesbian nor straight feminists battled to enshrine a politics of pleasure in arenas outside their own bedrooms. With so many lesbians just coming out, their often hurtful memories of heterosexual sex were deep, immediate reminders of their need to "do sex" different. In this context, gay male sexuality (and gay male life which, to cite John D'Emilo, has often taken shape in pornographic zones) appeared threateningly "other" or "alien."¹⁵ As such, feminist elevation of "the personal" to creed fed the disinclination, even resistance, of lesbian feminists to move beyond the limits of their own lived experience. Under siege and inventing things as they went along, they constituted a visible, proud presence against social forces that actively disavowed or condemned their existence. However, their emphasis and practices also contained strands of a congealing, identity-based politics compelling (and exclusive) to insiders who feared dissolution, co-optation and assimilation.¹⁶

Indeed, gay men's sexual culture was not readily "personalized" by lesbians who themselves were vying to displace medical and popular images of The Lesbian as sexual deviate, pervert and predator. Most radical lesbians - who were largely white and middle-class - were embarrassed and repelled by talk and images of "dirty," "kinky" gay male "promiscuity." Without supportive links to largely working-class sex workers, lesbian feminists unwittingly aligned themselves with the "Clean Up Yonge Street" campaign against prostitutes, dangers, porn models and masseuses who worked "the strip" and who became increasingly vulnerable to arrest and police harassment in the '70s. Thus the moral authority exercised by some white middle-class lesbian feminists vis-à-vis sex and sexual imagery in the mid-to-late '70s not only echoed the sexual conservatism of the Daughters of Bilitis in the 1950s; but it also reworked early twentieth-century temperance and social purity notions of essential, unchecked male lust from which women needed protection.¹⁷

Consonant with bourgeois norms of propriety, these lesbian radicals seemed partial to century-old notions of childhood as the age of vulnerability to be guarded at all costs from adult corruption. Championing the goodness of egalitarian, nurturant adult love, most middle-class lesbian activists seemed unaware of the state warehousing of minors - sexually active working-class girls - in detention centres on charges of sexual immorality. Regarding man/boy love, not only did these lesbian feminists tend to re-invoke the potent spectre of pedophilia (against evidence that the overwhelming majority of child molesters are heterosexual men), they applied an analysis of unequal power in adult/child heterosexual relations to adult/youth homosexual relations without considering how same-gender sex might fundamentally alter the dynamic. Had girlhood memories of lust for older women been admissible, it is possible that recognition of the disjuncture between practice and ideology may have opened up space for dialogue and for the formulation of alternative strategies. Indeed, attention to the structuring

of power within lesbian sexual exchanges was effectively stoppered (or at least discredited) until volcanic debates about butch/femme and SM erupted in the early 1980s.

Significantly, by the end of the '70s, lesbian feminist attention to power and its abuses in sexual relations had raised vexing questions concerning the civil libertarian stance of *The Body Politic*. It also prefigured later criticisms of the race- and class-bound character of commercial porn, gay and straight. However, the slide from criticism of sexual practice and representation to support for state sexual censorship was riddled with flaws, not least of all the deflection away from root causes of sexual and gender inequality in capitalist, racist and patriarchal culture.

In the end, a preoccupation with mobilizing around female rage and pain, disconnection from pre-Stonewall queer experience of state sexual regulation, a separation from gay men and the yearning of many middle-class lesbian feminists for radical (yet respectable) power-free love, contributed to the dominant feminist interpretation of cross-generational sex, gay and straight, as indefensible. On the level of strategy in the mid-to-late 1970s, lesbian and straight feminists tended to support two courses of action: 1) the elimination of pornography by the state through obscenity legislation; 2) the rejection of demands made by gay and lesbian youth for modification, if not abolition, of "age of consent" laws. Importantly, the reluctance of the left to engage in the politics of sexuality, compounded by the long-standing anti-left hostility of radical (and liberal) feminists, accounted in part for feminist faith in the state's role as a facilitating force in social justice.¹⁸ Over the past year, the short-sightedness of this approach has become crystal clear given the retooled obscenity legislation enshrined by the Supreme Court (i.e., the *[R v] Butler* decision) and recent interpretations of *Butler* that have criminalized sexually explicit matters, both lesbian/gay and straight.

The 1990s: The Promise of Queer

Between 1977 and when *The Body Politic* closed down in 1987, discussion of the content of the "Men Loving Boys" article was ostensibly squelched. Undoubtedly, the immeasurable amounts of community time, energy and money expended in defense of the paper chilled the collective's desire to encourage further debate on the subject. Today, as one consequence of this chill, nagging issues persist: If an imbalance of gender power relations is not relevant when we consider sex between men and boys (or women and girls), do unequal power relations based on age remain? In other words, what age limits (if any) are appropriate in determining when the impermissible becomes permissible? How do gay (and lesbian) youth who seek sex from adults make sense of this desire and the sexual activity that may ensue? And how can print and visual resources designed to foster sexual agency in young people (ideally produced by youth themselves) be made widely available?

To date, gay and lesbian movements have not mounted a successful defense of "man/boy love." Clearly, the stigmatization of gay men as lecherous child molesters is long-standing and resilient; however, the current lesbian/gay moratorium on cross-generational sex cedes authority to the already powerful emotional (and moral) force of a right-wing sexual agenda. Christina Blizzard of *The Toronto Sun*, the architects and supporters of Measure 9 in Oregon and Initiative 2 in Colorado during the 1992 United States' presidential campaign, have been successful in deploying the demonizing discourse of homosexual pedophilia in the service of a broad offensive against all lesbians and gay men.¹⁹ In addition, the intense focus on the spectre of the perverts is being used to galvanize neo-conservative and fundamentalist activity on broader issues of welfare, unemployment, immigration, the family, people of colour and women.

In looking for allies to challenge the dominant ideology of young people's sexuality (and the control adults exert over children/youth), gay men will not readily discover friends among lesbian feminists. Still, factors that include the AIDS/HIV crisis, the efflorescence of queer discourses inspired in part by man/boy lovers, sex workers, bisexuals, SM dykes and lesbians and gay men of colour, as well as the state confiscation of lesbian-explicit materials (e.g., *Bad Attitude*), have converged to herald new possibilities of conscious coalition, of political and social kinship. Unlike (white, middle-class) lesbian feminist ideology of the 1970s, the distinction made between male and female sexualities no longer operates as the primary political cleavage. Moreover, there seems to be a growing awareness among feminists that radical issues are often transformed by the state into legal (as well as administrative and medical) categories which may bear little resemblance to original feminist (and anti-racist) demands or intents. Whether queer-as-identity will operate as a set of rallying points, or yet another regulatory regime riven by inclusions and exclusions, will only become clear through the repetitive enactment of queerness in myriad private and public arenas of struggle.

NOTES

1. Gerald Hannon, "Men Loving Boys Loving Men," *The Body Politic* (November, 1977), p. 29-33. The standpoint of sexually active young gays and lesbians was explored in "Seven Years to Go: the plight of gay youth," *The Body Politic* (September, 1976), p. 1, 14-15
2. Claire Hoy, "Stop the Bleeding Hearts," *The Toronto Sun* (October 30, 1977); "The Limp Wrist Lobby" (November 2, 1977); "Gay Rights, Continuing Saga" (November 13, 1977); "Morality vs. Perversity" (December 21, 1977); "Our Taxes Help Homosexuals Promote Abuse of Children" (December 22, 1977); "Kids, Not Rights, Is Their Craving" (December 25, 1977)
3. Armed with a warrant, officers from the Metropolitan Toronto Police force and the Ontario Provincial Police carted away twelve shipping cartons filled with documents and records: subscription lists, distribution and advertising records, corporate and financial records, classified ad records and addresses, manuscripts for publication and letters to the editors. Personal and business mail was opened the Canadian Gay Archives was ransacked.
4. Interview with Pat Murphy, 1986, conducted by myself and other members of the oral history collective, Lesbians Making History, Toronto.
5. Interview with Amy Gottlieb, 1989.
6. Interview with Ed Jackson, 1992.
7. Interview with Amy Gottlieb, 1989.
8. Jane Rule's original article, "Teaching Sexuality" appeared in issue no.53 (June, 1979) of *The Body Politic* and has been reprinted in her collection *Outlander: short stories and essays* (Tallahassee, Fla.: Naiad Press, 1982), p. 157-162. Here, Rule adds: "[I would want] to make adults easier to seduce, less burdened with fear or guilt, less defended by hypocrisy. If we accepted sexual behaviour between children and adults, we would be far more able to protect our children from abuse and exploitation than we are now" (pp. 160-161).
9. Interview with Susan Cole, 1989.
10. Interview with Chris Bearchell and Konnie Reich, 1990. In 1978, responding to the "Men Loving Boys" debacle, Gayle Rubin penned a letter to *The Body Politic* cautioning against the abandon of "already vulnerable and stigmatized groups such as boy-lovers, sadomasochists and transsexuals to further attack and isolation" (p. 90).
11. Darlene Lawson, three-hour taped debate, "Men Loving Boys Loving Men" at LOOT, January, 1978, housed at the Canadian Women's Movement Archive (CWMA/acmf), Toronto, Ontario.

