

Notes from Another Country

Notes from Another Country: Personal Reflections on a Modern Witch Hunt

Preamble

Brian Rothery

This book is produced under my name, but it has not been written by me. The post-confinement conditions, which the real author is forced to endure, make it impossible for him to publish it or attempt to publish it. These conditions demand that he reveal any pseudonyms he might use to the authorities, thus shutting off that possible avenue of publication and effectively silencing him. This is Great Britain in the year 2009.

I am therefore publishing it under my own name and making whatever provisions I can for my executors to reveal the identity of the true author should that become possible for him in his lifetime and if not after his death. Why am I doing this? Because I believe that this is one of the most important works I have ever read and it is being suppressed by the state.

The author has not asked me to do what I am doing here, so this is entirely my own idea for which I take full responsibility.

I also offer the full manuscript to any publisher with the courage to publish it. I will act as agent for the author. Meanwhile, the chapters as they are written are being published here if this appears to be the only way to get it read. I appeal to all who sympathize with what they now read to promote it as widely as possible. Google has already de-listed this web site once at the request of the IWF so time may not be on our side.

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“[T]he major enemy, the strategic adversary is fascism ... And not only historical fascism, the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini – which was able to mobilize and use the desire of the masses so effectively – but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior [sic], the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us.”

Michel Foucault, “Preface”, Deleuze and Guattari (1983) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* London, The Athlone Press, p. xiii.

“But thought is one thing, the deed is another, and the image of the deed still another: the wheel of causality does not roll between them.”

Friedrich Nietzsche, "Of the Pale Criminal", Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Introduction

To declare at the beginning of a project that one of its principal motivations is a refutation of love, a repudiation of egalitarian moralising, and that a decidedly anti-nurturing, anti-communitarian, anti-decency spirit animates it from the outset, may be to invite insurmountable hostility before it has even begun. At the very least, such a declaration means that anyone advocating it has got some explaining to do. What follows is an attempt at just that.

Whilst I will not be relying on statistical data too rigorously - what we make of facts, and in whose interests they are fashioned and promulgated, are often far more interesting than the numbers themselves - I will be attempting to advance a moral argument, and basing that argument on a melange of different influences which have, both contingently and by my own deliberations, found their way into my experience. These influences include literary, academic, clinical and polemical works but overshadowing them all is the direct personal experience of state-sanctioned terror against variant sexuality. The latter gave a new, and unwelcome, importance to all of the former, driving me to drastically re-appraise them, only this time from a radically different vantage point. Being transformed from a hard-working, highly skilled professional into a criminalised and reviled outsider overnight does tend to alter one's perspective on the world; massive, compulsory stigmatisation inevitably means that you have to leave the world you once inhabited behind - there can never be any way back to it.

Like many educated, vaguely liberal, well-paid professionals, I had little time, or cause, to radically question the institutions which effectively control and structure our lives. As an employee of the State, I reasoned that if it employed, and was largely managed by, people like I, tolerant, left-leaning liberals, then it could not be all bad. There were difficulties and dilemmas, to be sure, but the institutions themselves, education, the health service, the criminal justice system, were, despite their evident flaws, in essence sound and, anyway, could be reformed in a mature pluralistic democracy. But I was forced, against my will, to see that genteel, liberal mores become wholly unsustainable when the very same State that I had supposed to be basically benevolent and neutral can effortlessly smash ordinary people's lives to pieces - including my own and those of many thousands of others. This might be beginning to sound like melodramatic exaggeration or, at least, sour grapes, and it would not be untrue to admit that I did (and do) feel exceedingly angry about it. A moral argument founded on hate and rage is liable to lose even more votes. And yet, as I argue in what follows, it is precisely the virtues of hate - properly disciplined, politically intelligent hate - which may provide the only realistic means of overthrowing the dictatorship of a suffocating, joyless and miserly sexual morality. This morality - although moralism, the attempt to subjugate all to the

rule of one point of view, is a better term – can be counted on to ensure the immiseration of children and adults, male and female, gay and straight, alike. It feeds off its own sourness; its basic premise is, ‘if I can’t be sexually happy, why should anyone else be?’ The more sexually unhappy people it creates, the stronger it gets.

Our rulers today are less ostentatiously visible than they once were. They do not, as a rule, publicly mutilate and hang misfits and miscreants, although there is a metaphorical sense in which, with one category of offender, they continue to do precisely this. Symbolic execution may not be as gore-splattered as its literal counterpart, but the resulting death is very real, and possibly even crueller than actual biological extinction (being alive to your own symbolic death is a curiously pernicious, and agonising, experience). But we do still have rulers. Perhaps what is most different for those of us fortunate enough to live in highly developed capitalist societies is that our conditions of dictatorship are disguised and, most of the time, rendered invisible. As Leo Bersani has noted (*Homos*, 1995), power in the ‘developed’ world is not invested in the person of a bloated and debauched monarch, but is mediated by law and economy. But a fundamental continuity with more ancient and supposedly unenlightened domination persists: modern power has a structure, a ‘one way street’ form, wherein those who hold it continue to discipline, marginalise and scapegoat those who do not.

It is a fundamental part of my argument that institutional violence and domination are alive and well in our present-day, gentle, well-healed pluralistic democracies. Whilst the image of power has had a makeover – it has dropped its monarchical pretensions and has become tutelary (i.e., it has substituted ‘you’ll do anything I want because I’m the king’ for ‘We will regulate your private behaviour in minute detail because we are here to protect you.’) Naked coercion and intimidation have largely been reserved to those living at the margins of our good and great social order, the wretched, the abandoned poor, the mentally ill, and the sexually different. They can be sent to our liberal Gulags and concentration camps [1] without a murmur of protest from the ‘general public’, another preposterous fiction manufactured by our largely unelected rulers.

To the comfortably liberal, these opinions can only sound like the deluded rantings of a paranoid fruitcake, the kind of person you see ambling along the pavement hurling incoherent abuse at passing cars, or furiously chiding invisible demons whilst sitting on park benches smelling of urine and cider. As I was once such a comfortable liberal myself, I am aware of the danger of sounding like a swivel-eyed loon; and yet, I cannot think of an alternative to rebutting the far more dangerous and powerful delusions of our contemporary strain liberal democracy than a plain-speaking articulation of its deceptions, evasions and denials in the field of human sexuality.

Edmund White’s quasi-autobiographical novel of 1982 [2] virtually opens (page 14) with a scene of ‘underage’ sex between two boys – one fifteen, the other twelve. What is

extraordinary, scandalous even, about this scene is not merely that it quite obviously isn't a 'one-off' experiment – the boys are at it every night for the remainder of the younger boy's stay (he is the son of the fifteen-year old's father's business acquaintance who, with his wife and two boys, has been invited for a short vacation). It isn't even that the older boy is having anal intercourse with a younger boy: this scenario can be (and just about everywhere else, is) rendered as a depiction of sexual abuse. Our culture presently insists that this is the only form in which sexual activity between minors can be represented – a bigger older person, invariably male, using his superior strength to sexually dominate a smaller, younger person. It is rather that the abuse narrative is conspicuously and joyously absent from the boys' sexual encounters with each other: the sex is initiated by the younger boy. It is a scene of simple, innocent sexual enjoyment, mutual pleasure-sharing, in which the boys make no demands on one another other than to experiment with reciprocally thrilling penile fun together. They do not become lovers, they do not enter a long-term monogamous relationship, and they do not renounce or denounce their sexual experiments later in life in favour of compulsory chastity and abstinence for the young. Against the grain of our culture's symptomatically coercive scripting, they are not subsequently destroyed as adults as a result of their 'under-age' sex. They do not self-harm, develop eating disorders, or become alcoholics. Clearly, *this is not meant to happen*.

In other words, these boys cannot be truthfully represented in mainstream narratives of love and morality. Their innocent intimacy can only be represented as a sexual crime; if they were to be discovered during their libidinal explorations, even more so now in our age of near-psychotic sexual paranoia about children, one or both of them would be placed on the Sex Offenders Register and forced to undergo compulsory 'treatment programmes', which are indistinguishable in fact from the psychological bullying and vulgar brainwashing that dissidents from Stalinist ideology were subjected to in the Soviet Union. It would come as little surprise to find one, at least, of them yielding to the overwhelming institutional pressure they would inevitably be subject to (couched, of course, in terms of adult 'concern' to 'protect' children); quite possibly, the younger of the two, despite actually being the initiator, would feel impelled to adopt the abuse narrative being offered to him as his only escape route, and impugn the older boy.

White's novel is enlightening largely because, insofar as 'abuse' features at all, it appears in the form of pre-emptively disgusted and narrow-minded adults, from horrified parents to deeply worried mental health professionals, rigorously suppressing non-normative expressions of erotic pleasure in the young. In Normotopia, the world of sexual normalcy, deviance is a disease contracted from an external source (invariably, a pervert/paedophile). But in Freud's intelligent analysis of the sexual status quo, normality itself is a tyrannising regime aimed at coercing a universal, originary pleasure-seeking, innocent and experimental, into the straight-jacketed, joyless world of conventional moralism.

To return momentarily to the question of statistics: one would expect that, in a rational society, governments would carefully weigh up the social science data, including health and clinical research, pertaining to troubling phenomena, and formulate social policy guided by these findings. Whilst this may be true of some phenomena - although I hesitate to isolate any particular social subject - there is one socio-political matter whose investigation not only routinely and resolutely abjures necessary analytical qualities, such as neutrality, proportionality, and refusing to rush to judgment on the basis of inevitably incomplete data; it also routinely ignores comparatively rigorous research data which fails to support its own preconceptions. All we humans can aspire to is fractional, partial truthfulness; only the Almighty can know the whole Truth. In a nominally secular society we might wonder who has endowed those who regard themselves as our Authorities with the stature of God when they claim to be acting on behalf of such capitalised Certainties. True scientists, at least ideally, seek intelligent, informed efforts to disprove their discoveries; only then, when such efforts fail, can the provisional label 'truth' be applied. Ideally in science, truth is never above contestation and even revolution; it is, or ought to be, a radically democratic and reasoned project. But fascists - ideological and moral fascists, fascists with a small 'f', not merely jackbooted neo-Hitlerites (as Foucault, I think, would concur) - seek only agreement with preconceived credos and received wisdom, no matter how injurious and murderous these belief systems turn out to be in practise. It is perhaps superfluous to add that these two perspectives - true, open scientific enquiry and fascism (with a small 'f') - constitute radically irreconcilable perspectives.

The small 'f' may offend some; there is an impressive critique of fascism, largely from within the Marxist tradition, which delivers an incisive and wholly plausible analysis of historical fascism as an extreme option chosen by deeply threatened capitalist states to discipline and crush insurgent working class opposition. During my youth, the term 'fascist' was used indiscriminately by people of my generation to refer to anyone they didn't like very much, from embarrassingly un-radical parents to professors who were tough on you in seminars, to mainstream politicians. To the true socialists of that generation, people who had directly fought and defeated the vile forces of horribly real Fascist states, such laxity was an insult to all who had sacrificed their lives in the struggle against bloodthirsty dictators such as Hitler, Mussolini, and the Spanish Generalissimo, not to mention the many later Latin American and Indonesian mass murderers so beloved of the rulers of North America during their war against commies. I have much to agree with in these analyses; to accuse the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) of being a fascist organisation is being more than a tad sloppy with one's vocabulary (although I remain to be persuaded that 'authoritarian' is an altogether inapt term). And yet I am still interested in why ordinary, intelligent people can be relied upon by ruling elites to abandon their material interests and throw their weight behind pernicious political hysterias. It was never in the interests of the German working class

to support Hitler, or the Italian working class to support Mussolini, or the Spanish working class to support Franco. And yet they did, in sufficient numbers to ensure the secure domination of these genocidal monstrosities for long enough to persecute and, ultimately, exterminate large populations of ‘unacceptable’ human beings (today, the deathword might be ‘inappropriate’).

At the time of writing, it remains impossible to conduct anything that comes close to a rational public debate about the issue that has engulfed and professionally destroyed me, as well as literally thousands of others in the UK alone. Even I can tell that my particular life is relatively insignificant in the scheme of things; what has been inflicted on me only gathers significance by its multiplication – by the terrible fate of thousands of men and their many loved ones in the UK alone whose lives were demolished by the vicious witch-hunt known as ‘Operation Ore’, which the British police force proudly trumpeted as the brave beginning of a campaign to ruthlessly flush out armies of hidden child sex abusers. Countless paedophiles, they believed, were lurking in every school, every community, every internet chat-room, probably in every family (no one could be above suspicion). In my direct experience, far from netting dangerous child rapists, the police were merely destroying mild, ordinary, middle-aged men, many of whom (like me) were merely chronically sad, mired in intractable, insoluble mid-life problems about debt, cash-flow, strained intimacies and professional stagnation. For these men, seeking distraction from these intractables via impossible erotic fantasies was to cost them their livelihoods, frequently their homes and families and, ultimately, their lives; it should come as little surprise that men who have been hysterically branded as monsters in the local and national media, juridically stigmatised as society’s most despised and reviled scapegoat – the ‘sex offender’ - all too often, choose to end the agony by ending their lives.

These words are the unfinished, possibly uncompletable, product of massive trauma and stigmatisation, personal breakdown and inchoate, faltering regeneration. I have chosen the word regeneration carefully; ‘recovery’ implies a restoration of former health and vigour, returning to ‘normal’, the ways things were. The forces which converged to produce my ruination, and that of the other men I mentioned a moment ago (not to mention the thousands of others who were destroyed or massively traumatised as a by-product, such as partners, brothers and sisters, parents, children), mean that there can be no going back, no return to normality or even ordinariness. One finds oneself in another country, a ghost among the living, no longer a member of that great fictional entity, the ‘general public’, but a rejected and despised ‘it’.

Even though these scribblings may never be read by anyone else in my lifetime, it somehow seems important that they are set down, that a chronicle of the social hysteria and violent moralism surrounding – perhaps ‘manufacturing’ would be a more accurate term – this issue is recorded somewhere. Inevitably, this means that I am addressing an

imaginary future readership, one that I fear barely exists at present and, to the extent that it does, may wish to keep its silence in order to avoid the howls of execration that will assuredly accompany any dissent from the new establishment's views. One does not court personal, social and financial ruination lightly. But as this has already happened to me, I feel more inclined to articulate a dissident perspective, one that at present will be decried and caricatured (if it is not ignored) as a pervert's charter, the deluded ramblings of a twisted sicko.

The issue, if my imaginary future reader has not already guessed, is that particular form of variant sexuality we like to term – which means, we like to rigidly and unambiguously nail down as - 'paedophilia'. It is a term which has been taken up by zealous campaigners: zeal on this issue, in fact, is a compulsory person specification in the job description of any who seek positions in the new establishment, such as law enforcement officers, probation officers, social workers, NGO workers, even judges, doctors and nurses – to mean "evil monster."

Lest anyone be under any illusions, these are not the writings of a brave man; like most people, I am weak, flawed and prone to opt for comfort rather than combat. But, like most people, I find it hard to walk away from an unjust, vindictive act of social scapegoating with a shrug of my shoulders, especially as I was not the only casualty. I can only speculate about the agony inflicted on the thousands of people who were sacrificed in Operation Ore alone; but I do know more immediately about how one of Ore's progeny affected those very close to me – my wife and children, who suffered a degree of distress and dislocation which I cannot even begin to describe or quantify, save to say that it was incalculably immense. Ironically, it was the Guardians of Child Protection themselves who inflicted these traumas on my children (unless you count a middle-aged man's private, undisclosed, personal erotic fantasising as a legitimate reason to smash two children's lives to pieces). Even so, I write not in a spirit of rebellion or trail blazing: I do not envision publication in my lifetime. My wish, my dream, is that these pages may be of assistance to historians of the future – perhaps they are my imaginary readers – and I write more in the spirit of Winston Smith, Orwell's ultimately tragic 'hero' of 1984, who attempted to immunise himself from the corrosive lies and violent coerciveness of Newspeak by keeping a personal journal, than of a Visionary, Leader or Politician (all of which now seem to me to be rather questionable occupations).

Writing is an attempt to preserve an area of sanity and freedom of thought in a time of mass paranoia and compulsory submission to torrential propaganda. The British psychoanalyst, Christopher Bollas, once wrote an intriguing essay called 'The Fascist State of Mind', which directly addresses the small 'f' fascism in us all. Bollas believes that this 'little f' fascist, the parts of ourselves which hold that (social/racial/sexual) purity and innocence is always being threatened by diseased or perverted outsiders

(Jews, blacks, immigrants, paedophiles, in chronological order), can be recruited by charismatic demagogues in times of social dislocation to make mass fascism, the kind that carries a capital 'F', not only possible but inevitable. Before its ascendancy into cultural orthodoxy, Bollas suggests that it is an ethical obligation for all who can detect the fascist impulse, in ourselves and others, to critique it, to speak about it openly in the radical, Freudian sense of 'free association' (i.e., I will allow myself to entertain thoughts that simply occur to me, without deliberation, perhaps the personal dissent from received wisdom, rather than follow the path laid down for me by some Leader or Authority). Should this fail, should fascists become Fascists, in charge of society (or important parts of it), such dissent would become suicidal; only a careful, private chronicling of the Fascist State becomes a (dangerous) possibility. I think that a form of 'F'ascism is now in our midst, and it relates to the predominant symbols of purity and danger in our times (children and adults respectively, particularly adult males). I feel a need to record some of this; I can only hope that Winston's fate does not become my own.

(1) At the time of writing, our horrifically overcrowded UK prisons are bursting with despair into suicide, self harm, violence and obscene hopelessness.

(2) Edmund White (1982) *A Boy's Own Story* London: Picador (1983).

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Chapter 1. Perverted Predators and their Venomous Victimologists

Or, How to Manufacture Monsters

In late 2007, a joke began circulating on the internet, as people started sending it to work colleagues, friends and family. It went like this:

“School 1977 vs. School 2007

Scenario: Johnny and Mark get into a fistfight after school.

1977 - Crowd gathers. Mark wins. Johnny and Mark shake hands and end up mates.

2007 - Police are called, Armed Response Unit arrives and arrests Johnny and Mark. Mobiles with video of fight confiscated as evidence. They are charged with assault, ASBOs are taken out and both are suspended even though Johnny started it.

Diversory conferences and parent meetings conducted. Video shown on 6 internet sites.

Scenario: Jeffrey won't sit still in class, disrupts other students.

1977 - Jeffrey is sent to the principal's office and given 6 of the best. Returns to class, sits still and does not disrupt class again.

2007 - Jeffrey is given huge doses of Ritalin. Counselling to death. Becomes a zombie. Tested for ADD. School gets extra funding because Jeffrey has a disability. Drops out of school.

Scenario: Billy breaks a window in his neighbour's car and his Dad gives him the slipper.

1977 - Billy is more careful next time, grows up normal, goes to college, and becomes a successful businessman.

2007 - Billy's dad is arrested for child abuse. Billy is removed to foster care and joins a gang. Psychologist tells Billy's sister that she remembers being abused herself and their dad goes to prison. Billy's mum has an affair with the psychologist. Psychologist gets a promotion.

Scenario: Mark, a college student, brings cigarettes to school.

1977 - Mark shares a smoke with the school principal out on the smoking area.

2007 - Police are called and Mark is expelled from School for drug possession. His car is searched for drugs and weapons.

Scenario: Mohammed fails high school English.

1977 - Mohammed retakes his exam, passes and goes to college.

2007 - Mohammed's cause is taken up by local human rights group. Newspaper articles appear nationally explaining that making English a requirement for graduation is racist.

Civil Liberties Association files class action lawsuit against state school system and his English teacher. English is banned from core curriculum. Mohammed is given his qualification anyway but ends up mowing lawns for a living because he cannot speak English.

Scenario: Johnny takes apart leftover firecrackers, puts them in a model plane paint bottle and blows up an anthill.

1977 - Ants die.

2007 - MI5 and police are called and Johnny is charged with perpetrating acts of terrorism. Teams investigate parents, siblings are removed from the home, computers are confiscated, and Johnny's dad goes on a terror watch list and is never allowed to fly again.

Scenario: Johnny falls during break and scrapes his knee. His teacher, Mary, finds him crying, and gives him a hug to comfort him.

1977 - Johnny soon feels better and goes back to playing.

2007 - Mary is accused of being a sexual predator and loses her job. She faces three years in prison. Johnny undergoes five years of therapy. Becomes gay.”

Whilst this hardly constitutes a rigorous sociological analysis of the last three decades – it is designed simply to induce amusement (or irritation, depending on whether your affiliations are to political correctness or free thinking) - it does address a distinct cultural shift which few who have lived through that period could seriously deny.

Punitive Progressiveness

The mutation depicted between these two scenes is, I believe, a manifestation - although perhaps ‘symptom’ is a better word - of a cultural revolution which has been taking place in our times. As I mentioned previously, I have personally been profoundly affected – in a violently traumatic way – by this social transformation, which cost me my professional career, my livelihood, my home, my liberty and my mental health, transporting me deep into a nuclear winter of long-term, suicidal depression. Overnight, I was transformed from a productive, hard-working professional into a shattered ghost of a human being, who simply wanted to die. This was not merely an individual trauma; it caused incalculable shock and torment for my loved ones. It deeply perturbs me to discover that I was merely one of thousands in the UK alone who became overnight casualties of a ferocious and supremely powerful moral crusade: the project of Child Protection.

Cultural transitions of this magnitude – and I think militant child protectionism is an especially virulent symptom of this historic transformation - are often characterised as stories of social progress. It may seem crazily counter-intuitive to seek to question this

particular progress story. How could anyone sanely argue that child protection is not an unqualified human good? But perhaps it is precisely because ‘everyone’ agrees that something is beyond debate, above sober, intelligent, critique, that it requires our most urgent scrutiny. ‘Everyone’ in Germany once believed that Jews were destroying the economic, moral and social fabric of ‘the Fatherland’ in the first half of the twentieth century. Most heinously of all, everyone believed, the Jews were polluting the purity of the Aryan master race by encouraging interbreeding between innocent Aryan girls and sub-human types. It is almost certainly true that many ordinary Germans remained silent and refused to count themselves in as members of this paranoid and genocidal ‘everyone’; but their silence, whether borne of fear or, less forgivably, indifference, contributed to a monumental experiment in mass annihilation. More than six million men, women and children were exterminated on the altar of this belief system, simply because they carried the signifier ‘Jew’.

Similarly, in the Deep South of the USA, during a similar historical period, an analogous ‘everyone’ believed that black men were sexually rapacious ravagers of innocent white women; ‘... I am a racist idiot!

So far as I can discern from their public (published and spoken) statements, the architects of our current age of Child Protectionism, our Western Cultural Revolution, have never betrayed the slightest hint of doubt that their efforts are borne of anything other than pure righteousness. This, they may be somewhat perturbed to learn, they share with supremacists and fascists. Hitler and his sycophants were animated by identical certitudes; doubt is relegated by hardcore fascists, new cultural purifiers, who prefer to call themselves ‘progressives’, and psychotics alike to the status of contemptible soft-headedness or dangerous slipperiness (rather than, for example, a most precious and necessary check on human arrogance and delusion). The new revolutionaries of Child Salvation see themselves, uncannily, as engaged in a uniquely imperative struggle, a necessarily militant campaign, to flush out hidden child abusers wherever they may be and purge the world of their malignant presence.

“Full Stop!” brays the British NSPCC, in its campaign against ‘child abuse’. The implication is that, behind every ordinary-looking front door, behind every professional appearance (youth worker, football coach, teacher), behind all ordinary appearances (including – possibly especially - that of parent), a countless horde of child molesters and predatory sadists of every persuasion lurk in the anonymity of privacy. These monsters must be stopped. If wholly innocent people get wrongfully accused (and personally ruined) along the way, or, as the campaign grows in zeal and confidence, if the definition of child abuse becomes so absurdly elastic as to create pervasive paranoia and adult fearfulness not only for children but of children, so be it. These are small prices to pay, the crusaders appear to be saying, for the eradication of evil in our midst.

It may be, however, that the time is long overdue for us to subject such fervent claims to some degree of scepticism and rigorously critical analysis. Against the claims of this particular version of progressiveness, which effectively amounts to the quest to cherish children with a viciousness and ruthlessness no concept of compassion could ever contain (even though its spokespersons often lard their pronouncements with piety and lachrymose sentimentality), I endeavour to argue that the material result of this social purification campaign is not only an insidious and contagious misanthropy, but a licence to the virtuous to give glorious and exhilarating vent to the sadism, cruelty and vindictiveness they would otherwise have to struggle with. There is violence in their virtuousness, sadism in their sympathy and, most notably, perversity in their purity, which, I believe, they would prefer not to acknowledge. Militant child salvationists seem to have forgotten, or are simply unaware of the fact, that fascists have always deployed the imagery of threatened purity (or innocence) to justify 'social cleansing' operations.