12. Pat Leslie, "Doing Our Own Work," *The Body Politic*, no. 46 (September, 1978), p. 2. For an early critique of the limitations of state sexual censorship legislation, see Mariana Valverde, "Freedom, Violence and Pornography," *The Body Politic*, no. 51 (March/April, 1979), p. 19.
13. See Eve Zaremba, "Porn Again," *The Body Politic*, no. 47 (October, 1978), p. 4.
14. Claire Hoy, "The Limp Wirst Lobby," *The Toronto Sun* (November 2, 1977).
15. John D'Emilo, *Making Trouble: essays on gay history, politics and the university* (Routledge: New York and London, 1992), p. 202.
16. This is not to deny the multiple successes achieved by political lesbians in the 1970s which have seeded virtually all contemporary lesbian social, political and cultural initiatives. I roundly dispute trendy critiques that simplistically reduce this decade of lesbian nationalism to anti-male, anti-sex pessimism or naive, gender-separatist idealism. My point is one of self-criticism, i.e., by isolating and analysing pitfalls in past thought and practice, we become better able to effect change in our historical present.
17. On the history of the English Canadian social purity movement, see Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991) and in Britian, Margaret Hunt, "The De-Eroticization of Women's Liberation: Social Purity Movements and the Revolutionary Feminism of Sheila Jeffreys," *Feminist Review*, no. 34 (Spring, 1990), p. 23-45.
18. See Varda Burstyn, "The Left and the Porn Wars," in Howard Buchbider, Diana Forbes, Varda Burstyn and Mercedes Steedman (eds.), *Who's On Top: The Politics of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1987), p. 11-46.
19. On the chilling developments in Oregon and Colorado during the US federal election in 1992, see Sally Chew, "Ding, Dong, Mabon Calling," *Out* (March, 1993), p. 41-47.

There Can Be No Emancipation of Women Without the Emancipation of Children and other pieces

Kanalrattenkommune

The Kanalrattenkommune (Sewer Rat Commune) was an anarchist women's and children's commune formed in the early 80s who were born out of the earlier Oranien-Strassenkommune. They interacted with the larger Indianerkommune and participated in hunger strikes, street performances, and formal meetings. The first and longest piece is a political manifesto which was printed in the Autonomer Frauenkalender (Autonomous Women's Calendar) 1989, and is a response to criticism leveled at the commune which claimed them to be upholding power structures in their relationships. The two other short pieces come from the commune's newsletter and were written in the early 80s.

There Can Be No Emancipation of Women Without the Emancipation of Children

We define female paedophilia as love between girls and adult women which is voluntary and includes sexual satisfaction; it is not a form of domination over other people since it is a form of life in which we have no need to dominate or possess children.

We wish to live without power over children and without the lifeless sexuality of adults. Adult sexuality means the destruction of life and the environment. The destruction of the environment precedes the destruction of child sexuality. Relationships with children other than those in the permitted categories of family, upbringing, home, and education are either not allowed or criminalized. Any attempt to break out of this machine of death is prevented. We consider contacts which involve pressure, coercion, extortion, or prohibition to be incidences of violence rather than paedophilia. Those who claim that paedophilia consists of abuse, rape, and sadistic force are furthering the fascist discrimination of paedophile love. For us, however, it is fascist to imprison children in families so that no other kinds of relationships are possible. Paedophilia is our only means of preventing motherhood from being the only permitted form of living together with children. We attack the rapist father, but in no way allow ourselves to be forced into a motherly power relationship/dependency. We demanded that children be given rights rather than protection, so that they can escape from families which they do not like or where they are mistreated.

The emancipation of women is not possible without the emancipation of children and childhood. A satisfying sexuality cannot be achieved without discussing the forbidden/suppressed topics of lesbian and child sexuality, without abolishing the divisions between body zones, sexuality and tenderness, sexual and non-sexual areas, age differences, and work. They try to separate every girl and woman from her sexuality so that they can later only function as sperm receptacles and mothers.

Girls are destroyed by adults so that their resistance is broken and they let themselves be treated as victims and protected. They must put up with everything until they give in and are no longer able to resist the macho state. They then pass on this inability to other girls, rather

than joining with them to offer resistance.

Abused children are divided into categories: a great fuss is made over those who can be reintegrated into society, but children who resist even the most obnoxious social workers or unwarranted meddling in their private lives receive no support. They are put out on the street, get involved with drugs, prostitution, attempt suicide, or they wind up rather quickly in homes, the child psychiatry circuit, or they are again destroyed by families. Even voluntary relationships end up in court or under the control of the child-protection agencies, who then forbid all contact, put children into psychotherapy, or place them in homes, psychiatric institutions, and prisons. Children are forced to live together with adults in stifling relationships where no sexuality is allowed.

None of this is considered abuse. When things turn out otherwise this lie becomes visible and there is talk of manipulation, the creation of dependency, power, etc., without questioning the nature of the relationships in which the adults themselves are trapped.

Almost all women who have tender and sexual feelings for children are afraid to pursue their wishes and needs and to respond to those of children, because these relationships are legally prosecuted and their social therapeutic nature is destroyed. The current campaigns which are supposedly directed against "sexual abuse" underscore the tightening of conventional morality, the suppression of our sexuality and the control of children. By being placed in solitary confinement a girl is prevented from having experiences, trying things out for herself to find out what she likes and does not like. Instead she is burdened with completely alien desires, all of this supposedly to protect her.

They know that children can become sexuality excited, but they forbid sexual gratification. No opposition to families, schools, homes, and the whole moral world remains; rather their influence is becoming even more widespread. Special courses for teachers, training programs to teach kindergarten children to say "no" and other such devices to protect children are contrivances to help and protect adults and the state, because they do not allow children to say "yes." They are the complement to or the substitute for male violence. We are the victims when the "wildwasser" women¹, the Emma journalists² and other campaigners make no distinction between relationships based on mutual consent and relationships based on force. But they force us to live according to their ideas which they think are suitable for our modern times. We do not want to give any state money to the "wildwassers" nor do we want to help the pedagogues to control us, but we do want to live with children.

The discussion will be continued.

Kanalratten, Berlin, 1989

Translated from German by Eric Wulfert.

Why We Live Together "Just With Girls"

We are constantly under attack because we want to live together "just with girls." We need our strength to change US, to liberate ourselves from our hated femininity that is never attacked, only protected and promoted. Women have betrayed girls - they are maternal-phallic, baby bottle-phallic. They are adult and hypocritical. They join in, they use their feminine privilege and are weak, don't carry anything heavy, because they allegedly can't do that and keep their hands clean, yet dirty the rivers with their detergents and obsession with cleanness. They gossip over coffee, wear high heels and knit alternative sweaters. They are women and talk

pedagogically and maternally with us. So we can't develop our own strength and autonomy. Femininity is as false as blunt masculine power, grooming and smearing Nivea creme on themselves; within the alternative it may be alternative, but it's no different.

We don't need stupid hetero games, we need criticism. We are constantly supposed to fight against or correct the power, so we never come to discover our own relationships among us girls. We don't want to go down with our own wishes. On top of all this oppression, we are then accused of separating, detaching ourselves from others, but those who make us do this are never accused. When we divide ourselves, separate ourselves, we then get condemned on top of all of our oppression, but those who oppress us are never condemned. We are sucked dry, we are to maintain the hypocritical and superficial rituals. We can't live together like that. We have better things to do than fight back from morning to night.

We want to first look at ourselves and become independent, without boys and men who do not understand our daily oppression as second-class people, at least not in the same way we are. The men are finally to solve their problems among themselves. If we were boys, we would live without girls. You (the collective psyche and all those who belong to it) live the compulsive sexuality of your parents, protect your fathers, the phallic power, the maternity. You haven't resisted, we are being destroyed, and you yourselves are too. We love girls and want to live with them, as other people do. But WE cannot because our friends are supposedly too young.

To Alice Schwarzer, Concerning: How Much Does Pedophilia Liberate?

At the same time that we, a girls' commune from Kreuzberg, called for the full and self-determined equality of all minors and pedophilic adults by doing a hunger strike..... (which the taz³ reported on several times), Emma printed a conversation between Alice Schwarzer⁴ and the tough guy social pedagogue Günther Amendt⁵ (pedagogues don't know a thing about pedophilia anyway), where it's claimed that there are no female pedophiles.

The very first question is why is there a page-long interview with G. Amendt about pedophilia in a women's newspaper and not an interview with the women in question (or at least the men in question), but apparently these women aren't authorized enough, or not scientifically literate enough to write or talk about their feelings (their love for little girls). We have informed them about ourselves several times by writing and telephone (long before the article was published), but we were hushed up.

What about me, I'm grown up because I am 19, am I a woman now? No, I'm not a woman, and when I'm 25 I can't live like this anymore, I'm not supposed to feel like this anymore, I'm not supposed to feel like a 12-year old, am I sick, stunted?? Do I then have to be with 25-year-olds, who have taken a different path than me that I can't handle? So if I as a 25-year-old love 12-year-old girls, then I'm not allowed to do that just because we're not the same age or size?

By the way: there are also small adults and big children! We can't talk about all pedophile relationships, but we fight against any oppression of girls, of men, of boys and against those old biddies, mothers, and women. Among other things, we demand stronger laws against rape, but why should intimate relationships that are absolutely non-violent be banned?

You say, the proof is still pending. But there're other proofs that are still pending as well. Namely, the lack of violence in adult relationships, hetero or homo. Incidentally, the original lesbian Sappho was a pedophile (see her verses).

You say: What of the frightening condition of the little girls abused by their own fathers, not to mention their souls...the millions of injuries suffered by young girls...female children are

exploited the most...it's almost exclusively female children who are used in sex tourism...and so on. You then present this to the public as pedophilia, as if we wanted to legalize rape. That's just like what the *Bildzeitung*⁵ does to lesbians!! (Lesbians are criminals with firearms, caution, terrorist women, beware!!!) You are crying out for even more prohibitions and you don't realize that we are always cornered, that we must be afraid and hide. And then you write that we don't exist, hide our feelings, and take one person (because the others do not dare to trust the estranged public) and put her up against the wall and execute her! We know several women in Berlin who are pedophiles, and when we talk at women's events there are always women who say they have the same problem.

Woman-girl relationships don't exist in the women's newspaper, papa knows. Women are mothers, men are sexual, adults are genital, children want a warm meal and a roof over their heads and a bit of love.....

Brigitta

Translated from German by Finlay.

NOTES

1. Wildwasser is a shelter for sexually abused children.
2. *Emma* is a German feminist magazine founded in 1977 which still runs to this day.
3. The *Tageszeitung* (or *taz*) is a daily German newspaper founded in Berlin in 1978 which focuses on politics and social issues.
4. Alice Schwarzer is a German journalist and feminist who founded *Emma*.
5. Günther Amendt was a German social scientist and author who mainly wrote about sexuality and drugs.
6. The *Bildzeitung* is a German tabloid newspaper published five times a week. Founded by Alex Springer in 1952, the paper has a conservative slant and most closely resembles the UK's *The Sun* in terms of style.

Cross-Generational Sex: the Radioactive, Red-Hot Potato

Susan Henderson

While nothing is known about the author, this piece is included as it shows that discussion and news about the topic of youthlove was not simply an urban or big city phenomenon, and discourse surrounding the issues was widespread. This essay appears in the May-June 1980 issue of Mainely Gay (formerly the Maine Gay Task Force Newsletter). This was not the first time the issue had appeared in the newsletter: a piece which first appeared in Weekly Gayzette was republished in Mainely Gay's January 1977 issue.

The New Yorkers are having at one another mightily over the issue of man-boy love, which, since they're too busy fighting with one another to organize a local Gay paper, is being reported round by agonizing round in *Gay Community News*. Man-boy love, or to use the more inclusive term, cross-generational sex, promises to be the hot potato to the Gay movement that Lesbianism was to feminism in the early '70's. The Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (CLGR) in New York¹ has split over the issue; *The Body Politic* was broken into by the police and two of its staff members arrested for printing an article about it. An advocacy group, the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) has been formed, and some other Movement groups won't share a platform with them, the issue has become so emotional.

Those who wish to keep the issue out of the Gay movement say that it is divisive, that it reinforces the straights' view of us as child-molesters. The same sort of thing was said in the women's movement about Lesbianism in the early '70's. Feminists found that they couldn't dodge the issue; that in fact the only way to keep the antifeminists from using Lesbianism as a weapon was to stop being afraid of the label. Similarly, the way to deal with the "child-molester" label is not to cloture the debate about cross-generational sex, but to discuss it freely and to come to some understanding, as a community, as to what our ethical standards in such matters should be.

The question cannot be dismissed as "a men's issue" either, as one school of Lesbian feminists - and some men - seem to think. This is why I prefer the term "cross-generational sex" to "man-boy love" - the latter expression deals with only half the issue. After all, young girls have gotten crushes on older women since time immemorial, as witness that classic song, "Ode to a Gym Teacher." The men do seem to be more concerned about the issue, since some of them have formed an association to deal with it, but love between generations knows no boundaries of gender.

The topic of love between generations raises many questions and no easy answers; and when one gets down to the nitty-gritty of actual sex between young people and adults, the questions are more, the answers harder, and not just highly charged, but downright radioactive. (The papers up here in the North Country have been full of the long, hot weekend at the Seabrook nuke site, and I've got radioactivity on the brain³.) All human beings are born totally ignorant and sexually immature. This is why we find the idea of having sex with kids

repulsive - they aren't physically or emotionally ready for it; they can be harmed by it. But at what age does one become physically or emotionally mature enough to handle sex? Twenty-one? Eighteen? Sixteen? Fifteen? Fourteen? Do we need age-of-consent laws to protect the immature from sexual advances, or are the laws against rape and assault sufficient? If we need to set an age of consent by law, what should it do? Given the disparity of power between adults and young people, do we legal adults have the right to make these decisions at all? Should the initiative not be left to those most concerned, the young people themselves?

Maine, by the way, has a somewhat complex age-of-consent law. Sexual contact with any person under the age of 14 is a class A crime if any form of coercion is used, and a class C crime if it isn't. It is also illegal for a person 18 and over to have sexual contact with a person between ages 14 and 17 if the older person is 3 or more years older than the younger person - this is also a class C crime. It is a defense if the accused "reasonably believed" the younger person to be 18.

Feminists rightly point out that, given the power that legal adults have over minors, a young person may be afraid to say "no," and there is danger that the young person will be exploited. The man-boy-love advocates reply, also rightly, that such relationships don't have to be exploitative, and that in fact they often aren't. Many times the relationship is initiated by the younger person, who has fallen in love or wants to know what sex is all about, and turn to an older and more experienced person. The Greeks, after all, built an entire educational system on this sort of relationship, and Sappho, Plato, and Socrates were some of its more famous exponents. Between the haloed images of the ancients, on one hand, and the specter of the man with the trench coat and a candy bag in the school yard on the other, there are a host of unclear-cut everyday situations. Let us take, for example, a teenage boy, thrown out of his straight family for being Gay. To survive, he hustles on the street. It is easy to condemn the man who takes advantage of his need. But what about the man, and there are apparently a fair number, who in exchange for sex, and sometimes without it, give him a home and care until he can get a steadier job. On some occasions these Good Samaritans have been ripped off or even murdered by the young men they tried to help. Who is exploiting whom?

This essay is all questions and no answers, because that is how the issue stands in my mind right now, and I think that is how it stands with the community as a whole. The questions need to be asked, and discussed; and hopefully some answers can be found. They won't go away, and the last thing we should do at this point is to cloture the debate. To continue the nuclear analogy, let us hope that the discussion will be conducted with less fissions and more fusion.