Our new moral guardians believe that aggression and lust are unpleasant defects which belong to bad types of people, who must be compelled to undergo corrective treatment. Such treatment, of course, is devised and conducted by non-aggressive, good types of people who never, ever, have unbidden or 'inappropriate' erotic feelings, such as social workers, probation officers and policemen, not to mention prosecution lawyers and judges.

At the risk of sounding slightly arrogant, it is perhaps worth noting that the first three protectors of public decency mentioned above generally share a relatively low level of educational and intellectual attainment in comparison with other professions. Police officers who needed my help to spell my name and my professional title had little difficulty in designating me a modern day witch; as one of them put it, my internet activity showed that I was something he called an 'ephebofoal'. A little later in his monologue, this became 'ephebofowl.' I think he was trying to show a pointy-headed intellectual like me that he knew his onions. He seemed curiously oblivious to the fact that he was using terms that referred to young horses and chickens attracted to adolescents. I think he was trying to find the word 'ephebephile', but I was too polite to correct him.

It is little wonder that these guardians of decency conspicuously ignore (repress, perhaps?) the brilliant, but discomfiting, insights of a profoundly influential Viennese intellectual who died just before the half-way mark of the last century. I am referring to Sigmund Freud, who saw that aggression and lust were ineradicable aspects of the human condition. All who are born mortal, Freud argued, must struggle with these forces. Anyone making claims on Freud's couch to be motivated solely by compassion and altruism would be met with a kindly but robust scepticism. Freud would be listening, quietly and patiently, for the symptomatic appearance of sadistic enjoyment in the patient's speech; and he would not have long to wait if he happened to be listening to

one of our present day Child Saviours. Should they begin to talk to a psychoanalyst (as opposed to a journalist) about the ‘punishment, management and treatment of offenders’, they may be deeply embarrassed to discover that the primitive malice simmering behind their carefully crafted sermons would be forensically exposed.

From fascism to Fascism in eight easy steps

In the Introduction, I abjured the tendency to overuse this word; it can so easily become not only meaningless but offensive to all those who have lost their lives in anti-fascist struggle, or who simply had the misfortune of becoming the fascists’ designated scapegoat. However, there is a rather precise sense, intimated by Foucault in the opening epithet of this book, in which the term is not only pertinent but necessary as a means of understanding certain forms of socially mandated hatred. I referred earlier to an essay by the psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas; he gives us some exceptionally important descriptions, which we might do well to heed as warnings, about how what he calls ‘the Fascist state of mind’ can arise. (1) Beginning with a craving for purity and a hatred of complexity and contradiction, which are viewed as pollution or disease, it only seizes power at the culmination of a series of subsequent steps (Bollas identifies eight).

I think it is worth looking at his descriptions quite carefully. Even though I doubt very much that he had this in mind when he wrote his evocative essay, I think he provides us with a brilliant and incisive analysis of the ruthlessness and fervour suffusing witch hunts such as Operation Ore and its proliferating offspring. He suggests that ‘intellectual genocide’, a repertoire of mental processes which create the fascist mind, is a precursor to actual genocide. Bollas holds that any hope of preventing true genocide lies in intervening at the stage of intellectual genocide. He is frighteningly and precisely right.

The steps Bollas outlines are not necessarily malignant individually, although when they operate together they are truly Fascist. He distinguishes between ‘committive’ genocide, the deeds actually enacted, and ‘omittive’ genocide (e.g., all those ordinary Germans who despised anti-Semitism, but not sufficiently to act against it). In the ‘committive’ segment we have:

Distortion - an early step, involving a subtle distortion of an opponent's viewpoint, rendering it less intelligent or credible than hitherto. This can be and often is an ordinary part of debate, but when taken to an extreme it becomes slander. For example, when psychological researchers whose work suggests that familial cruelty and neglect are far more important predictors of subsequent psychopathology than mutually pleasurable ‘underage’ sexual encounters are represented as apologists for child abuse, a slanderous degree of misrepresentation has occurred.

Decontextualisation - removing one comment from its textual environment and holding it up as a baldly true statement of the writer's beliefs (everyone can be made to look mad or perverted using this tactic). As Bollas writes: "The extreme of this act is the removal of the victim from his tribe, home (i.e., context), isolated for purposes of persecution". All ruined by Operation Ore will know about this manoeuvre very deeply.

Denigration - again, Bollas' own words describe this most clearly: "The belittling of an opponent's view combines distortion and decontextualisation, rendering the opponent's views ridiculous. This is a door through which affects (of scorn and belittlement) move and displace ideation as the machinery of conflict with the opposition." Intelligent thought gives way to unrestrained emoting.

Caricature - the move from twisting the decontextualised statement to make it sound absurd and/or wicked to cartooning the individual who made it:

“Again, it is part of ordinary rhetoric to caricature the opposition’s view and yet it is a transfer from the view held to the holder of the view. It therefore represents a significant step in the identification of a person or group with ascribed undesirable qualities.”

I would add that the act of converting behaviours into a species of *humanity*, reifying essentially highly ambiguous acts, such as viewing erotica on the internet, which may not even be fully comprehensible to the actor himself, into a type of person, can be seen as belonging to this category.

Character assassination - attempting to eliminate the opposition by discrediting the personal character of the holder of the view. This might happen in everyday ‘gossip’ but it cannot legitimately be part of any scientific, or truthful, endeavour. In particular, wherever the victim of character assassination cannot speak for him - or herself - for example, in a place where fictions or decontextualised 'facts' (which amounts to the same thing) are being circulated without any form of adequate contestation (like our contemporary law courts) - a human being can easily become eliminated from the scene of consideration ("send him to gaol - he's just a vile pervert!").

Change of name - e.g., "kikes" for Jews, "gooks" for Vietnamese, "paedos" for anyone who gets caught appreciating the erotic beauty of the young. Bollas suggests that this is an act of eliminating the proper name, the essential precursor to eliminating the person himself. I think this is a critical, even pivotal, point on the fulcrum which, if passed, leads almost inevitably to Fascism proper.

Categorisation as aggregation - The moment when an individual is transferred to a mass in which he loses his identity - e.g. 'paedo' or 'sex offender'. Here concentration camps and gas chambers start to become possible.

In the 'Omittive' segment of intellectual genocide we have

Absence of reference - Bollas: "This is an act of omission, when the life, work, or culture of an individual or group is intentionally not referred to. ... a writer such as Solzhenitsyn may be removed from the bookshelves, or in the extreme there are no references to crimes against humanity."

Bollas believes that these stages of intellectual genocide, before the first person has actually been lynched or incarcerated, should be seen as crimes against humanity. I think he makes a fair point. I also think that *all* of his categories, committive and omittive, are firmly in place, and at their most extreme, in the field of the regulation/policing of sexuality. Sexual Fascism is here, now, in our midst, not merely a dreadful prospect to be prevented. I anticipate all of these tactics being used on any form of dissident perspective. However, I also, perhaps foolishly, believe that a more truthful and nuanced account has to be at least offered.

Fantasy = Intention = Crime: Psychology for the sexually hysterical

The obsessionality, terror and fanaticism that has come to govern the project of 'Child Protection' has, I hope to persuade you, become a most dangerous social scourge, one that is itself exceedingly harmful (and intrusive) to those it was ostensibly created to shield – children. In our sexually enlightened times, children may also find themselves separated from their loved ones and placed on the infamous Sex Offenders Register – as 'children who sexually harm other children'. This is a purely invented fiction; children have always been prone to experiment with erotic pleasures with one another, perhaps more clumsily than well-heeled, middle class ladies (and their accomplices – white middle class 'honorary ladies' who like to think of themselves as 'new men') might appreciate, especially if guilt about their sheltered, relatively prosperous upbringing has driven them into social work. Criminalising these children and stigmatising them forever hardly sounds like social progress; and yet this is what is happening. Sex, including any form of erotic play, is strictly *verboden* in our new, 'progressive' regime of 'sex = abuse' moralism. So intent has this regime become on rooting out monsters, it is now herding large numbers of ordinary, harmless boys and men, and boys and men in particular are significantly more likely to be ensnared by its furiously swooping net, into the same box as dangerous rapists and violent sexual psychopaths.

I am one of these ordinary men; my 'crime' was to entertain impossible and politically incorrect erotic fantasies: fantasies which, like most people, I was no more preparing to enact than I was planning to travel the universe in the *Tardis* (also a wishful fantasy I frequently day-dreamed about), in such a form that the protectionists could identify me.

In other words, rather than confining my imaginings to the space between my ears, I made the fatal mistake of using the erotica available on the internet to augment what were essentially private and never-to-be enacted (in speech or deed) erotic daydreams. Moreover, I now think that the form of these daydreams was itself shaped by the images available on the net, which is another impertinent affront to the our moral rulers, who hold that erotic desire is fixed and essential, as opposed to fluid and mutable. To spare you further speculation, I accessed what is presently called ‘Child Pornography’. And then I was symbolically executed for it – a form of death (social extermination) which is intended to last until the end of one’s biological life, however long that may take. (3)

The terms used are particularly carefully selected. To the morally righteous, the word ‘pornography’ immediately conveys a Lot of Very Bad Things. Place the word ‘child’ in front, and you have “a lot of very bad things being done to children”. Recently, the term ‘child porn’ seems to have been deprivileged by salvationists in favour of the phrase ‘images of child abuse.’ Police officers are now prone to announce that the pictures they have found on some sad, hapless fool’s hard drive “are not child porn – they are child abuse.” More accurate terms like erotica – even ‘child erotica’ - won’t do; they don’t sufficiently convey the moralist’s self-promoted quest to be eradicating Pure Evil.

I’ll say more about this politically and emotionally overloaded term ‘child porn’, or its more pompous legal version, ‘indecent images’ a little later. It is perhaps worth noting at this point, however, that, in the eighteenth century, the moralists of the day had singled out *children* as the main perpetrators of child abuse, on the basis that they were abusing and corrupting *themselves*; masturbation was widely regarded as self-abuse, and any child unfortunate enough to be caught out would be subject to merciless punishment. Whilst we may now find such extremism bizarre, there remains a powerful continuity as the word ‘abuse’ is to this day being used to cover what, in a less frantic context, would simply be called ‘pleasure’. For now, though, I would like to share a speculation: as most of us know, when we are not in the company of moralistic zealots, there is a universal human disposition to fantasize erotic scenarios that are wholly incompatible with the subject’s own interpersonal conduct and ethical practises. There is not the slightest danger, for most people, that these scenarios will ever get actualised, not least because they are literally impossible: no matter how assiduously I imagine myself as a thirteen year old, I cannot literally become one. As more than a century of psychoanalysis has argued, only psychotics can believe this, because they cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality, word and deed, symbol and thing.

For the vast majority of people, erotic fantasies (and the more politically incorrect, the more erotically beguiling they become) are, in effect, intrapsychic resorts that one takes vacations in: ‘time out’ zones from the strain, tedium and outright distress of everyday social life. As such, they provide instantly accessible inner retreats where we are not obliged to be polite or considerate, just appetitive and inventively playful. The point is

that they enable people to experiment with versions of themselves which it would be wholly impossible to enact. Beneath the skin, in fantasy, the most boring accountant can imagine himself as a Casanova, the most earnest politician can be a porn star, and the most upright judge can experience being soundly disciplined by a whip-lashing dominatrix. The fattest, baldest, middle-aged man can imagine himself as a lissom boy, exploring sexuality anew.

The man (or woman) who privately indulges obscene fantasies about a work colleague; the woman who imagines being involved in vigorous and rough sexual intercourse with a priapic barbarian; the adolescent who imagines improbably Olympian sex with his or her teacher, or with the boy or girl next door: very few of these people are using such erotic fantasies as preludes to action. They are *substitutes* for action, internal alternatives to prescribed social conduct. It was once proclaimed by another wing of the guardians of public morality that drugs were for people who can't handle reality; libertarians reversed this to 'reality is for people who can't handle drugs'. I think much the same can be said for erotic fantasy: social 'reality', that corporately managed fiction, continuously shaped and manufactured by the vast, digital simulacrum we acquiesce in as our only vantage point on life, is the life-raft for those terrified of their own erotic imagination. Assuming that the majority of people are ordinary neurotic individuals like most of the human species (a degree of neurosis, as Freud suggested, is unavoidable in contemporary life), *none* of them (us) would consider putting these scenarios into practise; in fact, for most, to do so – or to have them exposed - would be deeply traumatic and repugnant.

Authoritarian moralists, with their insistence on simplicity, however, will have none of this complex (i.e., perverted) argumentation. Using a crudely reductionist psychology, which simply ignores both the unconscious and the ineradicable ambiguity of speech, language and action in human affairs, they render such fantasies as intentions, perched transparently on the surface of behaviour, which any right thinking person (by which they mean, I think, tabloid-indoctrinated imbecile) is obliged to deplore in the most vitriolic fashion. Great violence is committed when byzantine, paradoxical and profoundly ambiguous phenomena are simplified into a vulgar 'this means that' psychologism.

But if grandstanding politicians, desperate to secure popular support from an electorate they mistrust and feel fearfully disconnected from, declare on the say-so of authoritarian moralists (who claim to speak for us all), that certain reveries must be criminalised, the sort of thing that nobody (no 'decent' person) ought to be *imagining*, just picture what would happen if the Home Office developed a forensic instrument capable of detecting illicit fantasies in the mind, rather than on the computer hard drive (does anyone, really have *nothing* they would prefer to sexually hide? No fantasy, no daydream, no masturbation scenario?). Pretty well everyone would end up on the Sex Offender's Register, and, if current sentencing policies were pursued, large areas of land would

have to be surrendered for a massive new building development: Her Majesty's Prisons.

Manufacturing Monsters

Those of us who have been scapegoated and stigmatised (if not literally destroyed – significant numbers have committed suicide) by this crusade against politically incorrect erotic fantasies know that, despite the claims that ‘Britain’s paedophiles’ (4) are finally being flushed out and rounded up for incarceration, we are actually not only rather ordinary men, but wholly indistinguishable from all other ordinary human beings. I don’t mean that we have all been exceedingly cunning in concealing our evil predilections, although concealment becomes horribly unavoidable once one comes across these images. (5) I mean that we are ordinary human beings. We are in the midst of a moral panic which has elevated the simple viewing – solitarily and in private - of something called ‘child porn’ into a *crimen exceptum*. (6) Like the European witch trials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, mere accusation is enough to seal your doom.

Witchcraft was the seventeenth century version of the *crimen exceptum*, the crime that a dominant moral ideology designates as so heinous that the normal processes of justice and due process must be suspended, and punishment must be seen to be exemplary (merciless and ruinous). But, unlike the unfortunate witches, accusation alone is no longer necessary to set the processes of personal destruction by the State flying. In our new age of information technology, personal accusation can be regarded as wholly irrelevant, in fact. All that is required is that your credit card number appears on a site designated by the Authorities as a purveyor of illegal pictures. But perhaps even worse, despite the very real probability that many of the victims of Operation Ore had hitherto been wholly blameless victims of credit card fraud, if you actually *did* access forbidden pictures, accidentally or intentionally, this alone will convict you. To the police and the Child Salvationists, the act of looking at what they consider to be the wrong sort of pictures means that you are a rapist, a molester, a ‘beast.’ By adopting and promoting a crude ‘this means that’/’that causes this’ psychology, they have found that they can juridically crucify those they have indiscriminately netted, with the eager connivance of both prosecution lawyers and an army of pre-emptively disgusted judges. The academic, Laura Kipnis, has written movingly and intelligently about the hysterical, vicious life-sentence passed on an essentially gentle, kind-hearted gay man (Daniel Depew) in the USA. DePew, in his spare time, took part in consensual adult sadomasochistic sex. For this, and for talking fantasy with another fantasist, his life was destroyed. Referring to the criminal justice system (a critique which could equally well be directed at that in the UK), Kipnis writes:

‘They regarded the violence of his fantasies, and the consensual violence of his sex play, as “evidence” and proof beyond reasonable doubt – as if this could exist in anything but a psychological cartoon world – that he would, without question, have committed

violence against a fictional, non-existent child. In the stripped down good-guy, bad-guy psychological universe invented by U.S. prosecutors, where fantasy equals intent, and role-playing makes it real, how many thousands of new prisons – each the size of Texas – would it take to hold our new criminal class?” (7)

To make a monster, stuff everything you cannot acknowledge as part of your own psychosexual make-up onto a convenient scapegoat, and persecute without let or hindrance. Psychoanalysis understands, which I think is why it is systematically ignored by the State in favour of a mere technology, cognitive behavioural psychology, that simply splitting undesirable qualities away from one’s preferred self image and dumping them onto someone else is a form of righteousness forever threatened by what it is excluding, because the exclusion itself (‘them’ not ‘us’, ‘him’ not ‘me’) is a gigantic lie. Beyond the ethics of individual conduct, however, in the material world of bids for budgets, lucrative careers are being built upon this very same lie. The child protection industry provides a particularly rewarding career path. Its predominant credo, despite the fact that most cruelty to children (humiliation, neglect, coldness, violence) is committed by family members, is ‘net the paedos!’

Those of us who have been netted, if we have not collapsed into compliant, soul-murdered, post-torture Winston Smiths, have a rather different story to tell.

What actually distinguishes us from everyone else is that we have all experienced a violent transposition. One minute, we were unexceptionably ordinary people, who were quietly getting on with our lives, earning a living and raising our children; the next, we were transmogrified into the modern-day equivalent of the seventeenth century witch, forced to bear the virtually lethal disfigurement of a politically and juridically enforced identity which says nothing truthful or useful about us as individuals but, in fact, proclaims much (if not all) that is merely vituperative (and nearly schizophrenic) claptrap. Although these experiences are lived at an all too agonisingly personal level, they are, as I hope to argue, the deliberate and intended effects of overweeningly powerful (and covertly sadistic) political processes and agencies. If power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely, we are living through an era in which a coalition of political interest groups has achieved an unassailable position of social influence. To question this interest coalition is to court social (and quite probably physical) annihilation.

In another time, this might have been seen as bad news for freedom of thought and critical intelligence. Today, unquestioning acquiescence in what amounts to a kind of puritanical absolutism is depicted as the hallmark of moral righteousness. We are, perhaps, never more dangerous than when we are convinced that we are acting for the

moral good; it justifies us in purging the social body of those we believe to be moral pollutants. History is littered with such purges, as the piling remains of those whose fate it was to be expunged for the good of the moral order tragically testify. Presently, a rather foul odour is rising from our contemporary exercise in social purging, and those responsible for it are (predictably) blaming the stench on their victims.

The new rule of law – the Dictatorship of the Victim

Before thinking any further about these victims, almost immediately I have to declare that I have some trouble with the word ‘victim’. The current liberal-mainstream position, engineered and fashioned by some unpalatably rigid ideologues, as I will argue, is that victims of crime, and especially sexual crime, are routinely ignored. The electoral constituencies of the dyspeptically right-wing, the hang ‘em, flog ‘em, lock ‘em up and throw-away-the-key vote, has consistently been privileged by our ‘progressive’ government over saner and more nuanced analyses, partly because the latter cannot be comprehended by the British tabloids as anything other than limp-wristed hand-wringing. The new received wisdom is that the Law has to be rebalanced in favour of victims; victim law holds that legal safeguards to ensure that justice is seen to be done have favoured the perpetrators far too much. So, decency demands that we introduce summary justice wherever possible, curtail the tedious, costly and uncertain role of the jury system, redefine rape so that it effectively means any kind of sexual involvement which a ‘victim’ may subsequently decide was unwelcome or unpleasant, even if he/she fully participated, consensually, on the occasion in question, and reassure ‘the public’ that the legal system is on their side.

‘The public’, is of course, a highly specular entity; it refracts the light very differently depending on what angle you approach it. It is usually defined as ‘decent’, ‘law-abiding’, ‘hard-working’ and as constituting a long-suffering ‘silent majority’. This ‘public’ is shaped like a family, but as Simon Watney showed in his brilliant work on media representations of the AIDS crisis when it first broke in the 1980s, it is more likely to include your pet dog than your gay brother or sister. (8) ‘It’ in other words, does not ‘really’ exist – there are many publics and many ‘counterpublics’ (9) (ref Michael Warner – *Publics and Counterpublics*) – loose associations and more organised groupings of those who find the dominant storylines enacting the prescriptions of the ‘silent majority’ deeply injurious and oppressive, from gay and lesbian people to ‘sex-positive’ feminists, Marxists to social libertarians (it is possible, of course, to find oneself belonging to each of these loose sets). The absurdly fictional status of the decent, hard working, unified ‘public’ does not deter mainstream politicians from trampling over one another in order to appeal to ‘it.’ They have discovered that this ‘public’ has an insatiable appetite for draconian and illiberal ‘law and order’ measures, and that ‘it’ is sick of the pervasive disregard for ‘victims’.

But there is a flaw in this logic; far from being the age of indifference, requiring heroic politicians and militant, self-appointed tribunes of the underdog (such as the countless NGOs speaking for, although never having actually been elected by, ‘victims’) to restructure society in favour of the victim, are we not living in the age of the victim? In our present culture of narcissism (10) (ref. Christopher Lasch), the victim is endlessly exhorted not only to pronounce authoritatively on his or her experience of victimhood (today, if you’re a victim of something, you’re also automatically an expert on it) but to bite back, to obtain talion law redress.

There is, of course, *nothing* heroic or brave in giving voice to inveterate majoritarian prejudices; there never has been. Moral Utopia doesn’t really exist, not with our inherently flawed and aberrant species. Attempts to bring it into being have inevitably ended in the death camp and the gulag (or, in the USA and the UK, the greatest number of incarcerated people in the western world). Yet today, to call the contemporary mouthpiece of future Utopia into question (i.e., the victim), to be sceptical, to wonder whether there might be other co-ordinates to the subject’s misery, is presently all too easily seen as not merely the height of insensitivity, but as a variety of ‘abuse’. If you can package yourself as the right kind of ‘victim’, you will get not merely the ear, but the active support of the body of government and state (law enforcement and the judiciary); mainstream politicians will clamber over one another in unseemly earnestness to be seen as the most victim-cuddly, and the State and the ‘free’ (i.e., corporately directed and ruthlessly populist) press will join this moral beauty parade fulsomely and without reservation.

I’ll attempt to justify the scare quotes a little later. For now, I’ll just confess that I have belatedly come to hold a profound scepticism toward the term ‘victim’. I cannot imagine anyone sanely suggesting that we ought not to empathise with the victims of rape, of violent assault, of natural disasters and of political genocide. But in the age of victimology, the definition of ‘victim’ has become insanely elastic. I can be victimised by my neighbour’s cigarette smoke, fatness, alcohol consumption, sense of humour, way of looking at me, way of ignoring me, way of taking the piss out of me (actively or passively), way of talking, way of failing to appreciate my outstanding talent, way of over-estimating me, way of emitting breath and other body odours I find alien. Here is University of Illinois feminist theorist Sandra Lee Bartky describing her ‘sexual assault’ in 1990:

“It was a fine spring day, and with an utter lack of self-consciousness, I am bouncing down the street. Suddenly catcalls and whistles fill the air. These noises are clearly sexual in intent and they are meant for me; they come from across the street. I freeze. As Sartre would say, I have been petrified by the gaze of the Other. My face flushes and my motions become stiff and self-conscious. The body which only a moment before I inhabited with such ease now floods my consciousness. I have been made into an object.

Blissfully unaware, breasts bouncing, eyes on the birds in the trees, I could have passed by without having been turned to stone. But I must be made to know that I am a “nice piece of ass”: I must be made to see myself as they see me. There is an element of compulsion in ... this Being-made-to-be-aware of one’s own flesh: like being made to apologize, it is humiliating. What I describe seems less the expression of a healthy eroticism than a ritual of subjugation.”

Sandra Lee Bartky (1990) *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* New York: Routledge, p. 27 (Quoted in Christina Hoff Sommers (1994) *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women* New York: Touchstone, 2005, p. 27)

“*I have been made into an object; I must be made to see myself as they see me; less the expression of a healthy eroticism than a ritual of subjugation.*” These are some rather heavy accusations to hurl at a bunch of working class construction workers, who might well have been the catcallers and whistlers Bartky finds so odious. If a young man finds bouncing breasts erotically enjoyable, Bartky seems to think he is a potential rapist. Who is the more somatically alienated – the observer who recognises the erotic beauty of a ‘nice piece of ass’, or the mature woman who, bouncing her breasts, can only think about birdies in trees? Victorian girls and women were brought up in enforced ignorance of their clitorises, vaginas, and erotic possibilities. Has contemporary ‘victim’ feminism really got nothing else to offer modern women?