NOTES

1. The Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (CLGR) was a New York-based umbrella organization which was active from 1977-1994. The timing of this magazine suggests a reference to the March on Albany for Lesbian and Gay Rights, where CLGR withdrew endorsement of the march when they learned David Thorstad of NAMBLA would be speaking. Amusingly, Thorstad is a former member of CLGR.
3. The Seabrook Station nuclear power plant is a plant located in Seabrook, New Hampshire which was started construction in 1976. Even before construction began, residents and anti-nuclear protestors opposed the plant; it was even host to one of the largest mass arrests in history. The "long, hot weekend" that the author references is the Memorial Day weekend of 1977 in which protestors attempted to occupy the plant's construction site but were thwarted by state police and national guardsmen.

Toward a Feminist Position for Boy-Lovers

Camilla

While the author does not give her full-name, there is reason to believe that she is Camilla Decarnin AKA Mog Decarnin, lesbian sci-fi writer and critic. In a 2014 interview with sci-fi writer Will Shetterly, the author Samuel Delany speaks of how Decarnin was one of NAMBLA's female members and that she was the one who put him on their mailing list. No matter the author's true identity, their essay was published in 1983 in the sixth NAMBLA Journal.

According to David Finkelhor of the University of New Hampshire's Family Violence Research Program, it is now thought that 10% of all American girls are molested by male family members, about one percent by fathers or stepfathers.¹ (My own experience in talking with women convinces me that the incidence of rape by the fathers/stepfathers is far higher than that. It should be noted that in these incest situations, molestation most frequently includes sexual intercourse.) Over half of these cases involve physical force as well as verbal coercion. In 40% of all cases, rape is repeated rather than a single event, typically starting when the child is 10 or 11 years old. Outside the home, another 10% of all girls are also sexually attacked or harassed in various ways, from exhibitionism to rape. But the majority of men who rape girls do so at home. Most of these assailants are not pedophiles. Their behavior is based upon accessibility rather than sexual preference. The home thus becomes a trap where daughters are regarded as a sexual preserve, sometimes one daughter after another being utilized as older ones escape by running away or marrying.

What does it mean that one-fifth of all American women had unwanted, unpleasant sexual contact as children? Rape is only one easily identifiable extreme of a basic approach to women and to sex. It is important to grasp that even exhibitionism, to take another form of nonconsensual sexual involvement, can be traumatic, because exhibitionists (not all, of course) perform in a very hostile, aggressive manner, sometimes to such an extent that it is impossible to distinguish between exhibitionism and an intent to attack except by context, e.g., an isolated location versus the very public locations many exhibitionists prefer. It's easy to dismiss such experiences if they've never happened to you, especially with the widespread acceptance of the myth of these men's passivity. They may be "passive" compared to rapists, but that still leaves room for a lot of threatening, abusive behavior. Half the women I know had at least one experience like this as a child or teenager; few reported it at the time, out of embarrassment. Few would define it as "molestation," but many experienced it as very frightening, an unexpected attack by an adult upon a child. While a single such experience is unlikely to damage a child's personality, it will undoubtedly contribute to that child's perception of men as dangerous and irrational, a deeply rooted perception in almost all women.

Male Smugness on Sex

It is not a perception that comes out of thin air. Having lived a lifetime as a woman, I become extremely impatient with instances of male smugness about sex issues. In the Summer, 1980

*Semiotext(e)*², NAMBLA spokesperson David Thorstad said, "Women who know nothing at all about man/boy love, and very little about male sexuality, should keep quiet and learn from those of us who do know what we're talking about. The erect cock is not a weapon of torture, but an instrument of pleasure." Much as Thorstad has contributed to the general good and understanding of some areas of human sexuality, this remark is unfortunately all too representative of the entirely subjective approach of their sex acts men are encouraged to adopt. It is also nonsense. The erect cock has been a weapon of torture to women, and often to children, throughout history. This is a perspective men bluntly reject as beside the point, an exaggeration, the view of a few fanatics, because it is not the way men see themselves. But in a "civilized" society in which one out of three women will be raped by men at some point in their lives, and in which the threat of attack is a perpetual burden and limitation on all women, such a statement is not merely untrue, but downright bizarre. Rapists don't rape with their elbows, they use their cocks. And rapists are average guys. Nothing psychologically abnormal can be found in most of them because in a patriarchy, *rape is an act that fits in with the average guy's psyche just fine*. Even leaving a generous margin for the repeater, and the genuinely deviant "sex maniac" of song and story, it seems logical to suppose that if one-third of all American women get raped, at least one-fifth of all American men have raped women. How many men understand this depressingly basic aspect of "male sexuality" - that is to say, male acculturation? Very few, judged by the indignant protestations when it is suggested that male sexual behavior is not all that it should be.

Women definitely do not know all there is to know about male sexuality, but neither do men. Telling women to just shut up about what we know is certainly one ancient and respected way of dealing with male image problems. But it is not good enough for me and not for NAMBLA. Women should listen to boy-lovers. And boy-lovers should listen to women. One of the most important things a man can learn about his society is that his experience is only half the story. Women's lives are totally different from men's. We live with the knowledge that at any moment any male stranger (or worse, acquaintance) may assert his culture-given rights over all women by harassment or physical aggression. A city woman counts herself lucky if the day passes without some form of street hassle. This is a way of life men cannot even conceive of unless they themselves are targets for street abuse, for example if they are black or obviously gay. Even then men may be left alone out of fear of retaliation, and men have retreats - ghettos - where they can expect to walk around largely unmolested by whites or straights. There are no female ghettos. We live our whole lives in occupied territory. The effect on women's self-image, world view and behavior is profound; and so is the effect on men, accustomed to a universe in which over half the adult population is wary and comparatively deferential in their presence.

A Wide Cultural Gap

It's hard to know where one should start in trying to communicate a cultural gap most of us acknowledge superficially without any real concept of its depth or breadth. Remember how it felt to be dependent as a child - imagine what it would feel like to be told and trained that that dependence was to be your natural life-long state; that you could do nothing for yourself, ever, but must wait for a real adult - *i.e.*, a man - to do it for you, and pass the proceeds of his work, the largesse of his approval, on to you second-hand. Imagine learning to say "no" effectively when you have been told all your life in a thousand ways that your will is meaningless, and expressing it *the* cardinal sin; imagine learning, for that matter, to say "yes." Many children learn that they must please adults first and foremost; but imagine being taught that this is your life work. You will never grow up; your job will be to please the grown-up in your life, who

will make the decisions about where you will live and how, whether you may take a job in addition to your household chores for room and board, even what kind of food you will eat. And women are, of course, encouraged to look as young as possible, and may be called "girl" to their dying day. It shouldn't be surprising if feminists and other women identify strongly with children, distrust "the grown-ups" - men - and disbelieve sudden stories of children being capable of making their own decisions. This certainly isn't the story they've gotten all their lives from the patriarchy, and due to the almost inconceivably deep cultural split between males and females, it definitely is not their experience of childhood, especially of childhood interactions with men. I can't think how to get across to men how utterly helpless and victimized girls are *taught* to be, even though some rebel. It's in your "girl" costume: useless for anything but sitting still. It's in all your role models: they constantly act placatory and the most frequent activity they undertake on TV is to scream while being attacked. It's in your school: girls are "counseled" persistently into the least demanding (read least prestigious) careers possible. Things are beginning to change, but slowly. Most girls are still raised to feel guilty at the slightest expression of self-will.

And most boys are still raised to think that's good and proper, to step right into the role of grown-up (child molester?) in a relationship with a woman. The policing that women help perform with regard to man/boy love is only a shadow of the policing of women's lives still automatically performed by the high percentage of violent, abusive, or merely contemptuous or condescending men produced by patriarchy. It is this experience of men from which women attempt to protect children. The female cultural view of vast unequal power, remember, is not just a childhood attitude women stick to from docility or convention; it is reinforced throughout our lives upon our individual persons by individual males. No social sanctions such as those against women can be maintained without force: formal, as in police violence against the early suffragettes and modern-day lesbians, poor women and prostitutes in the U.S., and legal death penalties for female extramarital sex throughout the Middle East today, but even more importantly, informal and institutionalized, accepted as in the day-to-day bullying of women. It is not so much that sanctions against women are more subtle than those against boy-lovers, but rather that they are so accepted and common as to attract no notice, and that in America they are now enforced more by vigilantes than by the courts.