At the risk of sounding sentimental, or at least of searching for a mythological golden past, most of the ‘victimisations’ new brand feminist fundamentalism finds so intolerable would have been shrugged off as entirely insignificant by people of my parents’ generation. Perhaps they were too preoccupied with fighting off Hitlerite fascism, too united in hope for a more humane and truly democratic social order, to worry about these trivialities. Without realising it themselves, they – men and women together - belonged to a truly heroic generation. But in the midst of air raids, the omnipresent threat of invasion, and the likelihood of defeat and death, they were far more robustly optimistic and connected to one another than our 21st Century moral reformers. They had something we are losing, frighteningly quickly: they had *social solidarity and space*. By contrast, our time is suffused with the experience of alienated, disconnected solitude, along with an almost frantic feeling of overcrowdedness.

The multiculturalist injunction to celebrate diversity and learn to practise the arts of toleration seems to work better in spaciouly affluent middle class circles than in densely packed, working class ones. Those who populate the latter know, through the less mediated, raw experience of being crammed into confined and under-resourced spaces together, that the problem of neighbourly toleration has nothing to do with moral injunctions to be more tolerant, and everything to do with *tolerable proximity*. If you are forced, cheek by jowl, nose to armpit, up against someone else – let’s say, on a crowded

tube train in rush hour London – even a someone else you might have erotically fancied from a certain distance, you may suddenly feel invaded by unwelcome bodily messages, from bacterial odours to unexpectedly reciprocated desire (or rejection). Too much proximity, when it is involuntary, sudden, chronic or unbidden, breeds a desire for eradication, or at least distance (‘send them home!’).

Jews and dark-skinned people were until recently the primary scapegoats of social purity movements; today such vulgar racism is much less permissible, at a time when the quest for an imaginary scapegoat is possibly even more desperate. Whilst we once blamed our poverty and immiseration on the money-grabbing Jew or the feckless black, the age of paranoid affluence has not released us from our drive to find functional scapegoats. As greater prosperity has not resulted in greater brotherly love or inter-cultural peace, we are still on the hunt for suitable fall-guys to blame for our unease and unhappiness. Now that it no longer seems plausible to revile people simply on ethnic or skin colour grounds (or at least not openly), who do we have to invent in order to glue ‘us’ (the ‘social fabric’, ‘the public’) together? Who can we not only hate, but love to hate, now that we can’t so easily parade our enjoyment of openly racist bull*bleep*ting? In order to prevent myriad real social antagonisms from shredding the ‘social fabric’ into tattered threads, in order to conserve the fiction of a unified ‘us’, we seem to need someone else to hate. Enter the ‘Sex Offender.’

Sex Offenders: Our New Imaginary Monsters

Whilst of course there are major differences between the specific social aversion I am getting at and vulgar racism, there are nonetheless some striking parallels. The racist solution to the problem of proximity is: get rid of the alien. The delusion here is the notion that it is possible to naturalise an inherent social conflict, to literally transform an ineradicable social contradiction into a pre- (or non-) social biological problem. In other words, the fantasy operating in this scenario is that of a spurious social-organic wholeness: ‘we’ all live together in an essentially harmonious natural order (‘the public’), which is threatened and perturbed only by malignantly deviant outsiders. But fantasies are not simply so much Scotch mist, mere background music to the hard realities of life; they can be profoundly, and terrifyingly, real in their social effects, provided that the person in question believes the operative fantasy. If I can be persuaded that people can be categorised into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ types (or races), and that one of these categories has now become an intolerable social cancer, I might also become persuaded that they must be liquidated for the good of society, for the future health of the nation, for my children’s safety. But if we can purchase some distance from these pervasive and vigorously repeated truth-claims, if we can get our proximity right and recover some necessary scepticism, we are immediately confronted with a conundrum: just how do we go about categorising who is an alien, and who is a (legitimate) neighbour (someone like us)?

So far as our species has been in the ascendant, our efforts to make this discrimination have been little short of horrendous. History unequivocally shows us (and history is rarely unequivocal) that the more of the 'inferior race' you exterminate, the more threatening the remainder appear to be, and the more the effort to eradicate, to cleanse, must be redoubled, intensified, and ruthlessly purged of luxurious sentimentalities such as empathy and compassion (ref Zizek *The Metastases of Enjoyment*). The Nazis, as Zizek reveals, were most virulently anti-Semitic in those parts of Germany where the Jewish population was smallest or non-existent, and they became ever more genocidal as the extermination programme advanced.

From a psychoanalytic point of view, when you commit an act of violence against others, you begin to fear that they want to do the same to you; so you'd better keep wiping them out, in case they get you. The more violent and sadistic you become, the more violence and sadism seem necessary. If you are trying to eradicate your own projected sadism, no matter how many kikes, ... I am a racist idiot!

In the contemporary moment, many of the advocates of social purity are unconcerned about *racialised* Others; their project is to eradicate sexualised (sexually labelled) Others. In other words, there has been a shift from populist campaigns for racial purity toward populist campaigns for sexual purity (many of the new militants would find any association with racist sentiments deeply offensive). And, at the risk of sounding a little melodramatic, I have painfully come to believe that the combative activists of this purification movement have been getting away with little short of murder, unchallenged by Left, Right or Centre (with a small number of honourable exceptions in each of these factions) for three decades. Their major instrument, the weapon of mass destruction they wield so mercilessly in the cause of their virtuousness, is shame. The sheer degree of venomously toxic shame they can now deploy, with the active collusion of our 'free' media and 'neutral' law enforcement agencies, has been on too many occasions literally lethal. And, to compound matters, these contemporary puritans have been hiding behind children to promote their fanatical credo.

Either our secular moral guardians are unimpeachably virtuous in their project, or they owe their unassailable domination to a highly successful campaign of moral terrorism which has effectively menaced and browbeaten any potential dissent into silence. If the latter scenario is the truer - and, not being especially persuaded by the truth claims of the earnestly politically correct, I believe it to be the more likely - they have achieved this by means of spuriously alarming propaganda, which has enabled them to assume a position of frankly despotic power. But that is only part of the story; for any propaganda to 'take', it has to be believed. If believers are as complicit as disseminators in perpetrating inhumanity, why are so many people willing to believe the lurid and improbable propaganda of the child salvationists?

- (1) Christopher Bollas (1992) "The Fascist State of Mind" in Christopher Bollas (1992) *Being a Character: Psychoanalysis and Self Experience* London and New York: Routledge.
- (2) This was the zealous response by numerous professional child saviours to work conducted – very rigorously and scientifically – by the American psychologists Bruce Rind, Philip Tromovitch and Robert Bauserman.
- (3) Symbolic execution can be reproduced *ad infinitum*, in a way that physical execution cannot. Anyone unfortunate enough to end up on the Sex Offender's Register can expect a lifetime of intrusive 'supervision' by semi-literate policemen and ever 'tougher' legislation by vacuous politicians eager to obtain populist approval.
- (4) This was the term used by a short series of flatteringly uncritical BBC 2 documentaries, slavishly adopting the PR from Scotland Yard's Paedophile Unit *The Hunt for Britain's Paedophiles* – BBC 2, 2002 (see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/2029670.stm>) covering the UK police's arrest of large numbers of men suspected of viewing internet child pornography. These documentaries were effectively free promotional videos on a mass scale for the UK police's 'Operation Ore', which was 'rolled out' to a fanfare of largely uncritical, not to say snarlingly and gnashingly positive, media coverage in May 2002.
- (5) Simple possession of *any* such images, even if accidentally viewed, is illegal under present law and there is no defence; any evidence of possession will result, if detected, in criminal prosecution, almost certainly imprisonment and the inevitable loss of employment that this entails, followed by years, probably life, on the Sex Offender's Register, and compulsory 'treatment'.
- (6) I am grateful to the tireless work of Brian Rothery, editor of the excellent web-site www.inquisition21.com, for drawing my attention to this historical phenomenon.
- (7) Laura Kipnis (1996) *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America* Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press (pp. 11-12).
- (8) This was Leo Bersani's observation, in his remarkable essay of 1987 *Is the Rectum a Grave?*, which began life as a review of Watney's book.

Chapter 2. Marketing Revulsion and Making Up People

“*What kind of a society sends its citizens to prison for their fantasies?*”

Laura Kipnis. (1)

Terry Eagleton began his critique of Richard Dawkins’ best-selling book *The God Delusion* with these words:

“Imagine someone holding forth on biology whose only knowledge of the subject is the Book of British Birds, and you have a rough idea of what it feels like to read Richard Dawkins on theology. Card-carrying rationalists like Dawkins, who is the nearest thing to a professional atheist we have had since Bertrand Russell, are in one sense the least well-equipped to understand what they castigate, since they don’t believe there is anything there to be understood, or at least anything worth understanding. This is why they invariably come up with vulgar caricatures of religious faith that would make a first-year theology student wince.” (2)

Try imagining someone holding forth on human sexuality whose only acquaintance with the subject is ‘A Manual of Pervert-Spotting’ by Dr Michelle Noncemangler, Director of the charity ‘Protect Our Kids!’, and you will have some idea of what passes for knowledge amongst law enforcement officers. I am, of course, resorting to the caricature I disparaged in the last chapter but, I fear, only minimally. To answer Laura Kipnis’ question above: we are the kind of society which sends its citizens to gaol for their fantasies.

The ‘how’ component of this question is relatively easy to discern: place enormous powers in the hands of police officers to investigate a subject area they simply lack the education, training and intellectual resources to comprehend, and let all else follow. This is not meant as a crude ‘all policemen are thick’ diatribe; I would not dispute that many police officers are honourable, courageous and even heroic. But it is to raise an important question about the nature, and quality, of police ‘evidence’ in the field of so-called sexual offences. If one wouldn’t approach a pork butcher to conduct neurosurgery on one’s spine, why allow a policeman to make black and white judgments about human sexuality?

Unless you believe that Esther Rantzen is the pinnacle of intellectual achievement in this field, you ought, perhaps, to be entertaining some serious doubts. Without wishing to sound condescending, if you suspect that thinkers such as Plato, Shakespeare, Wilde, Freud, and Foucault may have thought rather more deeply about sexuality than the bloke down the pub (or various oft-quoted representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers, for that matter), you ought to have serious qualms about the quality of evidence

collected by officers who can't spell reliably or write complex sentences. But 'how' doesn't deal with 'why?' What has happened to get us into this predicament, and why have we allowed it?

Popular Horrors

In our new age of illiberal liberalism, a deeply censorious form of compulsory politeness which insists that everyone has to sign up to the same vision of the good life or face punishment, the mainstream view, as with victimhood more generally, is that child abuse remains a taboo subject, which no one wants to address openly and vigorously. The victimologist vanguard has to keep pushing its salvationist programme through, against appalling Establishment (and common) indifference.

But even a moment's reflection exposes this embattled posturing as something of an overstatement, to say the least. There is no indifference, whether in that mythical beast the 'general public' or its creator, the mainstream media, or the Establishment. In fact, the exact opposite is true: people are hugely interested in the rampantly metastasising discourse of child abuse, especially child sexual abuse. People want more and more stories, more and more lurid details, and the media are only too happy to feed them by the tub-full, almost invariably in the form of bovinely uncritical regurgitations of the crude propaganda and sexual hysteria peddled out by what I call the Child Exploitation Industry.

There is virtually never any scepticism, any independent critical inquiry, about these terrifying (and terrorising) claims and assertions. But, presently, this is a subject in which our self-appointed moral guardians have seen to it that scepticism is Not Permitted. You are either 'for' Child Protection, or you are against it. If you are suspected of falling into the latter camp, you are not merely exercising your right, in a free society, to a sceptical or minority point of view. You are an enemy, and quite probably an enemy harbouring disgusting and vile tendencies: a 'pervert's apologist' at best, if not an example of that very monster everyone loves to hate – 'the' Paedophile. Something called 'society', always assumed, never defined, must, at all costs, be defended against this evil beast.

So, when senior policemen proclaim that parents must snoop on their teenage kids' internet activities, and must accept that police officers posing as teenagers should inveigle themselves into youngsters' internet social networking forums, eavesdropping on their intimate communications with friends and peers, monitoring their every word and posted photograph, because 'it is estimated that up to 50,000 sexual predators are on-line at any one time', you must accept such assertions on trust, just as most journalists do.

50,000 Predatory Perverts Prowling On-Line

Although I promised in my Introduction not to bore the reader with statistics, it might be enlightening to spend a little time here on them, not least because this particular ‘estimate’ is pure moonshine, as would become apparent after a few moments sober questioning. That most journalists wholly failed to subject it to any kind of critical scrutiny in all of the countries where it was peddled (the USA, Canada and the UK being the most prominent) is a phenomenon which justly acquires the status of a symptomatic act. Most journalists, including those in the so-called ‘quality’ (broadsheet) end of the newspaper and electronic media market, simply regurgitated this number as a fact.

A notable exception to this lamentable trend, however, was provided by journalist Dan Gardner, who took issue with the number and subjected it to critical enquiry, as one would have hoped any journalist worthy of the title would have done. What he found is worth noting. (3) Gardner offered the following cautionary advice to anyone coming across such startlingly high, and tidy, numbers:

“There’s one obvious reason to be at least a little suspicious. It’s a round number. A very round number. It’s not 47,000 or 53,500. It is 50,000. And 50,000 is just the sort of perfectly round number people pluck out of the air when they make a wild guess.”
p. 33

Gardner is picking up on an interesting point: this is not the first time evangelical salvationists have resorted to dodgy statistics. Judith Levine, in her courageous and chilling account of the rise of militant child salvationism in the original child porn panic of the 1970s, noted similar statistical fictions. Virtually all were simply recycled, as they are now, by credulous and guileless journalists. Levine recalls that, before 1976, the child pornographer was ...

‘... a feeble beast and an even worse businessman. In fact, he was almost bankrupt. Raids aimed at cleaning up Times Square for the Democratic Convention uncovered only a miniscule cache of kiddie-porn. But those few stacks of dusty, decades-old black-and-white rags, already illegal, were enough to launch a crusade.’ (4) (Levine, p. 33)

The crusaders were led by a team that would epitomise the anti-child-porn forces – a child psychiatrist and a policeman (in 1976, they were Dr Judianne Densen-Gerber and Sergeant Lloyd Martin, a vice cop). As Levine continues:

“The two careened from sea to sea, stoking outsized claims. Before a congressional committee in 1977, Densen-Gerber estimated that 1.2 million children were victims of child prostitution and pornography, including “snuff” films in which they were killed for viewers’ titillation. Martin travelled the country orating speeches of evangelical fervor,

warning America on one Christian television show, for instance, that “pedophiles actually wait for babies to be born so that, just minutes after birth, they can grab the post-fetuses and sexually victimize them.” At that 1977 congressional committee, he declared that the sexual exploitation of children was “worse than homicide.” (5) (Levine, p. 33)

As you might by now be predicting, Levine proceeds to reveal that, a few years later, police testified that child porn had never been more than a boutique business even in its modest heyday of the 1960s. Moreover, the 1.2 million number, which Densen-Gerber subsequently doubled, was later exposed as the arbitrarily quadrupled figure one author said he’d ‘thrown out’ to get a reaction from the law enforcement community (Levine, p.33). Interestingly, Levine notes that these champions of compassion and moral rectitude would soon slip ignominiously from public esteem and prominence: Densen-Gerber under suspicions of embezzling public monies and employing coercive and humiliating methods at Odyssey House (the drug-rehabilitation empire she had previously founded), Martin removed from his post at the LAPD for harassing witnesses and falsifying evidence.

Despite these dishonourable endings, however, the crusaders’ work, based as we now know on sensationalism, insane exaggeration and plain dishonesty, had been accomplished. On the basis of flummery, cant and deceit, Congress passed the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation Act of 1977, prohibiting the production and commercial distribution of obscene depictions of children younger than sixteen. Politicians and campaigners in the UK, as ever, standing downwind of American manias and sniffing eagerly, followed a similar trajectory. Virtually identical claims about prevalence and extent were made, all of them eagerly lapped up by a pre-emptively outraged media. The culmination was even more draconian than the American legislation. In 1978 the Protection of Children Act reached the statute book, making the simple possession of such material by private individuals an offence, as opposed to its distribution and commercial production.

In the United States, as Levine notes, one of the first casualties of the new law was *Show Me!*, a sex education book for prepubescent children featuring explicit photographs of children, from around six to their early teens, engaged in sex play. Although it seems incredible to our paedophile-obsessed contemporary sensibilities, the book was showered with awards when it was first published in 1970. By 1978, it was being seized in police raids and pulped. Keeping children in enforced ignorance about erotic pleasure was clearly what passed as morality for the crusaders.

Returning to the present and the ‘50,000 internet predators’, a small degree of critical intelligence did surface amongst some journalists. In the United States, National Public Radio established that the person who had quoted this figure to the television

programme Dateline, which, of course, then proceeded to broadcast it without any attempt at verification, was an FBI agent named Ken Lanning. Speaking now to a journalist from NPR who was indeed trying to establish where Lanning had got it from, he replied “I didn’t know where it came from. I couldn’t confirm it, but I couldn’t refute it either, but I felt it was a fairly reasonable figure.” (Gardner, p. 35)

A figure which could not be sourced, which was actually nothing more than a piece of lurid imagination plucked from the ether for propagandistic purposes, was nonetheless circulated widely throughout the media because, with no evidence whatsoever, an FBI agent thought it sounded reasonable. Lanning went on to note a curious coincidence that Gardner had already picked up on: 50,000 was the figure quoted in the child abduction panic of the early 1980s (i.e., the number of children ‘it was estimated’ were being kidnapped by strangers annually). By the end of the decade, it was also the number of murders committed by Satanic cults. As Gardner notes, ‘These claims, widely reported and believed at the time, were later revealed to be nothing more than hysterical guesses that become ‘fact’ in the retelling’ (p. 35). Perhaps the twin-like resemblance of the online predator number to these earlier frenzies made it sound ‘fairly reasonable’ to Lanning (although ‘suspiciously familiar’ would have been a more truthful evaluation).

If news and current affairs programmes carry hair-raising and horrifying stories of child abduction, rape and murder, the inevitable revulsion and fear will take root in the audiences. But fear and revulsion are not especially useful guides to sane risk evaluation, especially when it comes to our favourite contemporary hate: crime (and especially sexual crime). Gardener observes astutely that mainstream news media, both broadcast and print varieties, have an almost obsessive preoccupation with crimes, but not with crime. To use his example, we will get to hear over and over again about the little old lady held up at gunpoint. But we will very rarely, if at all, hear about just how many little old ladies are being held up at gun point, whether more or fewer are being held up than in the past, who is holding them up and why, or what policies might protect little old ladies. As Gardner puts it:

“Rising crime means more crimes are committed. It’s easy to reflect that; simply run more stories of people assaulted and murdered. But falling crime means fewer crimes are being committed, a trend which cannot be captured by stories of individual crimes because a crime that is not committed is not a story. And so simply because the media focus on crimes while ignoring crime, rising crime will always get more attention than falling crime.”

(Gardner, p. 196)

And, I would add, the illusion of rising crime can be powerfully fostered even when, as

presently, it is actually falling year on year on just about every objective scale used to measure it. ‘Paedophile abduction is no larger now than when records began – still infinitesimally small!’ is not a headline. “Evil Paedo snatches kid from hotel apartment!” is.

Political grandstanding and irrational campaigns by unscrupulous salvationists have succeeded in elevating the ‘sex offender’ into the modern day witch. Sex offenders are seen as irredeemably and unreformably bad eggs, forever prey to uncontrollable sexual demiurges. But because a belief is popular does not make it true. As Gardner observes, many studies, including those of the U.S. Department of Justice, show sex offenders are less likely to commit another crime after release than other sorts of criminals (Gardner, p. 211). The UK Home Office has drawn similar conclusions. None of these findings, however, inform political decisions to draft ever more draconian laws. One final, spine-freezing paragraph from Gardner:

“Having warned of a threat, politicians must also come up with new ways to deal with it. In one month in 2006, the Louisiana state legislature passed 14 laws targeting sex offenders (an output one state governor justified on the grounds that ‘every time you turn on the news, some kid is getting abducted, raped, and murdered’). But after giving first offenders an automatic 25-year minimum sentence; after passing laws that allow for offenders who have served their sentence to be imprisoned indefinitely if they are deemed dangerous; after ordering released offenders to register and making their names, faces, addresses, and places of employment available on the Internet; after barring offenders from many forms of work; after banning them from living within 1,000 feet of schools, parks, and so many other places that they are often rendered homeless and driven out of town; after requiring released offenders to wear satellite tracking devices for the rest of their lives – what’s left? It’s a dilemma. ... In the 2006 gubernatorial race in Georgia, one candidate – the lieutenant-governor – called for a crackdown on Internet luring. That put his opponent – the governor – in a bind. He couldn’t simply second the proposal. So the following day, the governor announced that if he were re-elected he would authorise juries to sentence child molesters to death.”

(Gardner, p. 13)

Gardner notes that, as in the UK, few of these policies are inspired by criminological research and even fewer actually contribute to public safety: sex offender registries might be wildly popular but there’s simply no reliable evidence that they work. When a task force convened by Canada’s federal government concluded a registry ‘would not significantly improve’ public safety, and the money spent on the registry would do more good elsewhere, the government went ahead anyway. Gardner reports that the minister in charge privately apologised to the civil servants handling the file. ‘It’s politics,’ he told them (Gardner, p. 213).

So, with no reliable evidence to support their claims, the mouthpieces of the child exploitation industry continue to insist that the perverts are out there, waiting to ‘groom’ your son or daughter towards a rape, ‘looking at’ your child’s posted pictures and photos through paedophile’s eyes. You are not meant to ask how they came up with such a figure, nor when (or where) it originated, still less what extrapolations and presumptions are included within it. To raise such impertinent questions to the new defenders of society is to raise questions about yourself. The suspicion – very likely the accusation – will almost inevitably follow that you are the modern, secular counterpart of one of Satan’s Disciples.

If the Child Exploitation Industry wants us to believe that there is some indefinable but pervasive resistance to their project of exposing and punishing child abuse, it is a very peculiar form of resistance. Far from being characterised by mighty doors in the corridors of power being firmly shut and leant on from behind by an insouciant Establishment, it is more accurately depicted as a scene in which every door knocked, or even simply approached, swings wildly open on its hinges. As Stephen Bruhm and Natasha Hurley recently observed in an excellent collection of essays, (6) child protection, and, I would add, the increasingly draconian and ruinous punishments meted out to all those deemed to have been transgressors, has in the last two to three decades become the cornerstone of Western law.

From Compassion to Enjoyment

It is simplistic in the extreme to attribute the prevailing hunger for these stories, especially those featuring sexual abuse at the hands of our contemporary bogeyman, the child molester, purely to concern and care, although these qualities are undoubtedly also present. All ideologies require something real to hook into, and the ideology of ‘the child in danger’ is no exception. Real fellow feeling, real concern for the well-being of youngsters, does undoubtedly exist. But it can also be exploited, hijacked and sentimentally manipulated; and it is a major part of the ensuing argument that this has been happening on a massive and irrational scale.

Converting good-hearted solidarity into malignant, misanthropic paranoia has been the principal effect, if not the mission, of the Child Exploitation Industry, and they have been brilliantly successful in achieving their aims (and lucratively furthering their careers). Promoting something called ‘child protection’ or ‘child safety’, as extremely well-funded organisations like the British charities NSPCC and Kidscape do perennially with the dogged determination of fundamentalist mullahs, is of course simply code for promoting parental fear and insecurity.

This is ultimately the magic ingredient of their campaigns: exaggerated, irrational fear.

They'd quite simply go bust without it. We are to suspect that everyone is a potential or actual child molester or abuser, simply masquerading as a respectable person. This just means that media-savvy campaigners for organisations like the NSPCC, which spends huge amounts of the money it raises from your pockets on self-promoting publicity, have worked out that ordinary human compassion can be hijacked by fear and twisted into vengeful paranoia.

But besides fear, there is another magic ingredient which I believe plays a major, if not the major, part in child abuse campaigns: enjoyment. If you can alloy fear to enjoyment, you are likely to have forged the most effective of ideologies. (7) These are more intimately interrelated, more complicit, than we want them to be; the horror movie genre is ample proof of the intense enjoyment accompanying fearful imagery, so long as a certain voyeuristic distance and detachment from the scene is guaranteed.

I am, of course, using the word 'enjoyment' in its psychoanalytic, as opposed to ordinary, sense. Enjoyment in everyday English is just another word for 'pleasure.' But the French have another word, a word which conjures a notion of pleasure pushed beyond its most extreme limit – a horrific delight, an obscene bliss where the distinction between pleasure and pain is shattered. Orgasm is often cited as the model; but try to imagine a scenario where orgasm has become boring and you want an even more convulsive experience. Then you are in the territory of *jouissance*. It is enjoyment in the French sense of *jouissance* that I am thinking of here. Scandalously, I am suggesting that, alongside the horror and disgust consciously experienced by those who avidly read about child abuse in the popular press, there is *jouissance*. Why keep returning to issues which are supposedly unbearably painful? *Jouissance* – obscene (off-scene), hidden enjoyment is almost certainly the answer. Our public, decent selves can be disgusted and outraged without compromising the addictive fascination of our obscene selves.

Power, as we saw in the previous chapter, no longer appears as the capricious whim of over-mighty warlords, kings or feudal barons, belching their way through sumptuous banquets as they send their minions to torch nearby villages. To repeat a point I mentioned earlier, power is now mediated by morality, law and economy, rather than invested in the body of a monarch or a clansman. But that does not mean that it is has become cuddly and benevolent. Power was mediated by morality, law and economy in Oscar Wilde's day too, but that did not stop it from completely destroying him with the utmost ruthlessness and cruelty.

That most onlookers in his day were fully in agreement with the vindictive and ruinous judicial treatment meted out to him in no way justifies it; it simply reflects the form that sexual disgust, perhaps the most pernicious and irrational variety of disgust of all, took in his day. Wilde, notwithstanding his exhilarating intelligence, spellbinding talent, deep compassion and uncompromisingly courageous irreverence, was financially, socially,

psychologically and, ultimately, physically destroyed for being judged a heretic – that ‘abominable and detestable crime against nature’, as it was called back then.

I referred in Chapter One to the great French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, who would have discerned the reasons for Wilde’s death with little difficulty: if you wholly exterminate someone’s symbolic stature, it is only a matter of time before the flesh and blood body follows. Humans are creatures of symbols, who also have bodies (although the human body, as soon as it is immersed in language, can never be merely a meat and bone entity – it is inescapably always a symbolic phenomenon, too). It is a commonplace assumption that, should the body suffer too much trauma, depletion, illness, wear and tear, etc., the symbolic being will shuttle off the mortal coil, too. It is perhaps less commonsensically registered that, should one’s symbolic status be destroyed, should one find that all the words, titles and descriptions that socially represent one have suddenly been turned to ashes, the death of the physical body is almost certain to follow very shortly. This is what happened to Wilde; he contracted cerebral meningitis whilst living as an impoverished outcast in France, and died on 30th November 1900 aged forty-six, just three years after his release from incarceration with hard labour. I think his bodily self could no longer survive the torture of symbolic annihilation, which, unlike physical death, one has to remain alive to.

His appallingly cruel destruction poses us twenty-first century dwellers with an intriguing question: is ‘heresy’, as a method of categorising and exterminating the ‘enemies of society’, now dead, or has it re-surfaced, with a new, contemporary brand name, in our midst? You guessed it - it has, and the new heretic is ‘the paedophile’.

From inappropriate acts to inappropriate persons

The definition of just what constitutes ‘the’ paedophile, as it is commonly used by the Child Exploitation Industry, is as confused and meaninglessly over-inclusive as the definition (actually, the indefinability) of sodomy was. It was Foucault who most elegantly drew out the constitutive confusions this term ineluctably carried with it in the juridical history of the West. Foucault’s analysis describes a kind of radical historical discontinuity between the age of sodomy and the age of sexuality. It is worth citing him at length here:

“... silence and secrecy are a shelter for power; but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance. Consider for example the history of what was once “the” great sin against nature. The extreme discretion of the texts dealing with heresy – that utterly confused category – and the nearly universal reticence in talking about it made possible a twofold operation: on the one hand, there was an extreme severity (punishment by fire was meted out until well into the eighteenth

century, without there being any substantial protest expressed before the middle of the century), and on the other hand, a tolerance that must have been widespread (which one can deduce from the infrequency of judicial sentences, and which one glimpses more directly through certain statements concerning societies of men that were thought to exist in the army or in the courts. There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth century psychiatry, jurisprudence and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty and “psychic hermaphroditism” made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of “perversity”; but it also made possible the formation of a “reverse” discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or “naturalness” be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.” Michel Foucault, 1976, p. 101. (8)

In this book above all others in his oeuvre, Foucault brilliantly exposes the way in which modern power functions. Today, sex is policed not by silence but by voluminous and ceaseless talk. In Foucault’s language, this incessant speech constitutes what he calls the ‘deployment’ of continually proliferating ‘discourses’ of social regulation, such as medical, psychological, psychiatric, etc., accounts. The new form of law does not prohibit an underlying deviance, even when it claims to be doing so, but actively produces new forms of deviance which it then polices: all descriptions, from Foucault’s point of view, are also constructions.

The more we talk, the more we create the categories of deviance available for regulation, a process which of course results in the call for ever more resources to pour into the policing and regulating industries. If it is now regarded as true that paedophilia is our most menacing social evil, if, as Donald Findlater of the child abuse charity The Lucy Faithful Foundation has argued, “We know the problem [of paedophilia] is of monstrous proportions ...”, (9) Foucault would draw his attention to the fact that this is largely because people like him and the organisations he and his fellow crusaders make their living in have made it so. This does not mean that campaigners have merely raised public consciousness about an appalling problem that had hitherto been ignored; it means, from a Foucauldian point of view, that they have largely manufactured a problem and secured the funding and media repetition necessary to keep on stoking it up.

In an extraordinary discussion broadcast in France on 4th April 1978 by France-Culture, Foucault was joined by two other prominent radical intellectuals of the era, Guy Hocquenghem and Jean Danet. They talked specifically about the production of paedophilia. (10) The debate is remarkable not only for its intellectual acuity but also because, from our present day vantage point, it would be hard to imagine it being broadcast anywhere today. They were, perhaps, beginning to articulate a form of the ‘reverse discourse’ Foucault described in the quotation above, the counter-response of those positioned by the dominant discourse as deviant (you can call a chicken an

‘ephebofowl’ without consequence, but if you call a human being one, he might begin to answer back).

Addressing the ‘decency/indecency’ paradigm that was being articulated by jurists, doctors and psychologists since the nineteenth century, the discussion grappled with the way in which children, or, rather, the concept of children, were being aggressively recruited to strengthen regulatory practises. Early in the discussion, after noting that a moment of apparent sexual liberalism in the 1960s and early 70s was now being ferociously closed down by the authorities, Guy Hocquenghem had this to say (remember, this is 1978):

“These new arguments are essentially about childhood, that is to say, about the exploitation of popular sentiment and its spontaneous horror of anything that links sex with the child. Thus an article in the *Nouvel Observateur* begins with a few remarks to the effect “pornography involving children is the ultimate American nightmare and no doubt the most terrible in a country fertile in scandals.” When someone says that child pornography is the most terrible of present-day scandals, one cannot but be struck by the disproportion between this – child pornography, which is not even prostitution – and everything that is happening in the world today – what the Blacks have to put up with in the United States, for instance.”

(Kritzman, ed., p. 273)

Had he lived to express views like this today, Hocquenghem, who died in 1988, might be asked to attend a police station for questioning – no one is meant to raise questions about the disproportionate over-reactions and outright fabrications of the defenders of decency. Even so, as they were speaking then, before punitive progressiveness had reached total ascendancy, and since a record of their talk survives, they may yet inform us now about something our authorities would prefer us to remain deaf and blind to. Burning books containing pictures of illegal willies is perhaps not as effective as burning books with dissident arguments in them.

The discussion, presciently describing our present day structures of regulation and punishment, outlined the constitution of a new type of criminal: the type of criminal all ‘decent’ people would require protection from. This was the criminal who endangered the purity of the innocent, the vulnerable. Of course, ‘the child’ was the prototypical model of this category. From a criminology of acts, we began to have a criminology of types of person. Before the invention of this new typology, anyone could have committed a sodomitical act against anyone else – you were punished for what you did, not what some shrink said you were. But with the new typology, the basis of punitively protective, coercively caring law, your behaviour would now be construed as signposting your essential nature. Foucault, Hocquenghem and Danet noted that,

previously, the law had not been particularly interested in the ages of sexual partners so long as no one complained. But the new typology brought with it a new notion – the idea of an ‘attack without violence’ (in French “attentat sans violence”).

The attack without violence was specifically constructed, in the new typology, around childhood. As Foucault notes, especially after Freud had demolished the myth of a presexual childhood, children were suddenly constructed as having a radically different category of sexuality. In fact, not only should children be protected from adult sexuality, but also from their own desires, especially if they found themselves developing a crush on an adult (God help adolescent school kids, who do this all the time). As Danet puts it, the new protectors would say,

“...yes, of course, children do have sexuality, we can’t go back to those old notions about children being pure and not knowing what sexuality is. But we psychologists or psychoanalysts or psychiatrists, or teachers, we know perfectly well that children’s sexuality is a specific sexuality, with its own forms, its own periods of maturation, its own highpoints, its specific drives, and its own latency period. This sexuality of the child is a territory with its own geography that the adult may not enter. It is virgin territory, sexual territory, of course, but territory that must preserve its virginity. ... It could be that the child, with his own sexuality, may have desired that adult, he may even have consented, he may even have made the first moves. We may even agree that it was he who seduced the adult; but we specialists with our psychological knowledge know perfectly well that even the seducing child runs a risk, in every case, of being damaged or traumatised by the fact that he or she has had sexual dealings with an adult. Consequently, the child must be protected from his own desires ...”

(Danet quoted in Kritzman, ed., pp. 276-275)

It is perhaps difficult for those who have absorbed these ideas fulsomely to question them, or even to acknowledge that they are not timeless truths but modern inventions. What is now perceived as an unbridgeable divide was once perceived as a simple continuum. Hocquenghem, who was involved from the age of fifteen in a sexual relationship with an adult without any of the allegedly inevitable pathological consequences, had this to say:

“What we are doing is constructing an entirely new type of criminal, a criminal so inconceivably horrible that his crime goes beyond any explanation, any victim. ... In the case of attentat sans violence, (11) the crime in which the police have been unable to find anything, nothing at all, in that case the criminal is simply a criminal because he is a criminal, because he has those tastes. ... The constitution (12) of this type of criminal, the constitution of this individual perverse enough to do a thing that hitherto had been done without anybody thinking it right to stick his nose into it, is an extremely grave

step from a political point of view.” (Hocquenghem quoted in Kritzman, p. 278)

The creation of a new type of unutterably vile person, (13) as opposed to unutterably vile act, has had certain predictable consequences. As the discussants observed, a lawyer will be quite happy to defend someone accused of murdering ten old ladies. That wouldn't bother him in the least: “But to defend someone who has touched some kid's *bleep* for a second, that's a real problem.”

Just thirty years later, you don't have to be accused of actually touching a kid's genital. You just have to be accused of looking at a picture of one. A new breed of vile pervert is born.

Heresy in the 21st Century

The contemporary terror and fraught fascination with paedophilia belies a profound instability, if not a kind of indefinability, in its juridical deployment. Currently, anyone from a muddled eighteen year old boy falling in sexual love with a fourteen or fifteen year old, to an unhappy middle-aged man seeking transient distraction from the insurmountable problems of his life by sitting in front of his computer screen and gazing at ‘under-age’ (14) images, to the tiny number of child abducting rapists and sexual murderers, all stand together as one after compulsory registration on the UK's Sex Offender Register. The term ‘Sex Offender’ as it is used in most public discourse effectively erases all differentiations, violently categorising these diverse and heterogenous people into a spurious, imaginary unity.

The unmistakably medieval vocabulary of heresy has had a long innings, lasting virtually unchanged for centuries, surviving in statutes and in religious faith, not to mention in the often unexamined background beliefs of many ordinary people. The war on heresy has been a long one, far longer than the war on terror, and it has resulted in immeasurable suffering and unquantifiable loss of life. It's a word that is rarely used, at least in ordinary conversations, in the twenty-first century. It sounds twee, bigoted and old-fashioned, the sort of word, like ‘sodomite’, that came out of the mouths of reactionary old codgers in ermine and wigs, bashing their gavels dyspeptically upon their benches, in a bygone era. But I don't think this means that it has gone. It is still very much with us, destroying lives, shattering families, tearing parents away from children.

It's just that, recently, it has undergone a renovation: beliefs fashioned in ancient, pre-scientific and pre-democratic times can be opportunistically recycled for the digital age provided the vocabulary is modernised (and modernisation is all the rage these days). For fourteen centuries, men (and to a lesser extent, women) who were drawn to same-sex erotic intimacies were frequently branded as heretics or ‘sodomites’, and faced

grotesque capital punishments as a result. (15) Mercifully, nearly a millennium and a half of hanging, mutilation and burning have come to an end. Today, you will no longer be sent to the gallows or the stake if you experience same-sex desires. But, whilst it may presently be fashionably ‘right on’ to be kind to gays and lesbians, we would be deluding ourselves in the extreme if we were to imagine that this new ‘tolerance’ amounts to fundamental ethical progress.

The hideous persecution of people practising same-gender sex in former times may seem, to many contemporaries of the early twenty-first century (in the Western capitalist democracies at least), to have been a horrific exercise in madness, as ludicrous as it was murderous. Former times often seem so weird, their fears so insanely irrational and ridiculous, that they appear to be quite incomprehensible in the modern world; just think of the panic over child masturbation that irrupted like wild fire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with batteries of expert pedagogues writing manuals and offering suggestions to worried parents on how to deter such abominable sinfulness in the young. (16)

Under the expert advice of the day, little girls and little boys had their hands and arms strapped to the sides of their beds each night, or were subject to intrusive and vigilant nocturnal surveillance, all in order to prevent them indulging in the evil affliction of self-abuse. Children of both sexes were repeatedly warned by fearful parents and pedagogues that not only would they degenerate into physical and mental invalids in this life, but hellfire and damnation awaited them in the next if they so much as placed a finger of their genitals, other than to void urine. In confronting these ludicrous beliefs now, we are tempted to shake our heads in horrified bemusement, and wonder what on earth drove the authorities of that era to leap on such preposterous bandwagons, investing such ruthless fanaticism in deterring what everyone now knows to be both universal and harmless (it really doesn’t make children go mad or deaf), and most assuredly no business of ‘the Authorities’ (or anyone else) anyway.

But we should pause before we congratulate ourselves too fulsomely on our greater enlightenment and toleration. As the British writer and literary theorist, Jonathan Dollimore, has brilliantly shown, what frequently appears superficially as a radical break with the past very often covertly sustains a radical continuity with ancient discourses. When these archaic discourses concern sexuality, it rapidly becomes evident that any real commitment to reason and rationality should readily consign their dominant contemporary interpretations to the historical graveyard of fanatical, hysterical and, ultimately, purely daft ideas.

Barbarism is usually considered, in much liberal thought anyway, as an anachronistic continuation of archaic cruelties. But I think this is part of the complacent self-idealisation and hubris which represents the present as an advance on the past, a

contemporary ‘we’ who are so much more enlightened and wise than those prejudiced and superstitious folk of bygone centuries. My contention is rather different; the barbarism which counts – which, in order to preserve appearances, presently exports torture to less fastidious regimes, and which deposes democratically elected radical governments and installs bloodthirsty religious (or martial) maniacs as custodians of order - comes from the present, much more so than it derives from the past. And it appears today in the form of unacknowledged terrors and hatreds belonging to both Western liberals and reactionaries, both of whom see themselves as quintessential bastions of beleaguered civilisation.

The paranoid moralists of today are constantly on the lookout for pegs in ancient texts to hang their wholly modern hatreds on. Whatever meaning these texts might have had at the time of their origin has long been lost, or ignored; ancient discourses – ancient texts – are read through the lenses of modernity. In other words, the moralists of the contemporary moment select what they wish to hear from these obscure and distant tomes. (17) As Gore Vidal once observed, (18) the Old Testament Book of Leviticus has been used to great effect by the zealots of the religious right to hound and bash ... I have issues with my sexuality!

“What we inherit from the past, in the realm of sex, is the morality of patriarchs and clansmen, souped up with Christian hostility to the flesh (“our vile body”, Saint Paul called it), medieval chastity cults, virgin/whore complexes, and other detritus of ancient repression. Given these legacies of unequal moralism, nearly every civilized aspect of sexual morality has initially looked deviant, decadent, or sinful, including voluntary marriage, divorce, and nonreproductive sex.” (19)

In other words, the obscurity – and remoteness – of ancient systems of belief are being used to legitimise a thoroughly modern barbarity. As Dollimore drew out in an important essay of 2001, (20) it is undoubtedly true that the open expression of crude racism, misogyny and homophobia has become less and less possible, in certain important public contexts at least, in recent times. Legislation such as the notorious Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act, which prohibited the ‘promotion’ (i.e., discussion) of ‘the’ homosexual lifestyle by local authorities, especially schools, would be difficult if not impossible to get through parliament less than twenty years later. Similarly, the spiteful and bigoted resistance by a majority of politicians, Lords and neurotically sex-hating lobbyists, to the equalisation of the ‘age of consent’ for homosexual sex seems almost shocking today.

It would be churlish to imply that we should not applaud such developments; but it would be vacuously stupid to celebrate a new age of sexual enlightenment. Society’s self-appointed moral authorities have always tried to ensure that ‘morality’ means nothing other than the dreary, neurotic, petit-bourgeois aversion to sex (which paradoxically coexists with a fraught preoccupation with it). As the American

philosopher, Richard Rorty, put it, debates about morality with these ground rules in place tend to ensure that gay-bashing is in, while abortion is out. (21) The British Marxist intellectual, Terry Eagleton, has been even more pointed: in this version of morality, immorality is always about what goes on in the bedroom, but never about what goes on in the boardroom. If large companies impoverish entire communities by closing down a factory in order to capitalise on cheaper labour costs in the ‘developing’ – i.e., more easily exploitable – world, this is just business as usual. But a single ‘inappropriate’ sex act, even an imaginary one, if it can be proved, will bring forth an incendiary moral maelstrom of brimstone and fire upon your house, whether you are a policeman, a doctor, a Naval Officer or a High Court Judge (all of whom are represented in the casualty list arising from the recent fanatical witch hunt masquerading as high morality – the UK police force’s Operation Ore). Neurotic moralism, in short, is obsessed with bawdiness, but curiously indifferent to bombing.

It is part of the contention being worked through in what follows that we might do well to jettison the ‘one size fits all’ moralism of our moral guardians, steeped in ancient bigotry and superstition as it is, and adopt what Michael Warner has called an ethic of sexual autonomy. Surely, Warner argues, it should be possible for people to enjoy sexual autonomy that is consistent with everyone else’s sexual autonomy. (22) We are, however, light years away from such sane sexual democracy.

Perhaps we need to explore not merely a history and sociology of the moralist sensibility, but a psychoanalysis. What goes on in the moralistic mind? Let’s address this in the next chapter.

(1) From her book of 1996, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America* Durham: Duke University Press, p. 3.

(2) Terry Eagleton ‘Lunging, Flailing, Mispunching’ (Review of Richard Dawkins *The God Delusion*), London review of Books, 19th October 2006.

(3) See Dan Gardner (2008) *Risk: The Science and Politics of Fear*, especially Chapters 3 (“Stone Age meets Information Age”) and 9 (“Crime and Perception”); London: Virgin Books Ltd.

(4) Judith Levine (2002) *Harmful to Minors: The Perils of Protecting Children from Sex* Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

(5) Densen-Gerber’s comments can be read in U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary, *Sexual Exploitation of Children: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Crime*, 95th Congress, first session, 1977, 42-28. Martin’s remarks to the same committee are in the same document, page 48. His comments to the Christian TV show were reproduced in the *Bay Area Reporter*, March 18, 1982, 8 (“‘Child Sex Cop’ Transferred”).

(6) Stephen Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, “Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children”, p. xxii, in Stephen Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, eds, *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota press, 2004.

(7) I am taking the term ‘ideology’ to mean those dominant cultural stories prodigiously pumped out of our cultural factories with the aim of obscuring material injustices and inequalities. The function of these widely circulating stories is simple but, to the principal beneficiaries of the status quo, inordinately important: socially reproducing and sustaining existent power structures. These stories

secure, or attempt to secure, the notion that ‘what is’ is not only as good as it gets, but also that it is ‘what ought to be’ and that - in the words of one their most artful and successful champions, Margaret Thatcher - ‘there is no alternative.’

(8) Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: The Will to Knowledge* Penguin, 1976, p.101

(9) Quoted in an article in *The Independent* on 1st June 2007 “Police Chief: ‘Viewing’ paedophiles need not be jailed.’

(10) A transcript of this discussion was published as “Sexual Morality and the Law” in Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed.) (1988) *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977 – 1984* New York and London: Routledge.

(11) In other words, consensual, mutually pleasurable sex across the line separating the age of minority from the age of majority.

(12) Hocquenghem is referring to the ‘making up’, as opposed to the essential make-up, of this type of person.

(13) As Foucault famously put it, in ancient civil or canonical codes, “heresy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology.” Foucault, 1976, *ibid.*, p. 43.

(14) From 2004, the age at which someone is legally categorised as a child – ‘under age’ as far as depictions of erotica are concerned -has increased to 18. Some militant child salvationist NGOs are lobbying the United Nations to increase the age still further to 25, on the grounds that some eighteen year olds look like younger teenagers, and will thereby release predatory paedophilic desires and intentions in those who view them (reference). Whilst these people are quite possibly certifiably insane, they are being indulged by politicians who desperately crave secure populist approval.

(15) Lewis Crompton’s encyclopaedic study, *Homosexuality and Civilisation*, chronicles this history of terror with chilling sobriety.

(16) The early eighteenth century tract *Onania*, for example, advises parents and children that masturbation “perverts and extinguishes nature; he who is guilty of it, is labouring at the destruction of his Kind, and in a manner strikes at the Creation itself.” Cited by Michael Warner, “The Ethics of Sexual Shame” in *The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics and the Ethics of Queer Life* New York: The Free Press, pp. 3-4, 1999.

(17) For more intelligent readings of ancient and modern texts, which attempt to furnish insights into the material conditions in which such texts emerged, as well as how meanings other than the officially prescribed, dominant meanings can be gleaned, one could do worse than read Jonathan Dollimore’s impressive oeuvre, especially *Sexual Dissidents: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault; Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture; Radical Tragedy; Sex, Literature and Censorship*, as well as Alan Sinfield’s excellent *Cultural Politics - Queer Reading* London: Routledge, 1994, and *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. Terry Eagleton provides a Marxian slant in his *Sweet Tragedy; After Theory, and Holy Terror*, although his whole work demonstrates the radical yield from ancient writings that can be harvested from a cultural materialist reading perspective. Each of these authors read from a cultural materialist point of view, although the first two inflect their reading lenses with insights gleaned from some aspects of contemporary queer theory and psychoanalysis. All demonstrate the value of appropriative, as opposed to denunciative or repudiative, readings. Sexual dissidents need all the intellectual resources history can furnish in order to resist over-mighty and violently coercive contemporary moralisms. As Eagleton has pointed out, radical dissidents and conservatives are both traditionalists, and their traditions have lengthy lineages; it’s just that radicals belong to a completely different tradition – of dissent and liberty – to the authoritarian possessiveness of cultural conservatives.

(18) Gore Vidal “Sex is Politics”, 1978, in *Sexually Speaking*.

(19) Michael Warner, 1994, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

(20) "Sexual Disgust" in Jonathan Dollimore (2001) *Sex, Literature and Censorship* Oxford and Cambridge: The Polity Press, in association with Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

(21) Richard Rorty (1998) *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers, Volume 3* New York, Melbourne and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

(22) Michael Warner, 1994, *op. cit.*

Chapter 3. Analysing animosity

“A graduate student at the University of Nebraska was forced to remove a photo of his bikini-clad wife from his desk, when two female students complained to the chairman that they felt sexually harassed by it. This used to be called “paranoia.” Why are snippy neurotics running our lives?” Camille Paglia (1)

If it remains possible to convert fiction into fact by constant repetition, as child salvationists, victim feminists, careerist police officers and tabloid editors have discovered, it is perhaps some comfort to those they have destroyed, should they still be alive, to recognise that the same formula does not appear to work for truth. No matter how sincerely you believe your own lies, they will still remain lies, no matter how many times you tell them. It may be useful to explore what would happen to the assertions of moralists if we received them from a psychoanalytic, as opposed to a journalistic, perspective.