Pedophilia vs. Sexual Abuse

It is this "normal, everyday, standard" *accepted* position of women, *not* pedophilia, which is the root and cause of sexual abuse of girls, and this should be of crucial importance to NAMBLA's analysis. Pedophilia is rare. Sexual abuse of girls is appallingly common. In the abuse scenario, the man simply sees the girl as a smaller, less powerful version of the woman he has been brought up to expect access to and power over. He is not sexually drawn to her because she is a child; she is simply a female within his reach who cannot reject him. The pedophile, on the other hand, is sexually and romantically attracted to children. One would expect, given these two dynamics, very different approaches to relations with children. The abusive adult would care very little about the child's feelings towards him. The pedophile, though, would be as anxious as age-peer lovers are not to arouse disgust, anger, fear, or any other negative feeling. It would be an interesting distinction to apply in whatever research is going on. Even allowing for the obvious case of overlap in the two categories various degrees of caring incest, for instance, and those adults who are decidedly pedophilic, yet who coerce, injure, or murder children, analogous to heterosexual men who attack women, I suspect that a clearly dichotomous pattern would emerge. Due to the extreme penalties that attach to active pedophile relationships in the U.S., research that would include representative members of good

relationships (necessarily secret) probably cannot be done here, so results will invariably be skewed toward bizarre or harmful behavior.

One way to correct for this skew might be to approach a research project with the child's point of view in mind. Under categories of incestuous and non-incestuous events, cases should be divided into two further categories, depending on whether the child's feelings about the relations were primarily negative or primarily positive. In this way some clarity might emerge on two divergent types of child-adult sex, even though the actual numbers of examples would still be heavily weighted, toward the police-psychiatric axis, what might be called the intervention bias. Complaints by children are a major initiating step in bring child-adult sex to the attention of authorities, though police and laws tend more and more toward harassment of non-complaining sexually active youths. But while intervention mechanisms such as police entrapment bring to light some consensual relationships, it must be assumed that the majority of relationships that the child finds pleasurable and rewarding go unrecorded. Clarence Osborne's arrest and immediate suicide at age 61 brought to light carefully kept records of relations with 2,500 boys, not one of whom ever complained. All of his partners who were later interviewed as adults are said to have spoken of him with affection.³ While the number of his relationships is unusual, it does give some indication of how likely it is for pleasant child-adult sex to go unnoticed by a society that forces it to remain secretive. From research available today, I predict that another dichotomous pattern would also emerge, showing boys having a far higher percentage of pleasant sex than girls. Correctly analyzing the interrelationship of these two dichotomies is one contribution an educated NAMBLA might make to the understanding of sexual dynamics.

Man-Boy and Man-Girl Relationships

One particularly knotty aspect of pedophile-child relations is the undeniable fact that in some cases sexual approaches or activity perceived by the pedophile as caring and good are perceived by the child as abusive or unpleasant. Some of this discrepancy is the result of the insensitivity to others men are allowed to grow up with. Due to their position at the top of the power hierarchy, men as a class are not able to relate well to feelings of severe powerlessness and to the indirect means of the communication the powerless often employ to avoid that direct assertion of will for which they have been routinely punished. Men feel relatively powerful in society and so tend to suppose that children share that feeling. The truth lies in the middle, with boys tending to feel much more powerful than women suppose, but girls tending to feel much more powerless than men suppose. This is also generally true of eagerness for sex, due to the differing results of sexual activity and intimacy for boys and girls, and the key role of assertiveness in good sex. Thus man/girl sex relations present the greatest possibilities for misunderstanding that would lead to unintentional power abuse. These relationships are also at a disadvantage in that men are carefully taught to discount female statements of all types. The relevant archetype here has to be Freud, who, rather than accept the threat of damage to his male complacency from case after case of young girls who reported being assaulted by men, developed the ingenious ideas of female hysteria, penis envy, and the female desire to be raped. Such a pathological level of denial, prevalent as it is in half the population, cannot but have severe effects on all human communication and especially on sexual expectations. Boy-lovers are not immune; confronted with the blatant case of the kidnapping of Steven Stayner⁴, NAMBLA printed an article which, to my mind, attempted to present an unflattering view of Stayner's character.⁵

Then too, many men remain ignorant of basic physiological facts and believe that any genital contact must be physically pleasurable to anyone. In addition, sensations prior to

orgasm can be so tender and loving that it is difficult to remember that they are purely *subjective* - that is, there is an illusion that such strong feelings must be shared by his partner, when in fact the partner may be having an entirely different experience. Men are certainly not alone in failure to distinguish between their own feelings and those of others, but their upbringing has left them particularly ill-equipped to recognize and respond to signals of discomfort from others. Men have not generally been brought up to take care of other people's feelings.

Another factor in child-adult relations is that most children have not yet had a chance to reject the sex-negative training they have been subjected to, which leaves any sexual topic or activity laden with guilt and fear. However, since no one expects an overnight rearrangement of our sexual mores, and since a child's perception of a sexual contact must be the bottom line if anyone is to take seriously the avowed benign intent of pedophile activity, pedophiles must accept an extra-ordinary responsibility for educating themselves about children, knowing each individual, and understanding the dynamics of both positive *and* negative child-adult sex experiences.

Learning: From Oneself and Others

To this end, men must become aware of their own history. They must fill in those profound gaps in their understanding of the world which arises from the master/slave relationships they have maintained toward women and children since the beginning of recorded history. This is not a simple task but neither is it impossible, particularly with the wealth of information available to men today. If it is hard to accept the view of one's own oppressive behavior as seen from beneath, it is also a million times more rewarding to open up to another universe of perceptions than to close down on one's own sensibilities in order to remain "comfortable." And in any case the result of this latter strategy is never comfort but only a slow stifling. Risk is vital to human growth; there is no expansion without openness, no openness without vulnerability. As long as men close up like mimosa leaves at the first hint of criticism or unpleasantness, vast realms of knowledge and experience, love, pleasure, and understanding will also be closed - not closed *to* them, but closed out *by* them. Male pedophiles have valuable knowledge that is unthinkingly rejected by society. They must grasp the concept of similar, and even greater, bodies of knowledge they themselves reject. If bonding with other freedom fighters is essential to NAMBLA's survival as a group, it is also essential on a personal level - the level at which political change really occurs.

A very little homework would go far toward cementing impressions of NAMBLA as a group conscious of parallel struggles and in solidarity with them. Child molestation is an issue crucial to NAMBLA, yet how many members bother to inform themselves on it? It is no more a myth than any other forms of child abuse epidemic in America, but there is a tendency in NAMBLA to suggest that most child molestation figures are explained by police agency misrepresentation of consensual relationships. That is flatly not the case. Nor is it sufficient to keep repeating that most molestation is heterosexual, as if that automatically rendered it irrelevant to NAMBLA.

To understand any man's position in this society it is essential to look at and understand the position of women and girls. It is inescapable that what some women are saying about NAMBLA is simply what the patriarchy has taught them: not only its false lessons about the feebleness and mindlessness of children and the harmful nature of sex per se (though make no mistake, sex is arranged to be harmful to women under this system), but its true lessons of *experience* of the violence, selfishness and callousness - the excess of willfulness - inculcated by it in men. The woman-hating culture does not pass over men who love boys. Ninety-nine male boy-lovers out of a hundred can read *The Asbestos Diary* and simply *not notice* its misogyny⁶ - a

feat on par with not noticing a brontosaurus in your backyard. This is what growing up under patriarchy does to *all* men's perceptions. Male boy-lovers, just like other men, participate in preferential employment, promotion, education, the emotional security of belonging to a superior caste, and the thousand little advantages (clothes not specifically designed to self-destruct, for instance) given to them in the male-oriented culture. Men who want to disclaim responsibility for the system that benefits them so materially cannot do so through peevish claims of innocence that sound all too like the protests of millions of WWII Germans who never personally harmed a Jew. The only way to be innocent of this system is to disavow it; to declare open hostility to a concept of human property, the emotional traffic in women and girls that continues in all our minds, in all our crass or subtle actions and attitudes. "But what," asks the eternal liberal, "can we do? Sexism isn't NAMBLA's issue; we don't have enough resources to include anything so vast in our central area of interest." Perfectly true. But within our limited scope several very undemanding courses of action could be implemented. Some can be actions of forbearance, requiring no investment beyond a bit of teeth-grinding.