Code words and scapegoats

The great American dissident and writer, Gore Vidal, once commented on the use of code words by opportunistic politicians, fundamentalist morality crusaders and authoritarian law enforcers, in fomenting outbreaks of mass hate, particularly at times of crisis or opportunity (such as bad news coverage for the government, or election campaigns, or the exceedingly rare example of the gruesome murder of a child, especially if this involved sexual molestation). As it is now considered a matter of bad taste to deploy openly racist, misogynistic or homo-bashing vocabularies, American authoritarians (like their British counterparts) devised substitute terms to distract people from their real economic and social-liberty interests, code words which all ‘right thinking’ people can easily decipher. This means that when vote-hunters want to conceal the fact that they will do nothing to advance the lot of those whose lives are blighted by preventable poverty, or do anything to even minimally assist ordinary income earners struggling to make ends meet, they will launch populist campaigns (fanned and fuelled by a snarling and slaving media machine) under headings like ‘law and order’ and ‘getting tough on welfare chiselers’.

At the time of Vidal’s essay, many white, God-fearing Americans (whom Gore calls ‘Christers’) believed, wholly contrary to the evidence, that criminals and welfare claimants were chiefly black, with the result that these campaigns were widely registered as meaning ‘Get the ... I am a racist idiot!

Presently, we find that we (apparently) have no need for code words; there is a recently manufactured group which has no constituency to protect it, and onto which it is possible to displace all the hatreds which can no longer be openly expressed towards

blacks, unconventional women and gays. Moreover, such hatred can be expressed without let or hindrance, and without mincing words: 'Protect our children!' means 'Get the paedos!' and both phrases can be used openly and interchangeably in public. And we all know that 'paedophile' means child-abducting sex-murdering rapist.

But as far as real children are concerned, we might find ourselves in a saner, more congenial and more rational world for their upbringing if we were to suspend our customary fear and loathing toward 'paedophiles.' I think this word is being used as a propagandistic codeword, with effects every bit as malignant as the ... I am a racist idiot! One rapidly discovers, when confronted with a victimologist, that their questions (for example, "Do you consider this a victimless crime?") have nothing to do with intelligent debate, and everything to do with incrimination and condemnation, in other words, with closing down debate, not opening it up. The questions, as I'll elaborate upon in a moment, share presuppositions which you are not meant to challenge (Should you answer, "Ought looking at pictures be regarded as a crime in the first place?" you will certainly increase your chances of getting a harsher prison sentence). In the simplistic, primitive world of good guys and bad guys dreamt up by prosecution lawyers and child salvationists, divergence from the one true path of moral rectitude is, by definition, crime. If you look at a picture of a boy or a girl, it means you are planning to *bleep* a boy or a girl. That this is the most insupportable bull*bleep*, that there is no evidence whatsoever to support this, despite many decades of trying to establish such crude causal links, will not deter zealous salvationists from claiming that their own weird fantasies about you should be regarded as fact.

Disgusted decency

If most of the men destroyed by Operation Ore and its poisonous spawn are now redesignated as 'paedophiles', we are very peculiar paedophiles. We are the kind of paedophiles who have no desire to have sexual contact with 'children' (the scare quotes simply hint at the absurdity of contemporary UK law - a 'child' covers anyone from a toddler in nappies to a sexually active seventeen year old). There are presently many, many more people in prison, and almost certainly permanently ruined as a result, for looking at pictures than for molesting children. It is a category error of truly psychotic proportions to regard the two acts as equivalent.

The fact that huge numbers of so-called 'internet paedophiles' (people who have looked at photographs and drawings) are herded onto the same register as child rapists and sexual murderers, who, despite their tiny number, nonetheless serve to represent public fantasies of 'sex offenders', merely accentuates the absurdity (or political expediency) of such a crudely overinclusive list in the first place. I strongly suspect that most of these men, if I and the others I met on the ludicrous thought-crime programme we were subjected to are anything to go by, are harmless, gentle individuals who simply got a bit

depressed. But mass incarceration, psychological torture and excessive stigmatisation tend to happen when paranoid revulsion gets mistaken for morality. A law suffused with hysterical hate is unlikely to be a sane one, or to have sane effects.

This is not intended as one of those well-intentioned but naïve flower-power denunciations of hate favoured by sappy, idealistic hippies in the 1960s, which viewed aggression as a kind of preventable psychopathology. Sadly, holding love-ins and urging everyone to be nice have not led to greater world peace. I share the psychoanalytic view that hate is not only an ineradicable aspect of human nature, it can also be at times both necessary and healthy. It becomes malignant and destructive only when it is disowned, displaced or mendaciously rebranded as a kind of righteousness.

Any form of ‘decency’ which is founded on an act of murderous violence or humiliating cruelty will be forever haunted by that primary aggression no matter how assiduously it seeks to bury it. This kind of decency – ‘Get the scapegoat!’ decency - will always feel the insistent undertow of its indecent origin; it will be compulsively driven to shore up its dissimulated virtuousness by locating the bad guy outside its city walls. It is a structure in need of an enemy. Indeed, it is defined by its excluded other: I am ‘X’ because I am not ‘Y.’ And all Xs must be defended against Ys, who must be tracked down, rounded up and eliminated, for the good of society, for preserving our way of life, for public protection, for the sake of the children. Defending supposedly unquestionable social norms by manufacturing fictional enemies, whilst pervasive, is a project worthy of further enquiry. Establishing something called ‘decency’ on the basis of eradicating other people is, one might think, a questionable enterprise. Moralists, however, have always operated like this: ‘I’ am ‘decent’; ‘you’ are a ‘pervert.’

Indecent scepticism

But psychoanalysis raises impolite questions about these distinctions. Could it be that what is banished from my preferred version of myself - ‘I’ - simply gets exported to ‘you’? Can I feel superior by forcing you to feel inferior? Or, can other people be used as receptacles into which ‘the decent’ expel their unacceptable fantasies?

Psychoanalysis, at its best, opposes these deceits. It is less concerned with identifying dangers from other people, from outsiders, than it is with accepting all those dangerous desires we would rather attribute to others. And even more incomprehensibly to small-minded moralists, psychoanalysis insists that acceptance does not mean enactment (quite the opposite, in fact).

Decency, innocence, danger, paedophilia: four terms which not only seem to depend upon each other but are today as interconnected as conjoined quadruplets. A pivotally unsettling question might be to ask what it is we (think we) know when we believe we know what these words mean. As manifest paedophilia (3) is exceedingly rare, and as

the number of assaults and murders committed by the most dangerous individuals has remained the same, infinitesimally small, for many decades, the rising tide of horror and panic (and enjoyment) surrounding this contemporary bogeyman must be attributable to something other than climbing numbers.

It may be more edifying to examine what the official storylines about children leave out. As Slavoj Žižek put it:

“Perhaps the best way of encapsulating the gist of an epoch is to focus not on the explicit features that define its social and ideological edifices but on the disavowed ghosts that haunt it, dwelling in a mysterious region of nonexistent entities which nonetheless persist, continue to exert their efficacy.” (Žižek, 2000, p. 3) (4)

All positive assertions, all creeds, all institutions, in other words, may profitably be subject to a psychoanalytic ‘x-ray’ for an examination of their structuring fantasies. From a psychoanalytic point of view, the ghosts which haunt us come from our own unwanted and disowned desires. The profit arising from psychoanalytic investigation, then, will not take the form of fortification for the dominant moral order, but of the truths it would prefer to keep obscured. It is perhaps little wonder that moralists and victimologists prefer cognitive behavioural psychology, which has nothing embarrassing or incriminating to say about their less manifest motivations at all.

Psychoanalysts, in addition to their formal teaching and reading, are obliged to undergo a lengthy personal analysis (the ‘training analysis’) before they are allowed to practise; they are expected to know their own weaknesses, irrationalities and temptations in order to avoid projecting them on to their future patients. Cognitive therapists learn from manuals and textbooks: they are rarely required to question themselves, and certainly not to the degree and duration of a psychoanalyst. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a technology, psychoanalysis a journey into the human soul. This does not make it above criticism; but its depth and breadth, drawing from art and literature as well as science, history and anthropology as well as philosophy, equip it to make a radical critique of cognitivist psychology, and CBT in particular, which the latter is wholly unable to reciprocate.

Before considering the weaknesses of cognitivist approaches further, we might pause here, as a prelude to analysing animosity, the distorted, malignant form hate acquires when it is projected onto others and disowned by the projector, to raise some questions about what we think we know when we know that we want to ‘get the paedos.’

Questions we love, questions we avoid, and people we love to hate

The American academic James Kincaid, who has studied the emergence into culture of the 'erotically innocent' child from the Victorian era to the present, is worth quoting at some length. His thesis, based on painstaking historical and literary analysis, is that it is the ideological insistence on 'childhood innocence', the emptying out from the ideological figure of the child of all abrasive attributes (aggressivity, sexuality, envy, avariciousness, etc), that has had the perverse effect of directly eroticising real children in the minds of the very same adults who suspect sexual abuse everywhere they look.

What the ideological construct of 'the child' is left with once these attributes are evacuated are precisely the very qualities (of purity, innocence and reticence) which were, and still are, perceived by many men to be intensely erotic, as young Victorian women, who were often suffocatingly reared to behave in these ways, frequently discovered. The great psychoanalyst, Melanie Klein, revealed in her work with children just how charged with aggressivity, sexuality, envy and sadism even very young children can be. For the salvationists, anything negative which occurs in a child's mind or conduct can only have been put there by a beastly adult. For Klein, this is a sentimental delusion and grossly unjust to real children, who cannot live up to such wishful adult prescriptions.

Unless they adopt the role of victim, real children are left to struggle with powerful psychic forces which their egos are too immature to bind safely, or they are demonised as anti-social yobs or even as evil devil-children, as the popular media depicted the two pathetic and very disturbed children who murdered the toddler James Bulger in 1993. In many respects, the shrill hatred and terror mobilised by the high priests of tabloidworld against these unfortunate boys was as venomous, paranoid and bloodthirsty as that of the authorities depicted in Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*. Creating lynch mobs is hardly a sign of either morality or civilisation; regrettably, many newspaper editors and journalists appear to regard such campaigns as hallmarks of public decency.

Commenting on a series of high-profile media frenzies centring on child sexual abuse in the contemporary USA, all compulsively and repeatedly told and re-told to an eagerly receptive public, Kincaid wonders about why we love certain questions but not others. To begin with, Kincaid considers the questions we don't love to ask. Listing the various massively publicised stories he has just analysed (5), he raises the questions we prefer not to address, or don't even think of addressing: what is the source, the nature and the size of the pleasures we take from such stories? What are these stories, where do they come from, and why do we tell them with such relish? What kind of relish is it? Why do we want to hear these feverish tales about the sexuality of children, and why do we listen to them so eagerly? What is it about the child and its eroticism that so magnetizes us? In short, why do we tell the stories we tell? Why do we need to hear them? As Kincaid notes, despite the fact that these are plain sorts of questions, we often don't attend to them. We prefer others, which he lists as follows:

1. How can we spot the paedophiles and get rid of them?
2. Meanwhile, how can we protect our children?
3. How can we induce our children to tell us the truth, and all of it, about their sexual lives?
4. How can we get the courts to believe children who say they have been sexually molested?
5. How can we get the courts to believe adults who suddenly remember they were sexually molested as children?
6. How can we get ourselves to believe others when they say they remember being sexually molested years ago?
7. How can we know if maybe some people are not making these things up, misremembering?
8. How can we know if bumbling parents, cops and (especially) therapists are not implanting false memories?

Though some of these questions seem to take revenge on other questions, they all have one thing in common: they demand the same answer, “We can’t”. (6)

Kincaid is mapping the contours of a, possibly *the*, most addictive social panic of all: paedohysteria. We are often aware of what and who we hate, and why we hate them, but less often are we aware of why (or even that) we sometimes love to hate. It is this ‘loving to hate’ factor which I believe is of pivotal importance in our perennial, and escalating, addiction to panics over children and sex, and to our horrified fascination with paedophiles, the contemporary cultural repository for our most viscerally enjoyable hatreds. Perhaps now is a good moment to take a closer look at hate – healthy and pathological.

Hate: true and false

Might there be such a thing as healthy hate? It’s an emotion that often gets a bad press; we think of necks bulging with engorged veins, spittle flying from snarling mouths, and fits of hair raising violence. But, if we momentarily set aside red-necked racialists and bile-spewing fundamentalists, we might begin to find a more ordinary and beneficial emotion. Perhaps the most remarkable thinking on hate remains that of the British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, who wrote a seismic little essay about it as early as 1947 (7).

Winnicott’s startling finding is this: hate is a necessary part of human emotional development. If you can’t hate objectively, you will hate subjectively – forever despising that which, via the fantasy of projection, you have lodged in other people. The point here is that projection distorts perception and sabotages genuine fellow feeling: you cannot

truly relate to another human being if you are actually all the time seeing only what you have projected onto him. In other words, you will be forever on the run from your own unwanted emotions, or forever trying to control other people because you imagine they are laden with disavowed bits of yourself. Worse still, *in extremis* you will be unable to differentiate between love and hate, a tragic, life-blighting confusion which Winnicott found in psychotic patients (for psychotics, wholly unable to hold conflicting emotions of love and hate together, love is hate). And even more startlingly, hate begins at home, in early infant care. It only becomes unmanageable when it is disavowed or sentimentalised (which, for Winnicott, is a sickly attempt at self-deception: ‘I’m purely good and kind and caring; only bad people hate.’ This is a ‘you, not me!’ manoeuvre aimed at concealing powerful emotions).

Is it possible, Winnicott effectively asks, for a mother to safely and healthily hate her infant? A cognitive behavioural therapist would be scurrying toward the latest manual on anger management to teach such a wayward parent the right way to be normal (in other words, a silly fantasy dreamt up by cognitive behavioural therapists). A Winnicottian analyst would say “Of course you hate, as well as love, your baby; you’re not sick or wicked – it’s a natural response to the wear and tear, the tyranny even, of your infant’s ruthless neediness!”

Babies and toddlers don’t really care very much if you’re running on empty, if you’re desperate for a sleep, or a pee, or a ham sandwich. They just require you to respond now, without delay, to their discomfort, to their wish for company, to their immediate interests, fickle as quicksilver though these may be. In the beginning, every parent of a small child knows that there is no way around this ruthless demandingness, because to a very young child it is an entitlement, a right, not a special privilege. If you can allow them, small children will teach you how to parent them, or what they need from you, which amounts to the same thing. And since all children are unique, no manual on normalcy can tell you what to do. In fact, if you rely on these guidelines as opposed to the special cues provided by your very own child, you are almost certain to run into error. Children are not born normal – they haven’t read the manuals or the tabloid press. They just experience and respond according to their own particular rhythms and preferences. Experts on normalcy will claim otherwise, but no expert on normalcy could possibly be an expert on your child’s development (no one can be an expert on your child apart from you).

Ordinary mothers, Winnicott insists, have at least eighteen reasons to experience completely sane and unremarkable hate towards their babies (and mothers, Winnicott claims, hate their babies long before their babies are capable of hating them). Here are a few of them:

The baby is a danger to her body in pregnancy and at birth.

The baby is an interference with her private life, a challenge to her preoccupation. To a greater or lesser extent a mother feels that her own mother demands a baby, so that her baby is produced to placate her mother. The baby hurts her nipples even by suckling, which is at first a chewing activity. He is ruthless, treats her as scum, an unpaid servant, a slave. He tries to hurt her, periodically bites her, all in love. His excited love is cupboard love, so that having got what he wants he throws her away like orange peel. He is suspicious, refuses her good food, and makes her doubt herself, but eats well with his aunt. After an awful morning with him she goes out, and he smiles at a stranger, who says: 'Isn't he sweet?'(8)

I laughed out loud, in relief, when I first read this, as a young first-time father; I suspect that all of us who have seen babies through to maturation, whether we are mothers or fathers, will recognise some if not all of the items on Winnicott's list. The crucial point here is that most mothers survive this early experience of ruthless infant neediness without collapse or retaliation (9). They do not give vent to their hate: they just know that the love they feel will balance it out, and they might just as well bear it as try to get rid of it.

Later, when small children begin to know about hate themselves, when, inevitably, they discover that mummy and daddy are unable to prevent discomfort, sleepy crankiness, momentary hunger, transiently cold wet diapers, and so on, they will feel more at ease with this emotion if they have been fortunate enough to have had parents who can handle it. For Winnicott, this just means getting through it without becoming vengeful or victimised. It is this experience, that of a loved parent who can survive their primitive, pre-concern ruthlessness, which enables infants to integrate aggression as a resource (i.e., 'I can be angry without destroying everything I love'). The strain on mothers, or primary carers, is as enormous as it is unavoidable. As Winnicott puts it:

"A mother has to be able to tolerate hating her baby without doing anything about it. She cannot express it to him. If, for fear of what she may do, she cannot hate him appropriately when hurt by her child she must fall back on masochism, and I think it is this that gives rise to the false theory of a natural masochism in women. The most remarkable thing about a mother is her ability to be hurt so much by her baby and to hate so much without paying her child out, and her ability to wait for rewards that may not come at a later date." (10)

It might be worth looking at Winnicott's psychoanalytic response to a delinquent boy during World War II, if only to contrast it with what such a 'young offender' might find in the culture of professionalized vindictiveness which dominates today's agenda. The

boy, nine years old, had been sent to a hostel for evacuated children Dr. Winnicott consulted to. But, Winnicott tells, unlike most of the other children, he had been sent there not because of bombs but because of truancy. Winnicott mentions that he had hoped to give the boy some psychotherapeutic treatment during his stay in the hostel, 'but his symptom won and he ran away as he had always done from everywhere since the age of six when he first ran away from home.'

However, during an interview prior to hostel admission, Winnicott realised that he made a significant connection with him: "I could see and interpret through a drawing of his that in running away he was unconsciously saving the inside of his home and preserving his mother from assault, as well as trying to get away from his own inner world, which was full of persecutors."

These words are worth pausing over. Rather than being frogmarched into 'addressing his offending behaviour' long before he had any capacity to do so, as he would undoubtedly have to do today at the hands of behaviour managers, his actions are instead accorded a degree intelligibility through Winnicott's deep awareness of his survival techniques. Rather than being given an ASBO and made to attend a meaningless behaviour programme, the boy instead feels deeply understood by this slightly eccentric man, who senses that he has never been able to express natural aggression and appetite safely and securely. Truancy, for this boy, is a form of love - 'I will run away rather than hurt you, mummy, because I know you can't take my aggressive feelings.' Even more poignantly, Winnicott understood the terrible fear driving this child's manifest conduct: "If mummy can't handle my aggression, it must be too evil to look at, so I'll just run off whenever I feel cross, or after someone has angered me. My head is full of monsters."

I'll let Winnicott describe what followed in his own words:

"I was not very surprised when he turned up at the police station very near my home... My wife very generously took him in and kept him for three months, three months of hell. He was the most loveable and most maddening of children, often stark staring mad. But fortunately we knew what to expect. We dealt with the first phase by giving him complete freedom and a shilling whenever he went out. He had only to ring up and we would fetch him from whatever police station had taken charge of him.

"Soon the expected change-over occurred, the truancy symptom turned round, and the boy started dramatising the assault on the inside. It was really a whole-time job for the two of us together, and when I was out the worst episodes took place.

"... The important thing ... is the way in which the evolution of the boy's personality engendered hate in me, and what I did about it.

“Did I hit him? The answer is no, I never hit. But I should have had to have done so if I had not known all about my hate and if I had not let him know about it too. At crises I would take him by bodily strength, without anger or blame, and put him outside the front door, whatever the weather or the time of day or night. There was a special bell he could ring, and he knew if he rang it he would be readmitted and no word said about the past. He used this bell as soon as he had recovered from his maniacal attack.

“The important thing is that each time, just as I put him outside the door, I told him something; I said that what had happened had made me hate him. This was easy because it was true.

“I think these words were important from the point of view of his progress, but they were important in enabling me to tolerate the situation without letting out, without losing my temper and without now and again murdering him.” (11)

I suspect that if Winnicott had managed this poignantly troubled child's symptoms like this today, a social worker and a policeman would have been knocking on his door, ready to arrest him for child abuse (fortunately for them, they would not have to take on this child's massive and provocative disturbance themselves). In today's tyrannical ideology of compulsory niceness to 'victims', all the child needs is love, patience and kindness. If a child proceeds to trash these qualities, without mercy or respite, it is the fault of the carer, not the child, who has been 'abused' and therefore needs infinite indulgence and compensation. No matter how well intentioned the paving, this particular path leads straight to hell.

A child who has not met intelligent, controlled hate from his parental environment will simply go on trying to find it, go on becoming more and more impossible, as children in local authority 'care' so frequently and tragically do. This benign hate, Winnicott shows us, is a necessity. Such children have to do this until they find what they are looking for (good, ordinary, healthy hate) or their aggression feels limitless; it is not an especially good idea to burden children with providing their own limits.

Winnicott believed that early parenting placed an enormous strain on young mothers and fathers, and that they should be afforded equally enormous support and understanding, even when they made mistakes. Although he could not endorse what follows (he died in 1971), I think he hints here at some of the main causes of contemporary paedohysteria. If you have to simply contain your own inevitable hatred of being treated like a slave, of being deprived of sleep and time to yourself, of being rejected at whim by His Majesty the Baby while he smiles charmingly at the lady in the supermarket checkout, you might be tempted to do a fundamentally dishonest and futile thing. You might choose to repress your healthy, ordinary hatred, instead of simply bearing it in the faith that it will soon

pass.

Freud knew that repression was not simply a swallowing down of bitter truths, a holding inside. It could also take the form of *transference* – literally, transferring the feelings you cannot bear to acknowledge as your own onto an outsider. This is the point at which healthy, ordinary hate turns malignant.

Whilst Freud never disputed the necessity of repression: we are, after all, animals, even if we are the kind of animals who invented civilisation, he was deeply averse to conventional, blind, conformist repression. Animals tend to adopt Darwin's theories all too concretely – if you're having a bad day when I'm feeling bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, I'll eat you. But human animals invented social bonding and shared language to complicate this simple, 'survival of the fittest' rule.

Malignant hating: animosity

Perhaps it is little wonder that a brilliant Jewish polymath, during an era when his culture was about to become genocidally anti-Semitic, worked out the social and psychological dynamics of 'othering' (in Freud's vocabulary, 'transference'). When transference comes to town, sociality changes: suddenly, we have 'us' and 'them.'

Psychoanalysis refuses othering; if you are looking only for an accomplice to justify your hatred toward those you have targeted as beyond the pale, you'd better not go to see a psychoanalyst. A vast battery of spurious experts will be available to you instead, from law enforcement officers, social workers intent on rooting out abusers, to the militant witchfinders running victim survivor groups. If you told one of the latter about, say, a friend at work who had been sexually harassed, they would almost certainly have a good deal to say about what you could do to assist her (or him), for example, helping the 'victim' to report the perpetrator to 'the authorities'. A psychoanalyst, however, may say nothing at all, and simply wait quietly and patiently for further thoughts to emerge in your mind about this scene.

Psychoanalysis, in other words, is not primarily concerned about punishing wrongdoers. It is concerned with permitting repressed, unconscious fantasies, desires and beliefs to emerge for conscious contemplation. For this to happen, you need a quiet, confidential space, and unhurried time, not a list of action points. Cognitive behaviourists and victimologists alike have no concept of the unconscious; therefore you are more likely to receive advice for the 'appropriate' way to act upon the predicament you have just described. Appropriateness and inappropriateness are, of course, defined by the therapist/victimologist.

A psychoanalyst might be more intrigued about why you feel like mentioning this scene

now. This does not imply disbelief; pre-emptive dismissal is every bit as stupid as immediate credulity. The scenario, in fact, comes from Christopher Bollas and David Sundelson in their urgent, stirring warning about the rise of hysterical victimology which, they persuasively and repeatedly demonstrate, has authorised breaches in confidentiality so enormous that psychoanalysis has become virtually impossible to practise in the USA and Britain.

Psychoanalysis depends upon total confidentiality. It requires people to talk honestly about their darkest and most disturbing thoughts, fantasies and desires. With child protection fanaticism being enshrined in numerous laws on both sides of the Atlantic, analysts are now obliged to report to the authorities anyone who talks about ‘deviant’ fantasies (which policemen and prosecution lawyers deludedly regard as straightforward intentions). To fail, or refuse, to do so risks censure and even prosecution (including imprisonment) for the analyst. Notoriously, some of the people most in need of treatment, people with so-called borderline personality disorders, who struggle to keep fantasy and action distinct, and acting out adolescents, who use melodramatic provocation to manage terrible psychic agonies, are the very people who will be most dissuaded from seeking treatment as a result. Needless to say, the small number of individuals who ruminate on assaulting a child will not allow themselves to come anywhere near a psychoanalyst with these conditions in place, even though they may desperately want help. The law, Bollas and Sundelson show, is turning psychoanalysts into policemen.

Let’s return to the example of the patient who reports the incident of a work friend’s sexual harassment. Why on earth would a psychoanalyst remain silent upon hearing this? Bollas and Sundelson have an eloquent and sane reply:

“... in what is termed *object relations theory*, it is always assumed that whatever a patient talks about might express an unconscious and unwelcome part of the self. So the harassing figure at the place of work might be the first unconscious sign of the patient’s verbalisation of a part of himself that is sexually attracted to the friend. By selecting the harasser as an object through which to signify this desire, the patient actually invites the analyst to condemn this desire by indicating shock or outrage, and by suggesting punitive forms of action. Such indications would have the effect of sealing off the patient’s sexuality under a plastic coating of moral authority, bonding the patient and clinician, but, unfortunately, bonding them in opposition to the expression of sexuality.”
(13)

Does moralistically sealing off sexuality from further exploration make it safer or more reformable? Does refusing to discuss something make it go away? There is an enormous difference between the focus of psychoanalysis - the unconscious mind - and that of

ordinary 'advise-based' counselling, which aims to help by telling people what they should do. This is all right if you're thinking of buying a washing machine, but not if you're trying to live your life authentically. Who can tell you how to do that? Instead, psychoanalysis provides a safe, receptive area, marked off from the noise, distractions and provocations of ordinary life, in which to listen to your own mind as it gives you bulletins of unconscious news.

It is in the unconscious that we plant our fears, which include our unwanted desires and temptations (if we didn't have unwanted desires, there'd be no need for an unconscious; those who deny its existence must spend their days trying to escape its effects, perhaps by becoming a child salvationist). It is precisely because he does not react in a customary social manner that the psychoanalyst can listen out for the subtle, evanescent ambiguities that signal unconscious communication. If we cannot embrace our own unconscious thoughts and wishes, we will resort to pinning them on someone else.

Access to the unconscious can only be approached, as Freud discovered, by freedom of expression ('free association'). If you try to pursue it, by asking questions, you'll simply evoke conscious rationalisations. Uncensored free expression, to this day an almost shockingly radical notion for a curative discipline (aren't doctors meant to ask you about your symptoms?) - inevitably means that you end up saying things you never expected to say, reminiscing about events you'd not thought about for years, and, frequently, saying things you didn't mean to say. For an analyst, the unconscious emerges through what is actually said, not what you intended to say. It is when the conscious ego slips up in its surveillance and monitoring of your talk that the unconscious speaks.

But if the patient is asked to free associate, so is the analyst. The person on the couch speaks freely and truthfully, an incredibly difficult thing to do, in actual fact, and the person behind the couch listens freely. The analyst does not have an agenda other than to wait for unconscious signals. And, as unconscious communications often contain many more than one idea or desire, in listening quietly and freely, the analyst is giving himself time to mull over the possible multiple meanings behind the manifest act or word. Returning to our example, Bollas and Sundelson continue:

"Perhaps the patient is asking that a morally censorious part of her personality be taken on; or perhaps it is a communication from the transference: the patient feels sexually molested in the workplace of psychoanalysis. Whatever the psychic truth seems to be will rarely be instantaneously clear. It will take time - nonreactive time....

"The analyst will, however, eventually come to an interpretation. And if he says, for example, that the patient finds it easier to talk about her own sexual feelings for her friend by attributing them to an aggressive man who deserves condemnation, he has not rejected the patient's account of her friend's work harasser. Instead he has decided, as

always, that whatever psychic truths there are in any narrative must take priority for the analyst and if psychoanalysis is to function.” (14)

What I am trying to get at here is that apparently axiomatic words and deeds can have exceptionally divergent meanings, depending on the libidinal co-ordinates, the unconscious desires, invisibly choreographing them. What you see depends upon what you are using to aid your vision. Just as you cannot see sub-cellular structures like mitochondria with a magnifying glass, so you cannot see unconscious processes with moralistic ideologies.

It is worth pausing on Bollas and Sundelson’s tentative interpretations: if someone feels driven to report, with disgust, a scene of ‘sexual harassment’, is it enough to take this on face value, or would it be wiser to ask: why has this person described this scene in these terms? As victim therapists find any expression of erotic interest from a male toward a female (or even another male) as harassment and victimisation, this question has an added urgency. Do we let rigid ideologues rule our lives, or ought we be free to be sceptical about their assertions? If moralists create an environment in which erotic desire is regarded as a form of assault, what are we to do with our desires? If, as Freud suggests, we are all desiring animals, the notion that desire is the equivalent of assault, or that desire leads ineluctably to assault, leaves us all in deep trouble. Could one desire in a ‘wanting to *be*’ rather than ‘wanting to *have*’ modality (i.e., I want to imagine that I am being an adolescent again, to re-experience that early sexual experimentalism, rather than: I want to *bleep* an adolescent)? Freud would have answered: of course.

In an essay written in the early 1970s (but published much later out of consideration for his patient’s confidentiality), the psychoanalyst Eric Brenman found himself thinking deeply about tunnel-visioned righteousness, which he called ‘cruelty and narrow-mindedness.’ He was working with an extraordinarily vicious patient, who relentlessly veiled her talion-law vindictiveness with a patina of victimisation. So committed was this unfortunate woman to violent virtuousness that she drove almost everyone she approached away from her. Brenman eventually helped her to be kinder, both to herself and to others, but only after years of analytic struggle, during which he had to hold back the frequently provoked inclination to judge her, punish her. As a seasoned psychoanalyst, he knew that if he gave vent to these immediate responses, he would merely entrench her sense of vindictive victimhood. She saw herself as purely good - all her misfortunes and difficulties were inflicted upon her by malevolent and envious others. Naturally, her own spiteful, rigid and malicious treatment of everyone she got close to was rationalised by her as (a) a natural response of a pure, innocent person to other people’s nastiness, and (b) justice. Brenman eventually helped her to let go of this cruel and self-defeating moralism. Nobody can love a spiteful do-gooder, after all.

Summarising the mental manoeuvres involved, Brenman wrote:

“When love and hate clash, either we feel guilt and make reparation, or we are persecuted by guilt. To avoid either consequence, we can pervert the truth, draw strength from a good object and feel free to practise cruelty in the name of goodness. It is as though we omnipotently hijack human righteousness and conduct cruelty in the name of justice.” (15)

Love and hate inevitably clash for anyone rearing a child from infancy - primary, ruthless dependency - to maturity (thanks for helping, mummy and daddy). It is when we try to split these conflicting components apart, encouraged by political moralism, and project them into good and bad types of human being, that emotional lying can become enshrined in public law.

To the politically correct, aggression is a kind of affliction; to most people it is an ordinary component of human emotional responsiveness. We all need aggression and objective hate when it is called for, to protect ourselves from assault and injustice, malicious lies and duplicitous righteousness. Today, a mother who feels negatively, no matter how transiently, toward her child will be viewed as in need of parenting training (CBT again, of course - often taught by people who are not parents themselves but who nonetheless believe that the manuals they have read qualify them as so). For Winnicott, she would be embraced compassionately as an ordinary human being who finds being treated as a slave unpleasant.

But perhaps we have only raised questions in this chapter. We are aware that the fictions, lies and displaced desires that formed racism created a tragedy, a holocaust. But why such horror, such disgust, such hidden enjoyment, now, in childhood sexuality? Why must it always be represented - over and over again, to feed our fascination - as abuse?

Maybe we should take a cool, analytic view at ‘deviant desires’ next.

(1) Camille Paglia (1994), “No Law in the Arena” in *Vamps and Tramps*, p. 50, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.

(2) Gore Vidal (1979) “Sex Is Politics”, *Playboy*, reprinted in Gore Vidal (1999) *Sexually Speaking: Collected Sex Writings* California: Cleis Press, pp. 100-101.

(3) As defined by psychiatry at any rate, which at least attempts to be meticulously discriminating and detailed in its differentiation of various mental ‘disorders’. The police and the child salvationists predominantly seem to use the word ‘paedophile’ in the same way as the black cab driver or bloke down the pub – ‘perv’, ‘nonce’, ‘anyone we don’t like who fancies someone younger than himself.’ The result? If, as is currently the case, anyone under the age of 18 is considered a child in UK law, the salvationists can argue that teenagers exploring sex, mutually and non-coercively, are indistinguishable from four year olds, and someone will have to pay for such ‘abuse’ if it comes to light, even if it is one or both of the teenagers. We now have children as young as 10 on the Sex Offenders Register.

(4) Slavoj Zizek, “Giving up the Balkan Ghost” in Slavoj Zizek, *The Fragile Absolute – or, Why is the Christian legacy worth fighting for?* London and New York: Verso, 2000, p. 3.

- (5) Specifically, that of Ellie Nesler, the mother who shot dead her son's alleged abuser in court, the trial of the Menendez brothers who as adolescents had murdered their step-father whom they claimed had repeatedly sexually molested them as children, Woody Allen's marriage to his adopted daughter, Michael Jackson and his alleged sexual infatuation with young pubescent boys, and the 'Satanic Ritual Abuse' panic culminating in a lengthy trial of parentally accused day-care workers.
- (6) James R. Kincaid "Producing Erotic Children" in *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* ed. Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) pp. 8-9.
- (7) D. W. Winnicott (1947) "Hate in the Countertransference" republished as Chapter XV in Winnicott (1987) *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis* London: Hogarth.
- (8) *ibid.*, p. 201.
- (9) For Winnicott, ruthlessness in infancy is not organised cruelty but an unavoidable developmental immaturity, an ability to feel concern for any else; it is cured by gradual maturation and good enough parental care.
- (10) Winnicott (1947), *ibid.*, p. 202.
- (11) Winnicott (1947), *ibid.*, pp. 199-200.
- (12) Christopher Bollas and Davis Sundelson (1995) *The New Informants: Betrayal of confidence in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy* London: H. Karnac (Books) Ltd.
- (13) Bollas and Sundelson (1995), *ibid.*, pp. 65-66.
- (14) *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.
- (15) Eric Brenman (1985) "Cruelty and narrowmindedness" republished in Elizabeth Bott Spillius (ed.) (1988) *Melanie Klein Today, Volume 1: Mainly Theory* New York and London: Routledge, p. 257.

Chapter 4. Deviant Desires

“Disobedience, in the eyes of anyone who has read history, is man’s original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion.” - Oscar Wilde (1)

“Sexual morality as society - and at its most extreme, American society - defines it, seems very despicable to me. I stand for a much freer sexual life.” - Sigmund Freud (2)

“Sooner or later, happily or unhappily, almost everyone fails to control his or her sex life.” - Michael Warner (3)

Appropriating Psychoanalysis

We might now be beginning to see that a psychoanalytic perspective inevitably, and necessarily, complicates the violent simplifications of moralistic purism. A qualification, however, may be timely at this point: perhaps we need to be more specific about which form of psychoanalysis we are drawing upon. Whereas it once exerted a humane influence on orthodox psychiatry, staying the hand of those who tried to cure mental anguish by cutting bits of the brain out or sending neurone-frying voltages across depressed cerebral cortices, clinical psychoanalysis, at least in its more institutionalised forms, has also been shamefully complicit in the pathologisation of sexual nonconformity. For a discipline whose originator regarded sexual convention as a primary cause of mental suffering, this is a curious development. Whilst I think it is broadly true to claim that the world is all the richer for psychoanalysis, I am less convinced that the same can be said for psychoanalysts. The clinical institutes set up internationally in Freud’s name have, I believe, all too frequently betrayed (or at least compromised) essential Freudian principals, such as emotional neutrality and benign scepticism, in favour of a specious authoritativeness and normative moral ideology.

The psychoanalysis I find most inspirational abjures medicalising and normalising narratives of mental and sexual development. It begins with the premise that we are linguistic animals, whose bodies will never be fully at home in language. The best psychoanalytic writing - and Freud, despite his detractors, remains a most gifted and evocative writer - is less concerned with forcing people to conform with spuriously pre-ordained truths than it is with inspiring people to find new vocabularies to live by. Freud was a living paradox: a medically qualified scientist with a flamboyantly wayward poetic sensibility. He was, as his work shows, never able to reconcile these forces; those clinicians who have subsequently turned psychoanalysis into a form of medical treatment have done so largely by jettisoning what is most specifically Freudian in the process.

The Freudian tradition that I prefer happily engages in ostensibly non-psychoanalytic conversations; it is not so much a branch of psychology, which generally aims to redirect deviant individuals back to the straight and narrow path of normality, as a radical alternative to it. In this version of psychoanalysis, it is normalcy, or rather, our willingness to acquiesce in a dominant moral ideology that generates widespread unhappiness and illness, which in turn requires analysis. It is 'normalcy' which requires (radical, non-normative) psychoanalytic/political analysis, rather than deviance. A psychoanalysis which joins forces with a political critique of regimes of the normal is to be welcomed, not resisted. It welcomes conversations with political history and is sceptical of normalising narratives. Insofar as it is a 'clinical' practise, it is more a form of friendship than a method of treatment (if a friend is someone I can talk to without censoring my thoughts). Perhaps most valuable of all to those of us who have been abjected by fascist moralism, it offers a critique of coercive normativity on the basis that deviation is *intrinsic* to human sexuality, not merely the preserve of a bunch of perverts. In this respect it is universalising rather than minoritising; it suggests that even judges and senior policemen are subject to unbidden erections and 'inappropriate' erotic fantasies, just like everyone else. From a psychoanalytic point of view, what is normal about normality is not conventional morality so much as the myriad ways we fail to abide by it.

When psychoanalysis is freed from institutional ownership, it is capable of yielding radically emancipatory insights, not least because it plays havoc with all attempts to categorise and label. The Freudian unconscious, which no one is immune to, is the seat of ceaseless mobility and subversion; it cannot be petrified into a stable essence or an authoritative formulation. This applies as much to my words as to those of the 'strategic enemy' Foucault warned us of. When I talk of moralists, perhaps I am trying to describe something that infects us all, albeit to varying extents: a version of ourselves which requires authority and certainty to proscribe the threat of liberty and doubt. When we read Michael Warner's opening sentence to his rousing little book of 1999, quoted above, our moralistic selves will dilate with censorious indignation, while our more pragmatic selves will acknowledge its unremarkable truthfulness. Perhaps we should learn to become a little more cautious when we find ourselves governed by our moralistic inclinations; from a psychoanalytic point of view, repugnance is a ruse we deploy in order to avoid engaging with perturbing insights.

Whilst we might justifiably be sceptical about the entire project of identifying types of person – species of humanity – because of its inherent murderousness ('bad' types can be eradicated for the sake of the 'good'), we may nonetheless hold that we can allow ourselves to identify strongly with specific political structures. One structure, the one favoured by our authorities, once believed that moral virtue was given to us by God; only the wilfully sinful would deviate. Secular versions of this replace God with Nature

(or what we might call ‘innate decency’): sexual ‘propriety’ is directed by a ‘healthy’ genetic constitution – decency is in the DNA. ‘Straying’ from ‘appropriateness’ is a form of personal sickness or wickedness. In other words, deviants are genetically abnormal (and therefore inferior), or wilfully defying nature. At least when God was alive, there was a prospect of repentance, forgiveness and going on to live a good life. But when primitive secularists come to town, punishment and eradication become the name of the game.

Substituting one ‘God term’ for another does not necessarily enlighten. If we depose ‘the Almighty’ in favour of ‘normalcy’, where does this lead us? Normalcy is a vacuous concept so long as it remains purely statistical; it’s just what a majority of people do. A desire to be normal, as Warner notes, should lead all of us to clamour for outstanding personal debt and bad breath. Secular fundamentalism may not be a progressive alternative to religious obscurantism so much as a continuation of it, albeit in distorted form. To declare oneself secular without a familiarity with the great religions is to foster delusions of progressiveness based on the repression of religious credos. Whatever is repressed, as Freud so luminously showed us, will return in distorted form. Only ignorance could lead us to claim that religious texts are devoid of value; whilst we should rightly dismiss crude literalists, who think that God wrote the Bible, we might become enriched by enduring wisdom through an engagement with religious texts. Scandalously, Christ did not honour the honourable; instead, He reached out for the disparaged, the wretched, the lonely and the rejected. At its best, Christ’s vision offered solidarity to all who had been brought low by arrogant righteousness. To be righteous, from a Christian point of view, was to acknowledge that none of us are free from sin or temptation, even if institutionalised Christianity subsequently unleashed horrific torture and bloodshed on anyone it declared heretical.

Institutionalised thought, however, inevitably means conventional thought. Conventions conserve, we are supposed to accept, the wisdom of our ancestors. Freudian thought has some politely ‘inappropriate’ responses to these assumptions. Perhaps we might profitably continue to bring a Freudian perspective to bear upon the truth claims of raging righteousness.

Normotic Personalities and Freudian Slips

A number of prominent psychoanalysts, notably Christopher Bollas and Joyce McDougall, have described an almost totally irremediable state of mind found in some patients who seek nothing else than to be (seen to be) normal (4). They appear to be profoundly disconnected from any access to their own unconscious mental life. This does not mean that they do not have an unconscious: one would be floridly mad if one did not push most of one’s whims, impulses and fancies out of sight for much of the time. To be conscious of everything in our minds is to be overwhelmed and paralysed.

But these patients are radically resistant to any form of contact with unconscious activity. Since it is the unconscious which devises our symptoms, or at least our preoccupations (which, from a Freudian point of view, *are* symptoms), this is a potentially serious handicap.

Psychoanalysis depends for its efficacy on facilitating receptiveness to the anarchic productivity of the unconscious mind. Freud had discovered that in conversations governed by conscious intentionality, conventional rules of grammar and syntax pertain. Words ostensibly refer directly to their referents, and the speaker speaks his mind. But consciously crafted words and sentences are not the only utterances that escape from our mouths. Take for example, the man waiting to buy airline tickets to Pittsburgh in a North American airport. When he finally gets to the front of the queue he notices an extremely attractive and well-endowed young woman behind the counter. To his dismay, he finds the words “Two pickets to Tittsburgh” falling out of his mouth instead of the intended request. It is as if two versions of him, with quite different aims and purposes, are competing simultaneously for the use of his mouth (5).

The Freudian unconscious is not a bizarre menagerie of wild lusts and irrational passions: it thinks and lives, and it is ingeniously opportunistic. It, too, has syntax and grammar, but of a radically different kind to that of conscious speech. If our conscious selves are our prosaic selves, our unconscious selves are more like subversive dissident poets. As Jacques Lacan discovered in his fabulous re-reading of Freud’s texts in the light of modern linguistics, the unconscious operates through the inventive deployment of metaphor and metonymy, substitution and combination, pun and rhyme. Far from being a hidden and obscure nether-region, the unconscious is there for all to see. It is more accurate to suggest that *we are in unconsciousness*, rather than *the unconscious is in us* (although together, both statements amount to a truer description).

For those who continue to dismiss the agency of unconscious desire, here is Paul Keegan, in his introduction to the exhilarating new translations of Freud in the *New Penguin Freud* series:

“Doing nothing much is one thing; getting it wrong, suggests Freud, is something more interesting. Ordinary acts bristle with redundancy – with stumbling, slipping, falling; with dropping things, knocking things over, losing things, pouring things over ourselves, with forgetting each other’s names, addressing each other by the wrong names, mislaying the names of our husbands, of our cities; with forgetting what we intend to do, omitting to carry out tasks, mixing up dates. Our days are full of farcical detour and unscripted subplots. We cannot trust ourselves to post our letters, we make mistakes in the writing, we wrongly address them to those for who they are specifically not intended. We put calls through to the wrong people. We take the wrong trains, we register our children with the wrong names, we forget to sign cheques. No sooner do we

receive presents than we mislay them. We are inept at dodging each other in the street, and we cannot be relied on to cross an empty thoroughfare without getting run over. More generally, we produce a constant unspecified static: we fiddle with our clothes and our hair, we scribble things, we jingle our coins, we hum tunes ‘thoughtlessly’, like Sterne’s Uncle Toby; we make meaningless gestures and movements; we are obscurely ‘impelled’ to perform odd acts, acts which are not quite actions. We are the landing strips for all these minor furies. And through it all we say – or rather we come out with – the wrong things, with hybrid utterance, with things concealed but struggling for appearance.” (6)

If our conscious selves try to nail down our utterances and fashion authoritative declarations, our unconscious selves mischievously pull the rug out from under our attempts at mastery and certainty. From a Freudian perspective, *Everyman* is found in our so-called errors and slips, not in our consciously articulated proclamations and public posturing. If most ordinary people can recognise themselves in Keegan’s summation of the ignored slips, bumbles and accidentally blurted truths cluttering our everyday lives, we are already more dissident, and more Freudian, than our conformist selves would like to concede.

Normotic personalities, however, would be stricken; phenomena such as multiple meanings, sliding associations, metonymic mobility are terrifyingly destabilising to the lovers of certainty and enclosure. This is perhaps the main reason why policemen and poets do not make compatible soul mates. We might be experiencing, in the setting up of Orwellian Sex Crime departments (or, to use the officially preferred epithet in the UK, ‘MAPPA’ - Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements - a principal aim of which appears to be the policing of middle-aged men’s private erotic fantasies) an employment bureau for normotic personalities.

To analyse this particular incompatibility a little further, perhaps we may go so far as to wonder whether the decision to become a policeman might itself be a defence against extraordinarily powerful ‘poetic’ tendencies, especially if we are referring to those officers who have chosen to police the sexuality of others. Facetiousness aside, there is a serious, if not pivotal, point in this speculative assertion. Poetry is notoriously promiscuous in its use of metaphor and metonymy; it is unruly, iconoclastic and sometimes shockingly counter-conventional, rousing us out of conformist modes of thought and drawing us to view the world from entirely new perspectives. Unsurprisingly, for those who know that poems are not simply pretty verses (and that love is not merely a warm fuzzy feeling), what we are describing here as characteristics of ‘poetry’ can be seen to apply in all respects to human sexuality.

Human desire, no matter how pious the proclaimed intentions of the person it inhabits (and animates) may be, pays no respect to hierarchy or rank, gender or ‘race’, age or

achievement. It is relentlessly impersonal in the midst of our most person-respecting efforts. Whilst we are doing our best to be decent and nice and holistic, our desire starts dancing to an accidentally noticed ear lobe, or the hollow of a neck, or the enchanting colour of an eye. A prince can desire a pauper, a racist a black man, a victim-feminist a misogynist. Perhaps most perturbing of all in our culture of compulsory paedohysteria, a schoolboy can lust after a favourite teacher. When Freud dislodged desire from the strangulations of joyless moralism and observed where it went, he noted that it was vagrantly experimental and prodigally wayward, ingeniously opportunistic and rudely irreverent. It can be mobilised by the curve of an eyebrow, the movement of a hand, the timbre of a voice, the dreaminess of a gaze, the lustre of eyelashes.

Desire and Deviancy (the Paradox of Prohibition)

Michael Warner gives a vivid summary of normotic moralism in his intelligent, urgent quarrel with sexual normalcy:

“The received wisdom, in straight culture, is that all of its different norms line up, that one is synonymous with the others. If you are born with male genitalia, the logic goes, you will behave in masculine ways, desire women, desire feminine women, desire them exclusively, have sex in what are thought to be normally active and insertive ways and within officially sanctioned contexts, think of yourself as heterosexual, identify with other heterosexuals, trust in the superiority of heterosexuality no matter how tolerant you might be, and never change any part of this package from childhood to senescence. Heterosexuality is often a name for this entire package, even though attachment to the other sex is only one element. If you deviate at any point from this program, you do so at your own cost. And one of the things straight culture hates most is any sign that the different parts of the package might be recombined in an infinite number of ways. But experience shows that this is just what tends to happen. If heterosexuality requires the entire sequence, then it is very fragile. No wonder it requires so much terror to induce compliance.” (7)

There are striking resemblances between what Warner here calls ‘straight culture’ and what we have been calling ‘politically correct moralism’. Perhaps it accounts for why so many victim feminists, allegedly radical and ‘anti-patriarchal’ women, have felt wholly at ease in the company of fascist religious fundamentalists who would still like to burn every non-hetero at the stake. This might itself be a result of their naïve and facile (non)analysis of the politics of the State. As Camille Paglia once noted, women who want to run to the State as a kind of husband every time an impolite male offends them are more than flirting with crude authoritarianism (does anyone really want a policeman and a social worker adjudicating on their erotic fantasies?). I don’t think Warner would dissent from the view that there are large numbers of people who regard themselves as ‘hetero’ sexuals who harbour no malice or paranoia toward ‘non-hetero’ sexuals. But

those who have adopted a militantly ‘heteromoralist’ stance - the devoutly ‘heteronormative’ - will find the fight against fascist modes of thought incredibly difficult to resist. “Nasty types of people (i.e., anyone we don’t like) must be eliminated!” appears to be the popular front behind which victimologists and fascists have united.