For example I would like to hear a lot less bitching about "the feminists" and see evidence of a lot more listening. I would also like to see a lot more acknowledgement - without that unfortunate note of extolling the good niggers as opposed to "those awful feminists" - of the many prominent feminist women who publicly support boy-lovers. (I can think of half a dozen without even trying - can you?) There is an upsurge of interest in child sexual abuse issues within NAMBLA which I would like to see fostered; it is much easier to show you are not doing something if you know what that thing actually is, and the average NAMBLA member's *tabula rasa* state on the subject of abuse makes us vulnerable to ludicrous errors and non-comprehension of major points when we try to debate it. I would like to think boy-lovers could pick up from NAMBLA at least the rudiment of improved attitudes toward women to share with their younger friends. Above all, I would like to see a constant awareness that when feminists distrust NAMBLA they do so not out of some arbitrary, causeless "man-hating" fixation⁷, but out of a long and bitter history of experience with men's treatment of female children and female adults. Until this distrust is seen as reasonable and valid it cannot be met in a radical manner.

I want to see, in short, an end to the system's success in pitting one abused group against another, a success measured every bit as much in NAMBLA's hostility to "the feminists" as in *some* feminists' hostility to NAMBLA. When we see prisoners beating up other prisoners at the instigation of authorities, we know who to blame. When we see women, feminists, gays hastening to help batter NAMBLA with legal sanctions and media assault, we must be equally alert to the actual power behind the attack, never losing one crucial fact: that the government and media are still firmly in the control of rich straight men. And that they love to loom down and see us skirmishing with each other around the base of their monolithic structure. If we throw our emotional dynamite in their direction for a change, we just might bring the whole damn thing crashing down - or at least take a few healthy chips out of its foundation. To engage in any "she hit me first" dilly-dallying in this process is only to mimic the anti-disarmament tactics we all know and love on the global level. And if we're going to stop *that* one, we have no time to trail along in their footsteps. We are on the side of life against the forces of death, and all our combined knowledge and good will are going to be needed to come out of this struggle alive.

NOTES

1. Leonard H. Gross (ed.), *The Parents' Guide to Teenagers* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1981)
2. Sylvere Lotringer (ed.), *Loving Boys* (Semiotext(e) Special Intervention Series 2, 1980)

3. "'As a Community, We Are Terrified of Paedophilia': An Interview with Author Paul Wilson," *Gay Community News* (Boston, Massachusetts), Vol. 3, No. 7 (September, 1981); and John Edgar, "Paedophilia: Where to from Here?" *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (February, 1982)
4. Steven Stayner is an American boy who was kidnapped in Merced, California at age 7 by previously convicted child molester Kenneth Parnell, who held him 200 miles away in Mendocino County. Stayner returned to his family after he had escaped and was trying to return Timothy White, another of Parnell's victims, to his own family.
5. *NAMBLA News*, No. 4 (Dec. 1980/Jan. 1981), p. 14
6. Casimir Dukahz, *The Asbestos Diaries* (New York: Oliver Layton Press, 1966). The fictionalized diary of a boy-lover and his sexual exploits, the book contains several passages which could easily be read as misogynistic, such as Casimir calling women's genitals "that Fascist flytrap some women have between their raddled thighs" and his statement that "women in general are nice to have around if only to throw things at, to sic the dog on or to confirm one's worst suspicions."
7. Gene D., "Nuances," *NAMBLA Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 8 (October, 1982), p. 6

Our Sexuality, Ourselves: Power and Empowerment

Cindy Patton

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When I set out to write this review, I had no idea of the number of related issues that would appear along the way. I chose to discuss man/boy love because I felt it was an issue that was needlessly dividing people and because I believed the great interest in the subject grew out of a sincere desire to understand all of the ramifications of sexuality. I soon realized that we have no good vocabulary for discussing sexuality and that we want an answer, now. I found that I had to limit my discussion to what I saw as the important question for the gay and lesbian and feminist movements at this time -- sexuality and power. I personally feel that the differences between men's and women's sexuality, and lesbian/gay and hetero sexuality pose such important questions about socialization, repression, and power that relationships between men and girls should be treated separately. The purpose of this book and this review is to discuss the nature of man/boy love and how it fits into the current political climate.

The topic of man/boy love has come under scrutiny recently by feminists, pro-feminist leftist men, the Christian right, politicized m/bl supporters, and the men and boys themselves. The images tossed around range from huge cocks descending viciously on unsuspecting adolescent anuses, to kindly bespectacled men cuddling tousled-haired boys in front of a tv (that's television). I'm tempted to say "and somewhere in between lies the truth." But that would be a further lie, and one which neatly duplicates the logic which has distorted the discussion of sexuality for our whole lives. Sexual practices and feelings are not monolithic, diametrically opposed, or cast on a continuum. The meaning of particular acts becomes hopelessly obscured in the broader landscape of "sexuality," that black hole of our feelings, fantasies, and desires that we are only beginning to explore. The dynamic between individuals in a particular relationship is only part of a complex web of relationships; power exists relative to other powers, including social, historical, psychological, and physical power.

Unlike other discussions that have been cast into the political arena, we cannot escape the fact that discussing someone else's sexuality requires exposing some of our own. It is important to understand the restrictions and hurt we have put on ourselves by striving to define a "correct" sexuality and sexual practice that gets rid of the pain we have all experienced in this culture. It is essential to remember, as we embark on our pointy-headed discussions of sexuality, that we are talking about real human beings, right now. Wishing that we could be free from sexual expressions and attitudes that we inherited from our culture will not make our

troublesome sexuality go away. We can legitimately discuss the quality of our relationships in order to combat the "isms" we have identified as wrong in our analysis. But we must keep foremost in our minds that our very sexuality has been shaped by the society we have taken it upon ourselves to criticize. We do not leave our political meetings and go to bed (or to the bushes, or johns, or wherever) to a world that is magically free from the dynamics of class, color, age, power, etc. Having discussed some of the problems of understanding sexuality, I want to focus on man/boy love. But because I believe this discussion is only a part of a larger, essential discussion of sexuality, I will return to these problems again.

The Age Taboo: Gay Male Sexuality, Power and Consent, represents an excellent collection of view-points. What the collection lacks is a good feminist analysis that critically incorporates the radical new ideas of sexuality. [Daniel] Tsang also fails to adequately place the various arguments in the broader context of sexual politics. The book as a whole, while informative, is very somber and lifeless. The only time we get a sense of the joy of these relationships is in the interviews with the boys. It is a shame that all of the discussions of man/boy love are serious and project a sense that we are embarking on dangerous territory - it becomes all too easy to overlook the simple fact that these men and boys are enjoying each other's company. We are provided with a body of material that explores man/boy love in a political context, which will, hopefully, move the debate past the level of vitriolic attack and blind defense, and on to a level where the real issues may be sorted out.

The book examines consent primarily in terms of the age of consent laws, the extent to which they are differentially enforced (gay men are arrested for sex with boys far out of proportion to hetero men's arrests for sex with girls), and the malleability of the actual age of consent (in the Puritan America, the age of consent for girls was 10, there was no age of consent for boys). While changing the age of consent laws is probably essential for the ultimate liberation of children, focusing on this issue obscures the real issue of power.

A good, informed analysis of power in our relationships with each other and society is essential to any movement for social change. A lot of time and energy is spent discussing who has power over whom in sexual relationships with little attention to kinds of power and networks of power. Many of us assume that because men are bigger, richer, and more socially mobile than boys that they have power over them. This is an insult to the intelligence and ability of boys as well as a diversion from the fact that these men are often using their social power to liberate boys from oppressive homes that stifle their sexual expression. Time and again, men have expressed fondness and appreciation for the men who helped them express their gayness when they were boys and their only other frame of reference was their homophobic parents. Women, too, almost invariably point to a gym teacher, youth group leader, or older female relative upon whom they attached their lesbian fantasies, and, in some cases, with whom they actually developed sexual relationships. It is the power of gay adults to give support (and sometimes sex) to gay youths that gets the Moral Majority up in arms. To them, there is no difference between an avowed boy lover, and a gay teacher. While I do not want to deny that adults have social, psychological, and, in some cases, physical power (especially in the case of parents, whose beating of their children has only recently been considered assault), but, based on my discussions with a number of gay men, I do not think that boy lovers often abuse that power. The real abuse goes on in the family, an institution that some feminists who criticize boy lovers conveniently forget is intrinsically under attack in their own analysis.