Whilst Warner does not develop his arguments in a specifically psychoanalytic direction, even though he is by no means hostile to Freud, we might start a certain psychoanalytic speculation on his thoughts. Contrary to the conventional view that prohibition comes into play in order to block deviant impulses (originally, the devil’s temptations), Freud’s radiant texts show us that desire and repression are complicit rather than opposed. He was the first to recognise that not only do the forces of repression grow ever stronger with every successful act of prohibition but the prohibition itself creates what it is supposed to prevent (Foucault would undoubtedly have agreed, even though he was often less than generous to Freud). From a Freudian perspective, when society introduces impossible moral proscriptions, deviation is desire.

When James Jackson Putnam, an analyst from Harvard, wrote to Freud expressing his view that analysts should take a stronger moral line with their patients, he received the reply which forms the second epigram to this chapter. Henry Abelove, the gay American historian in whose superb essay this quotation features, notes that Freud ‘knew, despised and opposed’ moralistic strains such as Putnam’s (8). Freud’s published writing can be superficially misleading - at times he appears to be siding with social conventions, only to politely blow them apart a few sentences later, or more immediately in a footnote. In his famous *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (a work he could not leave alone, returning to it and adding footnotes for a decade and a half after its first publication in 1905) for example, he writes:

“By demonstrating the part played by perverse impulses in the formation of symptoms in psychoneuroses, we have increased the number of people who count as perverts to a quite extraordinary level ... [We] are forced by the extraordinary distribution of perversions to assume that even the predisposition towards perversions must not be something rare and special but is part of the constitution that is considered normal.”
- Sigmund Freud (9)

As I suspect he knew very well, even in 1905, this definition makes perverts of us all.

But he is not simply saying that what he continues to call ‘perversion’ is more common than many people would like to think; he is going much, much further, as Jonathan Dollimore brings out in his scintillating book of 1991 (10). Politely admonishing fellow (non-psychoanalytic) doctors for their customary expressions of personal revulsion

whenever they discuss ‘the confusions of the sexual drives’ - an attitude of moralistic disdain he clearly regards as contemptible (‘superfluous’ and ‘not appropriate’ are the more courteous terms Freud uses) - he draws attention to ‘the vagueness of the boundaries of what might be called a normal sexual life in different races and different periods of time’ in order to ‘cool the protestors down.’ He is thinking of the Greeks, ‘a people culturally far superior to ourselves’, who not only tolerated men loving boys, but who saw such love as ‘endowed with important social functions.’(11) Imagine a group of child psychiatrists today being asked to comment on male pederasty: it would be virtually impossible for them to avoid loading their words with mandatory expressions of moral disapproval and indignation. We have not moved on from Freud so much as regressed to a pre-Freudian world of obligatory revulsion.

Most radically of all, Freud refuses to regard ‘the perversions’ as either ‘bestialities or degeneracies.’ While one may want to take issue with his continuing use of a word - perversion - that he is systematically draining of all the assumptions it customarily holds, it is abundantly clear that he is neither disgusted nor outraged when discussing it. He goes on to say, in the same text, that the perversions are “... the development of germs that are all contained within the undifferentiated sexual predisposition of the child ... ”(12). For Freud, as he directly states immediately after this comment, we do not become perverse so much as *remain* so: a Freudian view of non-normative sexual expression not only refuses both moralistic condemnation and pseudo-medical pathologisation, it insists that normalcy is a deviation from original ‘perversion’. For Freud, ‘perversion’ was a relatively new, scientific word, which he preferred to the moralistic and anti-scientific term widely circulating in his day, ‘degeneracy.’

When he refers to the ‘undifferentiated sexual predisposition of the child’ he is suggesting that we are all born with a potential for sensual pleasure not yet channelled into what we might call heteronormativity. This early sensuality, which Freud regards as on a continuum with later sexuality, is perverse only in the sense that it has not yet learned the social prescription ‘man is for woman and woman is for man.’ It is an innocent repertoire of pleasures that can be mobilised by vivid colours, by touch, sound, non-nutritional sucking, the sensation of the faeces in the anus, rocking, diapering.

None of this is to suggest that everyone should become a devout Freudian, any more than reading Proust should make you a Proustian or Seamus Heaney a Heaneyian. But perhaps it is to suggest that we might do well to drop both reverence and rejection in favour of *reckoning*: not ‘Is Freud right or wrong’ or ‘good or bad’, but, now that we have his thought, how do we want to use it? This is Dollimore’s approach, which I think most can accept: Dollimore insists that he is not a Freudian, even though he is equally insistent on using Freudian concepts in his cultural materialist argument. We do not have to accept Freud’s notions of a pre-social libido in order to preserve the radical promise of his thought. We can read him as saying, which he does quite explicitly in his essay

Civilised Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness (13) (and even more so in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (14), published 22 years later), not merely that the renunciation of pleasure required by society sets up a conflict between civilisation and our ‘instinctual’ nature, but that civilisation itself, as it ‘advances’ and accelerates its demands, generates its own *internal* subversion. In advancing itself, it becomes its own saboteur, generating both misery and the desire to evade misery with every successive request for more abstinence. When people are preoccupied with dilemmas like this, they are less free to produce, to contribute, although they may appear to conform superficially. I think Freud more than hints, with the second argument, at a radical alternative to politically correct moralism, which, as we have seen, masquerades as decency and righteousness whilst being increasingly unable to conceal its horribly soiled underwear (vicious, intolerant vindictiveness and proliferating paranoia).

If you tire of those who want to ban everything they feel offended by and imprison all whom they feel slighted or defied by (anyone who allows themselves to be groomed into a life of indulgent victimhood will invariably be limitlessly vengeful), the conflict-laden world-view offered by Freud at least allows some promise. Conflict can bring deadlock, although it more usually brings domination: those with power simply suppress those without. But it can also sponsor dialectic. And, to the lovers of domination, dialectic is deeply unsettling: if superior power is forced into an encounter with its subordinated terms, a transformation rather than a stalemate might take place. That superior power has resorted to terror and overwhelming force throughout history to secure its ascendancy does not vitiate subordinate arguments, even if it may result in the imprisonment, extermination or torture of dissident voices.

As Dollimore argues, Freud can be interpreted, from a cultural materialist perspective, as suggesting that authoritarian social norms are not threatened by external deviants: *they generate their own inevitable resistance and subversion*. The perversity such regimes so viscerally condemn are inevitable products of their own repressiveness. Perversity, in the sense of doing something improperly, might also be translated as doing something differently. The first definition employs notions of biblical wickedness to deter waywardness; the latter, an innocent, experimental curiosity.

To be commanded is, no matter how convincing the subsequent display of obedience, inevitably also to be incited. No matter how many times we hear the overt decree “Thou Shalt Not!” there is always a part of us which registers the obscene - off-scene, occult - commandment hidden in the prohibition itself (“You must!”). The Freudian super-ego, having got you to renounce a pleasure, continues to punish you for simply *imagining* the pleasure you have just given up. One is not rewarded for one’s conformity so much as made even more miserable by it. Whilst we are the animals who (have to) have consciences, super-ego conscience is always bad conscience: it obscenely enjoys the suffering it is promoting and grows more powerful with every act of compliance. Whilst

it is never an easy or straightforward manoeuvre to move from the individual ego to society as a whole, the super-ego ('over-I') does sound uncannily like our modern day child salvationist movement. Every time it succeeds in instilling a fear, in ratcheting up paranoia, it swells in power and influence. But the paradox of prohibition is that it produces desires rather than suppresses them.

This has, of course, major implications for modern prohibitionists. "Don't think of 'under-age' erotic scenarios" has precisely the same effect as "don't think of a pink elephant." In the latter case, your mind is ineluctably filled with puce pachyderms. In the former, you are inevitably incited to picture images which could well lead to your imprisonment and symbolic murder (for symbolic creatures such as human animals, symbolic murder is murder).

The fact that modern 'paedophobe moralism' can talk of nothing other than paedophilic imagery ought to alert us to the possibility that something intensely symptomatic is animating the morality police's discourse. Could it be that our contemporary moralists, our orchestrators of murderous witch-hunts, are the only true paedophiles in town? Freud, I suspect, would have little difficulty in at least considering this hypothesis as worthy of further research.

Inadmissible evidence?

Whilst I think that scepticism is the wisest policy when considering any new research, there is nonetheless some ingenious work which might permit us to question the violent hierarchies - the decency/indecency, normal/abnormal binaries - that govern our lives so coercively. The penile plethysmograph is a brutally intrusive device used by the righteous - those who never have 'inappropriate' erotic feelings - to prove that perverts get aroused by dirty pictures of underage genitals (amongst other disgusting and vile things). Of course, the erection detectors are worn only by the identified perverts, never the investigators. But in one study, published in the impeccably respectable American Psychological Association's *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* in 1996, Professor Henry E. Adams of the University of Georgia's Department of Psychology persuaded a group of ardently homophobic men to view gay porn with their militantly hetero-penises nestled securely in the notorious plethysmograph. Another group of heterosexual men who expressed no homophobic sentiments were also included in the study.

As you might have guessed, only the homophobic plethysmograph volunteers persistently demonstrated the most engorged penises whilst viewing gay erotica; ordinary heterosexual men with no animosity to homosexuality were unaroused. As the study calmly states: "Homophobia is apparently associated with homosexual arousal that the homophobic individual is either unaware of or denies." (15) One cannot help wondering what the researchers would have found if their question had been "Is

paedophobia associated with paedophilic arousal?” Militant paedofinders would perhaps prefer us not to speculate about this too much. From a psychoanalytic point of view, our most trenchant terrors, our most fervent fears, signpost our disavowed desires, the insistent longings we dare not acknowledge as our own, not real bogeymen.

When Freud was questioning (and politely obliterating) moralistic norms in nineteenth century bourgeois Vienna, the world he inhabited contained three basic categories of humanity: gentleman, ladies and degenerates (the Jews, of course, of which he was one, were shortly to be designated non-human). He did much to disorient these spurious categories. However, today, in the Department of Sex Crime, at any rate (which is perhaps one of the most enduring achievements of that grotesque mutation known as ‘New Labour’ in the UK), the joyless, life-blighting categories Freud did so much to deconstruct, live on with renewed vigour in the ‘progressive’ project of ‘protecting the vulnerable’. Our new, progressive fascists think that gays are tolerable; old-fashioned bigots got it wrong - it’s the pervs (those who find the beauty of the young enchanting) that we new, enlightened bigots are here to annihilate. Of course, a gay adult, even if he is an adult by a mere few minutes following his eighteenth birthday, will become officially a perv if he desires a boy one pubic hair short of the age of majority. He is the kind of gay who doesn’t count – a paedogay. As for those vile monsters who find young girls erotically beautiful, well ... these monsters are paedobeasts who must be liquidated.

It should be clear by now that the signifier ‘paedo’ authorises murder and vigilante violence. But, if Freud is to be taken seriously, we are perhaps no more murderous than when we are condemning desires that are most proximate to us, that lie most immediately behind the line of prohibition we have just drawn (“Everywhere in sexuality, the highest and the lowest are most profoundly attached to one another (‘from heaven through the world to hell’ [Faust]).” (16) The police tend not to set up specialist coprophilia units (although I hesitate to suggest ideas) largely because turd idealisation remains an interest of an immeasurably tiny number of individuals - who could build a viable career out of hounding a handful of *bleep* worshippers? But if successful professional futures, and massive government funding, can be secured on the back of paedohunting and paedohysteria, might this be because, behind the obligatory disgust and revulsion, somewhere - oddly, uncannily - a large number of people can sense a twinge of paedocuriosity? From a Freudian perspective, this is less than surprising. Aggressive banning is an act of incitement: whatever you do, don’t think of what I’m about to tell you is prohibited. Even if this evoked curiosity is immediately othered onto a (fictional) type of person – the paedomonster - the continued fascination with paedohorror should suggest to even the most superficial Freudian sensibility that a malignantly pathological phenomenon is in full sway. Quite apart from the violent suppression of childhood sexuality involved in the ideologies of ‘innocence’, ‘purity’ and ‘decency’, the war *against* the ‘sexualisation’ of childhood is the sexualisation

children.

Whilst I am deliberately deprivileging the bits of Freud which authorise conservative renditions of sexual normativity, this has less to do with facile eclecticism than with the irreducibly paradoxical and revolutionary contributions he persistently made. I think Freud's texts reveal that he spent his life in a struggle between his desire to build all-encompassing, teleological narratives of 'normal' development, and his acute awareness of a narrative-wrecking, insistently non-compliant unconscious dimension to human existence. He generally allowed the latter to (almost) invalidate the former. Here is that most supposedly Enlightenment man of science at his all too typically post-Enlightenment best:

“Conditions permitting, even a normal person can replace the normal sexual goal with ... a perversion, for some considerable time, or allow the two to coincide. In every healthy person a supplement that might be called perverse is present in the normal sexual goal, and this universality is sufficient in itself to suggest the pointlessness of using the term ‘perversion’ in an accusatory sense. It is precisely in the area of sexual life that we encounter particular and currently insoluble difficulties if we wish to draw a sharp distinction between mere variation within the physiological range and pathological symptoms.” (17)

Whilst using terms like ‘perverse’, ‘normal’ and ‘healthy’ he simultaneously erases the distinctions between them. As Robert May has put it, in “variations” we have not *perversions* but simply *versions*.”(18)

But if there are only versions rather than (per)versions, how do the guardians of normalcy justify their curious hierarchy of evil, in which ‘inappropriate’ erotic fantasies are regarded as far more deserving of intensive criminal investigation and public retribution than owning a third world sweat-shop in which huge numbers of small children's lives are shortened by excessive over-work? Could it be that the former involves processes Freud would regard as pathological, whereas the latter is simply business as usual?

Normal moralism in 4-D: Desire, Disavowal, Displacement and Demonisation.

In his extraordinary essay of 1987, Leo Bersani opens his argument with the comment: “There is a big secret about sex: most people don't like it.” (19) Bersani is drawing attention to the gulf separating the experience of sexual intimacy as pleasure with the widespread sense of sexuality as violent, uncontrollable, abusive and dangerous. Citing the example of a family in an American town who had their house burned down by local residents because their three haemophiliac children were infected with the HIV virus (this was at the height of the moral panic generated by AIDS in the 1980s and early

1990s), he calmly makes the case that the arsonists were not simply maniacs.

Media representations of AIDS were almost without exception, from broadsheet coverage to tabloid, from 'serious' news and current affairs to talk radio, vituperatively terrorising and rampantly homophobic. Gay men, far from being depicted as the principal victims of a terrible public health tragedy, were consistently represented as the agents of their own death, and a threat to the 'general public.' HIV infection became a signifier of immoral gay evil (even if you were simply a haemophiliac who got infected through a contaminated infusion). Bersani's essay is remarkable for his efforts, as a gay man, to calmly understand this representation.

Quoting the British sociologist Stuart Hall on the distinction between simple reflection and the much more elaborate processes of 'representation' - "the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping, not merely the transmitting of already existing meaning, but the more active labour of *making things mean*" (quoted on p. 203) - Bersani shows how easy it is for people to build up deeply sedimented beliefs about those the media have 'othered' (represented) for them, beliefs which reflect irrational prejudice rather than measured analysis. With the violent hierarchy operating between 'good' (monogamous, family-protective) sexual intimacy and the dangerous (disavowed and projected) sexuality of 'others', he writes "An important lesson to be learned from the representation of AIDS is that the messages most likely to reach their destination are messages already there. Or, to put this in other terms, representations of AIDS have to be X-rayed for their fantasmatic logic; they document the comparative irrelevance of information in communication." (20)

We need little encouragement, in other words, to vent visceral revulsion on those who symbolise our disavowed fantasies about sex because this is a displacement authorised by the factories of representation which virtually constitute the air that we breath from the moment of our arrival on the planet onwards.

If Freud is right, we can only register the existence of a deeply repressed desire in the form of its negation; where do our fantasies of dangerous 'other' sex come from? Bersani, perhaps surprisingly, follows some of the arguments of the principal architects of today's victim feminists, such as Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, who have militantly (and, it has to be said, eloquently) argued that pornography is simply a reflection of the pervasive male domination of women and, as such, is intrinsically violent, even where 'overt' violence is not depicted. It is violent, from their perspective, because it eroticises a politically entrenched inequality. As Bersani notes, the ultimate logic of MacKinnon's and Dworkin's critique of pornography is the *criminalisation of sex itself until it has been reinvented*.

Radically dissenting from this utopian conclusion, Bersani argues that power and

powerlessness, mastery and subordination, are not statuses belonging to types of people, or to genders, so much as rhythms, intrinsic to human sexual experience from early life onwards. If we could learn to resist putting one side of this dialectic into a separate species of humanity, if we could live a truly reciprocal sexual life - not a reciprocity between persons, but a reciprocity between the erotics of power and its thrilling relinquishment dancing in us all - we may become less paranoid, less needful of imaginary scapegoats and less drawn to utopian projects of sexual purification. As Bersani notes:

“The panic about child abuse is the most transparent manifestation of this compulsion to rewrite sex. Adult sexuality is split in two: at once redeemed by its retroactive metamorphosis into the purity of an asexual childhood, and yet preserved in its most sinister forms by being projected onto the image of the criminal seducer of children. “Purity” is crucial here: behind the brutalities against gays, against women, and, in the denial of their very nature and autonomy, against children lies the pastoralizing, the idealizing, the redemptive project ... More exactly, the idealization is identical to the brutalization.” (21)

Using real children as repositories for our wished for innocent ‘inner child’ is itself an insidious form of child abuse. Bersani’s work suggests that, whilst it may never be possible to make sex completely safe, and the effort to do is likely to be both tyrannising and counterproductive, we may yet be able to make it saner. It is to this possibility, in the form of an ethic of sexual autonomy, that we might usefully turn next.

- (1) Oscar Wilde (1891/2001) “The Soul of Man Under Socialism” in *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, p. 1081, St Helens: Collins.
- (2) Letter from Sigmund Freud to James Jackson Putnam, quoted in Henry Abelove (1966) ‘Freud, Male Homosexuality, and the Americans’ *Dissent* (Winter 1966), p. 63.
- (3) Michael Warner (1999) *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics and the Ethics of Queer Life* New York: The Free Press, p. 1.
- (4) See Christopher Bollas (1987) “Normotic illness” in *Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* London: Free Associations Books and Joyce McDougall (1990) “Plea for a Measure of Abnormality” in *Plea for a Measure of Abnormality* London: Free Associations Books.
- (5) This example is taken from Phil Mollon’s concise and enlightening little book of 2000 ‘*The Unconscious*’ (p. 3) in the “Ideas in Psychoanalysis” series, Cambridge: Icon Books.
- (6) Paul Keegan (2002) “Introduction” to Sigmund Freud (1901/2002) *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* p. viii, (The New Penguin Freud series, General Editor: Adam Phillips) London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- (7) Michael Warner (1999) *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics and the Ethics of Queer Life* New York: The Free Press, *ibid.*, pp. 37-38.
- (8) Henry Abelove (1966) “Freud, Male Homosexuality and the Americans”.
- (9) Sigmund Freud (1905/2006) “Three Essays on Sexual Theory”, republished in Sigmund Freud (2006) *The Psychology of Love*, p.145 (The New Penguin Freud series, General Editor: Adam Phillips) London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- (10) Jonathan Dollimore (1991) *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* Oxford:

Oxford University Press.

- (11) Sigmund Freud (1905/2006) "Fragment of an Analysis of Hysteria (Dora)" in Sigmund Freud (2006) *The Psychology of Love*, p. 39, (The New Penguin Freud series, General Editor: Adam Phillips) London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- (12) Sigmund Freud (1905/2006) *ibid.*, p. 39.
- (13) Sigmund Freud (1908/2002) "'Civilised' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness" in Sigmund Freud (2002) *Civilization and Its Discontents* (The New Penguin Freud series, General Editor: Adam Phillips) London: Penguin.
- (14) Sigmund Freud (1912/2006) "Civilization and Its Discontents" in Sigmund Freud (2002) *Civilization and Its Discontents* (The New Penguin Freud series, General Editor: Adam Phillips) London: Penguin.
- (15) Henry E. Adams, Lester W. Wright, Jr., and Bethany A. Lohr (1996) "Is Homophobia Associated With Homosexual Arousal?" *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* Volume 105, No. 3, pp. 440-5.
- (16) Sigmund Freud (1905/2006) "Three Essays on Sexual Theory", republished in Sigmund Freud (2006) *The Psychology of Love*, p.137, (The New Penguin Freud series, General Editor: Adam Phillips) London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- (17) Sigmund Freud (1905/2006) "Three Essays on Sexual Theory", republished in Sigmund Freud (2006) *The Psychology of Love*, p.136, (The New Penguin Freud series, General Editor: Adam Phillips) London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- (18) Robert May (1995) "Re-Reading Freud on Homosexuality" in Thomas Domenici and Ronnie C. Lesser (1995) *Disorientating Sexuality: Psychoanalytic Reappraisals of Sexual Identity*, p. 161, New York and London: Routledge.
- (19) Leo Bersani (1987) "Is the Rectum A Grave?", originally published in October, No. 43, Winter 1987; re-published in Douglas Crimp (ed.) (1988) *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, p. 197, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: October Books.
- (20) Bersani, *ibid.*, p. 210.
- (21) Bersani, *ibid.*, p. 221.

Chapter 5. An Ethic of Sexual Autonomy: Toward Sane Sex.

“... even if rich Jews in the Germany of the early 1930s ‘really’ exploited German workers, seduced their daughters, dominated the popular press, and so on, Nazi anti-Semitism was still emphatically ‘untrue’, a pathological ideological condition. Why? What made it pathological was the disavowed libidinal investment into the figure of the Jew. The cause of all social antagonisms was projected into the figure of the ‘Jew’, the object of a perverted love-hatred, the spectral figure of mixed fascination and disgust.”
Slavoj Zizek (1)

“Man’s solidarity is founded upon rebellion, and rebellion can only be justified by this solidarity. We then have authority to say that any type of rebellion which claims the right to deny or destroy this solidarity simultaneously loses the right to be called rebellion and actually becomes an accomplice to murder.”
Albert Camus (2)

Preventative Murder (Lying in the Guise of Truth)

Even though our contemporary rulers have rediscovered a timeless formula (i.e., the best defence against truth is the constant repetition of lies, as the duplicity and bare-faced lying over the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 nakedly displays) it would be stretching credulity too far to suppose that everyone working for the State was a big fat liar, intent on deliberately misleading the people. There is, of course, a good deal of difference between deliberate mendacity and erroneous belief. But it is altogether less far-fetched to suggest that very large numbers of people can be persuaded to hold beliefs for which there are no rational justifications (and which do not serve their interests). Systems of economic and human exploitation have depended on this for their continued survival at least since the advent of democracy (before that, it didn’t matter whether you shared your ruler’s beliefs – you’d be summarily executed, or have your village torched, if you stepped visibly out of line).

How, though, may we determine whether a belief is erroneous, without claiming some spurious ‘God’s eye’ view or slipping into fuzzy relativism (everyone’s beliefs are all equally valid, simply reflecting their particular vantage points)? Without wishing to take a laborious detour through the entire history of philosophy, which has been struggling to answer this question for millennia, we might make a simple but rather profound observation: we tend to know whether a statement is true or not when it is made by one person about another. Or rather, we can, if we listen carefully, discern the contours of truth within the statement being made, the speech act itself, but it may have little to do with the expressed content (or, rather, the truth may be pertain to the expresser of the content – whenever A tells us a story about B, who we have never met, we are

discovering nothing about B in reality, only A's views and opinions about him or her). And if we listen carefully enough, perhaps with a psychoanalytically inclined ear, we will hear the whispering of the libidinal co-ordinates - the sources of unacknowledged, hidden sexual enjoyment - which structure the speaker's preoccupations.