In discussing man/boy love with several patient friends, one man related to me his experience as a boy. He was quite shaken (still) by the extent to which he had destroyed a man's life by "telling on him," and the guilt from this experience is the enduring emotion - not the joy, or wonder, or excitement at discovering the nature of his sexuality. He had "told on" the man

he was becoming involved with because the man had wanted more than the boy was ready to give. Frightened of confronting the man, and raised to obey adults, the boy spent weeks worrying, then finally told his parents. What became clear, and troubling, to me was not that the man had such a great potential for setting the schedule of intimacy with the boy, but the fact that the boy's only recourse was to turn to an even more authoritarian power - his parents - in order to sort out what he wanted to do. The boy had no power; the adults settled the whole situation. Power is a double-edged sword, it gives and takes with one swipe. But society, and the great weight of its mores, has far more power than any individual, especially any individual who is conducting his/her sexual life outside of the prescribed arena.

When we discuss power in any relationship, we must accept the reality that people always have differing levels of different kinds of power. Feminists have tended to accept the definitions of power as society gives them, i.e., any thing men have is powerful. Actually, there are many kinds of power that are not valued by society, and which we, therefore, tend not to think about or exercise. The myth of power is that some have "it" and everyone else is powerless. Society use that myth to keep us from fighting back. We need to challenge that myth by empowering people, creating alternatives that help them use the power they have - women and kids can leave home, if we give them the support and somewhere to go; we can fight back against people who attack us on the street, if we will learn how to fight and organize safety patrols; people will leave unfair or unworkable relationships, if we give them social options and break-down the sanctity of "coupling."

On an individual level, to say that the man has the power over the boy, or the "top" has the power over the "bottom," or the upper class person has the power over the poor person, does not do justice to the positive sharing of power that is often a part of these relationships. In relationships where two people start out "equal," there is probably less of the learning and discovery of a whole different view of the world that takes place in relationships between people who are substantially different. Why should we think of man/boy lovers any differently?

It is clear (just because Freud said it, that doesn't make it a lie) that our sexuality begins developing early and has the potential to be expressed in an enormous number of forms. But it is society (as a cursory look at cross-cultural studies will show) that defines the meaning of sexual practice and streamlines sexual development to fit into boxes that support social needs. One might justifiably ask whether capitalist society represses adolescent sexuality precisely because it is this sexuality that is most likely to be diverse in its object and un-assuming about the "morality" of what they are doing. It is, then, by being told what we ought not to do that we finally arrive at the narrow space of what we should or can do. Adults that do anything else reap psychic penalties, or if caught, imprisonment.

Specific sexual practices serve different social functions - butt-fucking, for example, serves as an initiation rite in some cultures; as a means of controlling prisoners in others (our own for example); and as mere sexual enjoyment in others. One must ask first, what group of people are we talking about, what do they do, and what does it mean for them? As I tried to write this article, I became aware of my own need to know what it is men and boys do together. I was troubled, because I dismiss that question as stupid when it is asked of me, as a lesbian. But at the same time, I felt that my ideas of what this type of relationship might consist of had come either from the straight press or from NAMBLA statements.

Finally, I just marched up to some people and proposed the question. What I got in reply is what I have also responded to the same question when it was directed at me - lots of very different things. There are probably very few men who would even suggest anality to a boy; one man I spoke to said a boy would have to convince a man to engage in anal intercourse.

Some men merely "wrestle" with boys and engage in little more affectionate expression of their sexual feelings than the average scoutmaster. (Indeed, the many same-sex institutions for adult/child relating deserve a hell of a lot more scrutiny than anyone has given them.) Much more common is cocksucking by the men (and this, when you actually read the court cases, is what most men are arrested for, though the media tries to put over very different images). But to analyze the particular acts does little more than break myths, and actually obscures the many other aspects of men's relationships with boys. In most cases, the men take the boys out into society, to movies, plays, operas in some circles, and generally provide for them a caring relationship. Tom Reeves often discusses his relationships with lower class boys in Baltimore (with no analysis of class save a rather patronizing hint that these wonderful boys are free from cultural inhibitions about sex) but in a way that idealizes these relationships and makes them seem as unreal as those highly-touted, politically correct dyke monogamies.

Fortunately, others who are not so close to the subject of man/boy love have analyzed the political climate that is provoking the current attack on man/boy lovers. Gayle Rubin has raised questions about giving the state power over sex when "the media and the police betray an incapacity to distinguish between rape and consent, lovers and mobsters, children of five and 'children' of seventeen."¹ The evidence seems strong that the resurgent right (and quite possibly some of the tactically militant feminists who oppose pornography) has resulted in an attack on feminists and lesbians and gays, by way of sex and pornography laws. NOW² has come out against "pederasty" and the National Lawyers' Guild has (in carefully worded language that is, I think, actually much more supportive than some have claimed) more or less absolved themselves of responsibility for defending man/boy lovers.

A great deal of debate has centered around how we as a movement (actually several movements -- socialist, gay, women's) are going to respond to the attack on man/boy lovers and the phantasmagoric "kiddie porn" industry. The lesbian and gay movements (and I hope the others will develop parallel analysis) cannot abandon people with non-"vanilla" sexual expressions. To the resurgent right, boy lovers are no different than the rest of us - we all "recruit" - and our crime is simply being queer. It is absolutely essential to be clear that when the state cracks down on kiddie porn, boy lovers, s/m folks, etc., that they are not attacking special brands of deviant sexuality - they are attacking non-reproductive sex in total. They are smart enough to know that they have to pick us off one at a time; we have to be smart enough to realize that homosexuality - in a business suit, or not - will never be respectable or acceptable to the vast majority of people as they live and think today.

When I started writing this, I imagined that I might write the statement on man/boy love to date (silly me!). Instead, I find myself wishing more information were available. If we are serious about understanding childhood and adult sexuality, we must talk to men and boys who love each other, honestly remember our own desires as children, and most importantly, talk to the kids. No one seems to want to go to them - are we afraid of their warm, open sexuality? or are we still so ageist that we don't think they'll have anything important to say? We might also talk to the men who are in prison for sex with boys and find out about the punishment they suffer -- ridicule, rape, "protective" solitary confinement. Repressive society's views of "criminals" (ie., us) is never so clear as it is in prison.

The issues behind man/boy love are not, in the end, whether we will support them or not, but rather, can we stand to look closely at our own sexuality. We were once those same children, languishing in our queerness in families that did not want us to be sexual. Can we extend our analysis and demand a child's right to be free enough to make informed sexual decisions? Can we get over our own societally induced fear of childhood sexuality? We can make no radical changes in the terms of our adult sexuality until we can free children from the years of

pressure to de-sexualize and straight-sexualize them, and this should be the turf for our debate. How we empower people will determine how we deal with power in our relationship to each other and society. Race, class, age, any difference will take on new meaning when the people who have been powerless finally get power. Until then, things ain't gonna be easy, but we need so desperately to learn from each other, that at least we have to try.

NOTES

1. Gayle Rubin, "Sexual Politics, the New Right, and the Sexual Fringe," *Leaping Lesbians*, February 1978. This article is printed in full starting on page 1 of this anthology.
2. The National Organization for Women (NOW) is an American feminist organization which was founded in 1966 and concerned with anti-discrimination, abortion, sexuality, and the Equal Rights Amendment (a proposed amendment to the US Constitution designed to guarantee equal legal rights regardless of sex).

Can We Talk?: Censorship, Pedophilia, and Panic

Yasmin Nair

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Recently, Haworth Press cancelled its anthology *Same-Sex Desire and Love in Greco-Roman Antiquity and in the Classical Tradition of the West*, edited by Beert C. Verstraete and Vernon Provencal. According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*¹, the decision came after the press received 20 letters of complaint from readers of worldnetdaily.com (WND)². This extreme right-wing Web site routinely condemns homosexuality and supports reparative therapy. Focusing on Dr. Bruce Rind's "Pederasty: An Integration of Cross-Cultural, Cross-Species, and Empirical Data," WND, on the strength of a 187-word abstract, implied that Rind was endorsing "rampant child molestation." The press succumbed to the sensationalistic and willful misrepresentation of the book, instead of standing by the research of scholars who have cumulatively written about sexuality for decades.

Haworth will now publish the volume without Rind's essay, which is to appear in *The Journal of Homosexuality*, along with responses to the controversy. On the face of it, this seems like a scholarly tempest in a teacup, and it's easy to laugh off WND as the misbegotten intellectual progeny of Rush Limbaugh and Laura Schlessinger³. But this issue has serious ramifications for our ability to have an honest discussion about children and sexuality and about sex, period. Haworth's initial and craven capitulation and the firestorm it set off gives us the opportunity to revisit the history of terms like "sexual abuse" and "pedophilia" that have been thrown around.

Pederasty and pedophilia have been topics of debate in works about gay and straight history, given long-standing traditions of intergenerational sex between and among men and women. The right uses that fact to condemn all queers, particularly gay men, as predators of children. Haworth vice president Kathryn Rutz furthered the incendiary conflation of terms: "For the record, we do not in any way support or endorse the practice of pedophilia, pederasty, or any form of child abuse."⁴ To study the historical import of pedophilia or pederasty is not the same as practicing child abuse.

Some of that history involves Rind's earlier work. In a 1998 article, he and co-authors argued for a re-evaluation of the term "child sexual abuse" (CSA)⁵. They acknowledged the circumstances in which sexual encounters between children and adults might indeed be harmful and abusive. But they also reported that many of their subjects experienced sex with adults as positive experiences. In part, Rind et. al. sought to initiate a discussion about the concept of the "child," a term that suffers from extreme malleability. Depending on the state and the circumstances, the legal age of a "child" varies enormously and that can have serious

consequences for anyone suspected of sexual relations with or desire for "underage" people.

Images of children's bodies are fraught with contradictions. It's apparently all right for us to watch toddlers wiggle and twirl as mini-adults at pageants and talent shows. But anyone who takes a picture of their children naked in the tub (imagine, naked, while bathing!) and tries to develop it at a photo store stands a good chance of being jailed and separated from them forever. That kind of hypocrisy and hysteria led to Rind's essay becoming the focus of a campaign led by conservative groups like NARTH (National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality) and the Family Research Council. The uproar led to Congress's censure of the essay despite an independent academic panel's support of the methodology used. Haworth showed a similar willingness to dismiss scholarly work at the instigation of those who are least qualified to judge it. And they legitimized the ravings of those who have a vested interest in literally eradicating homosexuality.

There remains, of course, the emotional resonance of terms and concepts like CSA, especially for those who have actually experienced physical and sexual abuse as children. Combine that with the fact that the appearance of standing up for children is the easiest way for politicians to get votes and you have the heady sensationalistic brew that is the extreme paranoia around children's sexuality.

Feminism helped to end the silence around topics like incest and sexual abuse, making it easier for people to speak out. Today, the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction to the extent that we care less about protecting children and more about increasing the scope of the prison industrial system so that it effectively forms a virtual jail around those convicted as "sex offenders." Bill Andriette points out that those convicted become "guinea pigs for technologies of biometric and electronic surveillance-and-tracking that increasingly, under the guise of fighting terror, are rolled out for everyone."⁶

Anyone labeled a sex offender, pedophile, or pederast is sentenced to a lifetime of surveillance, barred from many occupations, and from living where they choose. This does not reduce the sexual coercion of children behind closed doors by relatives and family, and it prevents us from any meaningful discussion about consent. The stigmatization of groups like NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Love Association) which have asked for conversations about the age of consent means that we drive forms of desire inwards and underground.

We fail to remember that someone who knows beforehand that their desire, legitimate or not, will cause them to lose everything is more likely to act upon it with a desperate sense that they have, in a sense, nothing to lose. Eventually, those who do suffer from sexual damage have a lot to lose as well. A system that sees "predators" as beyond repair and thrusts them to the outermost regions of society also deeply pathologizes the "victims." We assume that those who experience abuse are forever damaged individuals and that we must exact the greatest revenge on their behalf.

Years ago, a woman matter-of-factly told me and others about the sexual coercion she endured in nearly every one of her foster homes. But whenever someone asked what she would have changed about her life, her response was "Nothing." Because, as she put it, she wouldn't be who she was without what happened — and she rather liked herself. That's not to claim that children/adults should experience sexual abuse as a rite of passage or as a life-affirming experience. But it does illustrate that we need to move beyond the monolithic idea that people respond in exactly the same way to abuse, however we define it. The conflation of pedophilia and pederasty with child molestation prevents us from considering a range of ways of responses and effects of sex between adults.

Why should queers worry about either the Haworth issue or those punished for sex with "minors" (the term is as malleable as "child")? The contemporary "gay movement" insists that

gays are second-class citizens because they cannot marry. But it has nothing to say about the gay and straight men who are routinely and unfairly apprehended for public sex. It ignores the fact that such surveillance and that of "sex offenders" is also a policing of gay desire. As Andriette points out, a "sex offender" on parole can be put back in jail just for reading *Best Gay Short Stories*. We are determined to prove that we are not only as good as straight parents and spouses but infinitely better. To that end, we've repudiated our sexuality and anything that hints of "deviant" sexual practices.

But how long can we carry the burden of exceptionalism? If there is ever a story about gay incest, or gay child abuse, the backlash will guarantee that we lose every one of our supposed gains and we will have hung everything on the tenuous concept of the "equality" of marriage rights. Gay marriage proponents argue that marriage will guarantee our rights to adopt and keep children. Really? Straight parents have their children taken away all the time, for the simplest acts like photographing their children in the nude. We may lose a lot more if we don't speak up for the rights of those most vulnerable amongst us.

The gay community's silence around the Haworth press issue repudiates or at least rewrites sexual history. It's not just that gay history has recorded intergenerational sex as a formative social influence. Queers know that our understanding of sexual and gender identity comes about through a complicated nexus of secrecy and knowledge, and in affiliations with people who are sometimes simultaneously our intellectual and sexual mentors.

But the problem with the current discussion around "adult-child" relationships is that we are conditioned to think that sex with an older person is traumatic. We talk more about sex these days and mistakenly believe that talking about the sex lives of desperate housewives or queer fashionistas means that we think about sex in more interesting ways, but the truth is the opposite. The more we discuss sex, the less we think and talk out loud about complicated questions about power and consent, secrecy and knowledge.

We're dealing with questions about children's sexuality by making them paradoxically invisible in our representations of them. We image them as sexless creatures of fantasy, with pixelated blue patches where their genitals should be. Conversations about children's sexual bodies and lives may be more difficult than censoring thought and speech and throwing people in jail for the rest of their lives, but they're absolutely necessary if we want to do more than reiterate narratives about "trauma" and "abuse."

Haworth's decision to separate Rind's essay is unsatisfactory because it implies that his work is outside the pale of "normal" research. Even now, Haworth distances itself from its own authors by not keeping the abstracts on its Web site. Instead, these can be found on the website of International Pedophile and Child Emancipation (IPCE)⁷, an organization. Once in print, it's likely Rind's essay will be relegated to the "Special Collection" areas of libraries and that anyone asking for it might be suspected of being a potential molester. I want to read Rind's essay as part of legitimate sexual research, not divorced from it.

Ask yourself if you would like the simple privilege of talking and thinking out loud about matters which affect us so deeply. Write now to Haworth Press, objecting to its capitulation on this matter. And maybe next time, the right will hesitate to assume such victories.

NOTES

1. Davie Glenn, "Scholarly Press Cancels Book After Web Site Attacks It as a Defense of Pederasty." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 26, 2005
2. "New Book Promotes Sex With Children." *World Net Daily*, September 19, 2005
3. Rush Limbaugh and Laura Schlessinger are both American talk radio hosts and political commentators with a conservative bent.

4. Glenn, 2005
5. Rind et. al., "A Meta-Analytic Examination of Assumed Properties of Child Sexual Abuse Using College Samples." *Psychological Bulletin* 1998, Vol 124, No 1, p 22-53.
6. Bill Andriette, "Pictures at an Execution." *The Guide*, October, 2005
7. International Pedophile and Child Emancipation (or simply IPCE, the name they changed to in 1998) is a loose coalition of discussion and study groups concerned with sexual relationships between adults and minors.