In the opening epigram to this chapter, Slavoj Žižek concisely explains why racism is always a pathological condition. I think it is worth staying with his thinking a little longer - he is addressing something highly pertinent to our concerns. In a stunningly brilliant analysis of the socio-political aftermath of a natural disaster, Žižek notes that, shortly after the impoverished, mainly black neighbourhoods of New Orleans were decimated by hurricane Katrina on 29th August 2005, reports emerged that the survivors were orchestrating outbreaks of looting and violence. Immediately, TV screens and newspapers were filled with reports of the disintegration of social order, explosions of black violence and rape. However, as with all previous paroxysms of moral panic and outrage, subsequent inquiries into these events revealed that, in the vast majority of cases, these orgies of primitive violence *simply did not occur*. As Žižek notes, unverified rumours were simply reported as facts by the media:

“For example, on 4 September Superintendent Compass of the New Orleans Police Department was quoted in the *New York Times* about conditions at the convention centre: ‘The tourists are walking around there, and as soon as these individuals see them, they’re being preyed upon. They are beating, they are raping them in the streets.’ In an interview two weeks later, he conceded that some of his most shocking statements turned out to be untrue: ‘We have no official reports to document any murder. Not one official report or sexual assault.’” (3)

The point that Žižek is making is that the most important feature of all these reports was the widespread *willingness to believe them*. As he argues, developing the analysis of anti-Semitism we have just read, even if ALL reports of violence and rape were to be proved factually true, the stories circulating about them would still be ‘pathological’ and racist,

“... since what motivated these stories was not facts, but racist prejudices, the satisfaction felt by those who would be able to say: ‘You see, blacks are really like that, violent barbarians under the thin layer of civilisation!’ In other words, we would be dealing with what one could call *lying in the guise of truth*: even if what I am saying is factually true, the motives that make me say it are false.” (4)

As you might by now have guessed, Žižek's analysis directly parallels a related form of social scapegoating: for ‘Jew’ or ‘black’, substitute the signifier ‘paedo’. Vastly more virulently, this word represents ‘the object of a perverted love-hatred, the spectral figure of mixed fascination and disgust’ *par excellence*. To characterise all who find the beauty

of the young erotically enchanting as toddler-abducting, murdering rapists is akin to characterising all who find women attractive as marauding Peter Sutcliffes (the ‘Yorkshire Ripper’). Eloquently intelligent lunatics like Catherine MacKinnon and the late Andrea Dworkin truly believed this: thankfully, most ordinary people, men and women alike, find this equation decidedly nutty. To take Zizek’s analysis seriously, the racist deployment of the signifiers ‘black’ and ‘Jew’ are simply shortcuts to placing our disavowed desires onto a speciously Othered entity. ‘Jew’, ‘black’, ‘homo’, ‘paedo’ – the very terms of mendacious truth, corrupt righteousness, violent virtuousness: they form a chronological sequence of lies aimed at gluing a fundamentally irreconcilable cluster of social ‘publics’ together into a fictional ‘us’.

Whenever we consider human speech and communication, we are inevitably considering what Zizek calls *libidinal motivation* – all the suppressed and hidden erotic investments we would rather other people not know about. Moreover, we are also ineluctably immersed in power and its deployment. Rarely does speech occur on a level playing field; more typically, it is staged along a gradient of power. If your cab driver says that he thinks you’re a pervert, you can shrug it off without any lasting effects (although the conversation you have just been having during your journey home from the railway station is a distinctly unusual one). But if a policeman says the same words – even though, so far as I’m aware, the sex police do not have especially lengthy trainings in psychoanalysis, philosophy, political history or anthropology to assist them in their diagnoses (rudimentary labelling seems to suffice) – the statement immediately has a real and material effect (5). When you are on the receiving end of it – when you are forced to assume the identity that is being thrust upon you and which violently erases everything else about you – you tend to know that you are being subject to a malignant and brutal lie.

The sex police believe that they have unearthed the real truth about you: all else (your professional achievements, your role as a good parent to your children, soul-mate to your partner, your personal kindness and generosity, etc) stands unmasked as a cunning deceit; in ‘truth’, you were a filthy pervert all along, and now you’re going to get your come-uppance (which, as we have seen, means social murder: if you succeed in pinning the most incendiary and socially despised signifier – ‘paedo/sex offender’ - on another human being, you have consigned him to the realm of the living dead; in other words, you’ve effectively murdered him). And even if you have never done anything, ever, that is remotely unkind or exploitative to a ‘child’, you will be told that this is because the sex police have caught up with you before you could put your evil plans into practise. This is preventative, public-protecting, ‘pre-crime’ murder, legalised murder for the good of society.

Against Love and Decency

As is becoming rather predictable in this work, I can only approach the main subject, an ethic of sexual autonomy, via an apparent detour, which I hope the reader will eventually come to see as part of the journey. Before we can begin thinking about the possibilities for sane sex, we may be wise to take note of the principal features of our present regime of heavily policed sexual ‘decency’, which I think ought more properly to be called sexual paranoia. I mentioned earlier that the ethic animating these words is an essentially anti-loving, anti-community, anti-decency one. Perhaps now might be a good moment to expand on what might on the face of it sound like a rather mad, or at least recklessly anti-social, assertion. Without wishing to oversimplify the argument, it can be stated in reasonably clear terms.

Words like ‘love’, ‘community’ and ‘decency’ come to us from our cultural factories of representation with specific meanings already preassembled and encoded inside them. During production, they are stuffed with coercive ideological values: ‘love’ always seems to mean the petit-bourgeois, pleasure-smothering, denial of cumulative hatred, which we saw in Chapter Three can be a preciously healthy emotion when not subject to sentimental disavowal or displacement. ‘Community’ does not appear to include, say, revolutionary socialists or queers, and it seems to be laced with implacable vengefulness (offend speciously over-generalised ‘community standards’ in some way and you could well end up in prison). ‘Decency’ seems to mean, above all, the martial suppression of erotic exploration and experimentation, which it indiscriminately deems ‘indecent’ – a word which does not appear to include the bombing and butchering of thousands upon thousands of innocent Iraqi people during the War on Terror.

To put it differently, these words, which we use so effortlessly, so familiarly, also use us: they direct us, channel us, govern us, even when we are unaware of succumbing to their influence. Those who claim ownership of the signifiers ‘love’, ‘community’ and ‘decency’ do not want us to misuse their carefully manufactured products, which they effectively maintain a kind of unmandated copyright over. They rely on our failure to question deeply sedimented assumptions. They do not want us to discover new meanings, new possibilities, new liberties, by using these words in unauthorised ways. The natural order might be threatened if we were free to do this.

So, to state my seemingly insane refusal in more concise terms: the regime of sexual decency which dominates us all and which none of us ever elected is founded on such violent and impossible repressions and disavowals that all who submit to it will be forever haunted by everything they have excluded. But to maintain appearances, to fabricate an impossible and ridiculous notion of universal ‘decency’, which turns out to be as spiteful and narrow-minded as it is cruel and intolerant, our excluded desires will be bundled up by our factories of meaning, our ‘news’ media, our soaps and TV dramas,

our movies, and presented to us as alien, as though they belonged to dangerous Others. It is this projection of disavowed desire onto an imaginary type of person which makes others into 'Others'. And everyone knows that presently, now that homo-bashing is out of fashion, our favourite Others are paedos.

It should come as little surprise at this point in the argument for me to propose a speculative hypothesis: the protection of children has enabled moral reactionaries and privileged victimologists (who have largely felt victimised only by their own lack of victimisation or hardship or trauma) to manipulate a pre-existing form of good-hearted solidarity – there are very few people who believe that cruelty to children is a good thing - in order to impose a rigid, miserly, erotophobic moralism on everyone. In so doing, they are resurrecting ancient, pre-democratic (and pre-scientific) prejudices: for 'abuse' read 'sin.' And, as we have seen, in a powerfully orthodox strand of our Christian-inflected civilisation at least, 'sin' frequently means simply 'pleasure' (St Paul referred to 'our vile body').

If sex is indecently demeaning and dehumanising, does the fact that everyone is sexual make us all less human? From the perspective of compulsory decency, if you find yourself privately excited by the contours of a breast or a penis, you are failing to respect the whole person that these anatomical parts are attached to. But if most of us find ourselves contingently noticing such anatomical attributes, does this not universalize 'indecent' far more than it does its binary opposite?

Children, of course, are not being protected in any realistic way by this campaign of moralistic fascism; only a vacuous abstraction is (6). It is a protection of decency campaign. As we saw in the previous chapter, aggressive prohibition is always a double-edged sword, inciting transgression every bit as much as it suppresses and cowers. Here is Associate Professor Amy Adler of New York University School of Law:

“Child pornography law, and the culture in which it has grown, allow us an occasion to reconsider some basic assumptions ... - questions about the relationship between prohibition and desire, between censorship and speech, between law and culture. Censorship law does not only react to cultural trends. It also reflects, amplifies, and creates them.

In our present culture of child abuse, is child pornography law the solution or the problem? My answer is that it is both. This reading pictures law and culture as unwitting partners. Both keep the sexualised child before us. Children and sex become inextricably interlinked, all while we proclaim the child's innocence. The sexuality prohibited becomes the sexuality produced.” (7)

I think the 'unwitting' partnership Adler refers to can only be regarded as an unfortunate

accident if we exclude the factor of unconscious motivation: those libidinal investments we looked at earlier which shape our preoccupations. Despite the complicity Adler describes between victimologist law and the sexuality it inevitably produces, victimology has nonetheless crept insidiously into so many professional trainings and academic disciplines over a few decades to such an extent that it constitutes a pervasive new orthodoxy, an orthodoxy which abjures academic freedom in favour of silencing criticism and demanding that the party line be toed without dissent. It might be enlightening to consider how it began.

Zero-tolerance: The Rise of the Feminist Classroom

“Take away freedom of speech, and the creative faculties dry up.”
George Orwell (8)

In 1984, Orwell’s casualty of murderous political correctness writes in his journal: “Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows.” In a characteristically brilliant appraisal of Orwell’s novel, Richard Rorty has this to say about Winston’s apparently simple and bald statement:

“All that matters is that if you believe it, you can say it without getting hurt. In other words, what matters is your ability to talk to other people about what seems to you true, not what is in fact true. If we take care of freedom, truth will take care of itself.” (9)

As an admirer (though not a disciple) of Rorty, I was struck by these words when I came across them again whilst researching this chapter. It seems to me that victim feminism has been corrosively effective in shutting down the freedom of thought Orwell and Rorty so urgently and plagently advocated, perhaps nowhere more successfully than in the academic world. And as the academic world feeds the real world with its professional elites in the police force, the legal profession, NGOs, charities, mainstream political parties, and so on, the consequences are rather more pervasive than a handful of awkward seminars. Here, again, in her powerful book of 1994, is Christine Hoff Sommers, a sane and distinguished veteran of equality feminism, citing one of the countless examples of what came to pass as academic debate following the rise of victim feminism in academia. During a packed workshop called “White Male Hostility in the Feminist Classroom” led by two female assistant professors from the State University of Plattsburgh, someone noted that female students can usually be relied upon to keep male students in check:

“One woman got a big laugh when she told of a feminist student who silenced an ‘obnoxious male’ by screaming ‘Shut up, you *bleep*er!’ “(10)

A few decades ago, the expression of opposing views in seminars was regarded as a good thing, feeding debate and discussion. What victim feminists refer to as male obnoxiousness used to be thought of as legitimate counterargument, to be treated seriously and dealt with by counterargument. Sommers believed that the growth of the (victim) feminist classroom did little to prepare students to cope in the world of work; I think she underestimated how successful the victim feminists would be in extending their appropriation of the university classroom to the workplace. However, her outrage at the victim feminist revolution remains as true today as when she exposed it in the early 1990s:

“It is an embarrassing scandal that, in the name of feminism, young women in our colleges and universities are taking courses in feminist classrooms that subject them to a lot of bad prose, psychobabble, and ‘new age’ nonsense. What has real feminism got to do with sitting around in circles and talking about our feelings on menstruation? ... While male students are off studying such ‘vertical’ subjects as engineering and biology, women in feminist classrooms are sitting around being ‘safe’ and ‘honouring feelings.’”(11)

Hoff’s forensic analysis persuasively shows that victim feminist pedagogy, in spite of its pseudo-radical posturing, simply plays into hoary old sexist stereotypes that extol women’s capacity for intuition, emotion, and empathy ‘while denigrating their capacity to think objectively and systematically in the way men can’. (12) Whereas an earlier ‘equality feminism’ welcomed solidarity with men who found blatant unfairness objectionable, the new victim feminists have discarded the careful multi-disciplinary analysis of systems of exploitation in favour of a vituperative, sloganeering ideology of nasty men being beastly to innocent women. As such, it has been spectacularly divisive.

A University of Minnesota social science professor told Sommers, on condition that his anonymity would be ensured:

We have a hardened and embittered core of radical feminists. These women have been victorious in court: they have the ear of several of the powerful regents and administrators. They call the shots. Everywhere you look there are feminist faculty members concerned to divest departments of their white male viewpoint. If you question this, you are labelled a sexist. It is a nightmare. At faculty meetings we have learned to speak in code: you say things that alert other faculty members that you do not agree with the radical feminists, but you say nothing that could bring a charge of gender insensitivity. People are out for control and power. (13)

This anonymous academic puts his finger on a signal detail: those who claim to be overthrowing an oppressive patriarchal power in favour of a new age of enlightened politeness are deploying strategies of power and terror that would bring an approving

nod from Josef Stalin and Adolf Hitler. Confusing intimidated conformity with respect, they take brow-beaten silence as an endorsement of their aims.

When Professor of Humanities Camille Paglia gave a lecture in 1992 at Brown University (USA) in which she dared to dispute victim feminism's insistence that rape was paradigmatic of relations between men and women, she witnessed the feminist student's debating abilities first hand. Believing that victim feminism was seriously over-emphasising rape, converting it into the crime of crimes, overshadowing all the wars, massacres, and disasters of world history, she insisted that the victimologist obsession with rape as the symbol of male-female relations was irrational and delusional. Paglia considered the new elasticity favoured by victimologists in the definition of rape as a trivialisation of real sexual assault, which she believed should be confined to cases of either stranger rape or the forcible intrusion of sex into a non-sexual context. Victim feminists, of course, had become accustomed to feeling raped when someone looked at them in a way they found offensive, or disagreed with them in seminars, or used 'obnoxious' (humorous) language in their presence. Paglia's lecture produced tumult and fury amongst the feminist students; they 'debated' Paglia by screaming abuse at her and disrupting the lecture. Here is her account:

"Those who doubt the existence of political correctness have never seen the ruthless Red Guards in action, as I have done on campus after campus. For twenty years, meaningful debate of controversial issues of sex or race was silenced by overt or covert intimidation.

"As I watched a half-dozen pampered, white middle-class girls, their smooth, plump cheeks contorted with rage, shriek at me about rape, I had two thoughts. First, America is failing its young women; these are infantile personalities, emotionally and intellectually undeveloped. Second, it's not rape they're screaming about. Rape is simply a symbol of the horrors and mysteries of the body, which their education never deals with or even acknowledges. It was a Blakean epiphany: I suddenly saw the fear and despair of the lost, stripped of their old beliefs but with nothing solid to replace them. Feminism had constructed a spectral sexual hell that these girls inhabited; it was their entire cultural world, a godless new religion of fury and fanaticism." (14)

So much for the freedom to say what you believe without getting hurt. Whilst British universities have remained less open to wholesale takeover by the new puritans, less willing to replace education with indoctrination, they have been far from immune, in certain significant areas at least (try taking a degree in social work, for example). Insofar as this resistance to fanaticism has been upheld, it is to be applauded. But the victimologist genie has already been let out of the bottle in the USA and it has been travelling across international boundaries ever since with the unhinged zeal of a fanatical missionary. Janet Halley, Professor of Law at Harvard University has suggested that victim feminism (which she calls 'paranoid structuralism') has spread so deeply into all

of the institutions that structure our lives that it ought to be called ‘Governance Feminism.’ She writes:

“If you look around the United States, Canada, the European Union, the human rights establishment, even the World Bank, you see plenty of places where feminism, far from operating underground, is running things. Sex harassment, child sexual abuse, pornography, sexual violence, anti-prostitution and anti-trafficking regimes, prosecutable marital rape, rape shield rules: these feminist projects have moved off the street and into the state. ...

“It would be a mistake to think that governance issues only from that combination of courts, legislatures, and police which constitutes the everyday image of ‘the state’. Employers, schools, health care institutions, and a whole range of entities, often formally ‘private’, govern too – and feminism has substantial parts of them under its control. Just think of the tremendous effort that U.S. employers and schools must devote to the regulation of sexual conduct at work, through sexual harassment policies that have produced a sexual harassment bureaucracy with its own cadre of professionals and its own legal character. And many feminist policy campaigns take power in the form of ideological shifts within state and nonstate entities ... Consider, as a possible example, that one result of feminist rape activism is the elevation of child sexual abuse as a serious enforcement priority complete with ‘zero tolerance’ enforcement attitudes; other kinds of child neglect and abuse, other kinds of adult/child interpersonal violence, lack the charisma of sexual offenses. They fall into the background. And this is an effect of governance feminism.”(15)

Halley, a life-long feminist before her decision to part company with its contemporary advocates of victimhood, does not directly challenge the misanthropic effects of victim feminism’s infiltration into virtually every area of public life in the Western world in this sequence. Her book is more academic than polemical, although she concedes that she finds the new governance feminism schoolmarmish and priggish. However, it is clear that campaigns based on advocacy research, shrill propaganda and the censorship of open debate have led to a massive cultural obsession with child sexual abuse, despite the fact that it is nowhere near as pervasive, nor as destructive, as the other forms of child neglect and abuse Halley mentions in passing.

Outside the Feminist Classroom

The philosopher Ian Hacking, whilst in no way attempting to condone or excuse child abuse, conducted a thorough review of the published work on its prevalence which led him to these perceptive observations:

“Any given study seems to prove a lot, but when put together, they are so at odds with

each other that the net effect is inconclusive. All these studies, of sexual or physical abuse, are amazingly indifferent to social class.” (16)

Hacking refers to Barbara Nelson’s classic study of the way in which physical abuse and neglect of children entered the American political arena: from the outset, Nelson noted, despite glaring material correlations, the campaigners were at pains to separate the problem of injured children from any social issues, a tactic which converted the problem into one of moral degeneracy (17). The approach ensured political unanimity, enabling liberals and conservatives to agree that child abuse was not connected with social division and poverty: it was a kind of moral illness. All could puff up their chests and make grandstanding exhortations to further their careers on the backs of impoverished and mistreated children. Moral indignation, of course, is cheap. It has no budgetary implications, no radical anti-poverty initiatives; all it takes is hot air and voluble outrage (delivering moral sermons to the lower orders has done little to alleviate poverty). Nonetheless, Hacking repeatedly found in the literature a highly replicated correlation between child abuse and neglect and poverty and low income (18). Hacking refers to an article that appeared in the September 1990 issue of the British *Times Literary Supplement*, which noted that, despite its ability to evoke horror, child sexual abuse (or physical battering) harms, indeed kills, far fewer children, either in Great Britain or the United States, than simple, miserable and unremitting poverty. The TLS article raised the question of why, with poverty intensifying and welfare programmes being run down, our attention had been drawn to sexual or other abuse? Hacking suggests a plausible reply:

“In [my] view part of the answer is that child abuse and especially sexual abuse offer scapegoats. It is clear that the children who die from maltreatment are the poor ones. In the United States the availability of public funds for poor families with small children decreased substantially every year during the 1980s, while every year there was more and more talk about the horrors of child abuse. In 1990 a presidential panel announced that child abuse was a ‘national emergency’. ... But the panel’s focus elided unpleasant topics like the filth, danger, the stench of urine in the halls, broken elevators, smashed glass, curtailed food programmes, guns.” (19)

In Britain, child psychiatrist Danya Glaser conducted a scholarly and meticulous review of the literature covering the effects of child abuse and neglect on the developing brain (20). Glaser concludes that the evidence is overwhelming that the politically deprived varieties of child mistreatment, which usually begin in infancy and continue chronically thereafter - cumulative neglect, capricious and chaotic love/hate oscillations in parental behaviour, coldness and physical cruelty - are strongly predictive of subsequent mental health difficulties, significantly impairing the neurobiological development of the brain. Buried in her lengthy paper is the observation that these problems are vastly more pathogenic than discrete episodes of sexual abuse are,

especially where the latter happen in a context of loving and secure parent-child relations. Glaser, like Hacking, is of course absolutely not condoning sexual abuse; I think that we can read her paper, however, as an invitation to ask why we are so obsessed with it.

Our preoccupation with child sexual abuse appears to be more connected with an irrational fascination, fanned and fuelled by the propagandists of victimology, than with far more common and damaging issues affecting vastly more children; in other words, real children's actual well-being is more likely to be sacrificed for the sake of our addiction to sex stories (abuse porn). In a remark which we might now find deeply perturbing, Halley continues:

“Ask any group of U.S. Women's Studies majors what they intend to do with their degree: many will say that they intend to ‘work in an NGO’. Global governance *and* local governance are often done through informal, opaque, ideologically committed ‘nongovernmental organisations’ that strategize hard, sometimes successfully, to become indispensable when major new fluidities in formal power emerge. ... By positing themselves as *experts* on women, sexuality, motherhood, and so on, feminists walk the halls of power.” (21)

In a saner world, we might question any claim to expertise founded on silencing free debate and using state power to threaten, sack, incarcerate and permanently stigmatise those who either dissent or simply differ. Despite her calm, sober tone, Halley's writing amounts to an urgent and alarming call for everyone, especially women, to ‘take a break’ from victim feminism, which, in becoming overweeningly powerful, has inaugurated a new age of abhorrently illiberal legislation, paranoid misanthropy and frankly Stalinist censorship.

The Strange Case of the Paedophile Psychologists

Imagine you are a respected and experienced social scientist and academic. You and a team of colleagues become intrigued by a phenomenon which appears to have been researched, virtually without exception, through the lenses of a particular moral ideology rather than through the basic principles of scientific enquiry: the sexual experiences of minors. Contrary to the spirit of the times, which appears to require compulsory panic and disgust, you decide to take a cool, balanced look at the published social and psychological literature claiming to substantiate firm correlations between childhood sexual experience and subsequent psychopathology. You rigorously analyse no less than 59 studies, in the spirit of scientific scepticism rather than moral revulsion. A few months after your research findings are published, after scrupulous critical review by your scientific peers of course, in a prestigious scientific journal, you find that a prominent radio personality begins a campaign of vilification against you which

culminates in your work being unanimously condemned in the House of Congress (for the purposes of this example, you are a US scientist, although it is almost certain that an identical reaction would ensue were you based in the UK).

Huge damage is done to your reputation; you are accused of being an apologist for paedophilia, of using deeply inadequate means of analysis, of selecting flawed and unrepresentative studies and of being morally twisted. A little later, after the media crescendo dies down, you are scientifically, though not publicly, exonerated: there is nothing remotely unscientific or erroneous in your study – *all* of the co-called criticisms, without exception, were baseless, misinformed, highly unscientific and excessively emotive. Predictably, however, the media outlets, populist celebrities and scientifically ignorant politicians responsible for condemning you are not in the slightest bit interested in retracting their inaccurate, hysterical and at times completely false allegations against you.

This is not a story I have concocted in order to besmirch grandstanding politicians, those venal little tin-pots who will seize on the smallest morsel of potential outrage like slaving wolves in order to further their careers, or to ridicule witch-hunting moral fascists, who perhaps ought to be pitied for finding themselves permanently surrounded by so much unspeakable filth. It is a lamentably true story of witch-hunting moral fascists and grandstanding politicians attempting to undermine scientific enquiry in the name of straitlaced, mean-spirited chauvinism and po-faced political bigotry (22). I find it intriguing because it illustrates rather compellingly the common ideological roots of both right-wing moral fascism and ostensibly left-wing politically correct victim-feminism. The fact that they have been sharing the same, increasingly fetid and unaired, bed together for a few decades should alert us to the fact they share identical presuppositions in sexual ideology. Sex is bad, and sex with penises, especially erect penises in sexual orifices, is unspeakable: it is rape and victimisation and corruption and evil.

But to return to our story of condemned scientists: the politically motivated, media-endorsed and scientifically ignorant hate campaign I have just referred to is precisely what happened to psychologists Bruce Rind, Phillip Tromovitch and Robert Bauserman when their study was published in perhaps the most prestigious of the American Psychological Association's journals, the *Psychological Bulletin* in 1998 (23).

Why so much bile and venom? You guessed it: the researchers were dissenting from the received folk-wisdom surrounding sexual experiences in childhood. The wrath of the righteous was drawn by the researchers' finding that the term 'child sexual abuse' was being used in an unhelpfully indiscriminating way, and that consensual sexual experiences between adults and minors resulted in no discernable ill effects for the children involved. The presumed psychological correlates of 'child sexual abuse', the

researchers found, were actually more associated with parental cruelty, coldness, emotional indifference, violence and scapegoating – highly ‘dysfunctional’ parental attributes. When sex was forced or inveigled upon a child in these conditions, severe, long-term mental health problems were indeed probable; but the latter were inextricably bound up with the whole range of abusive parental behaviours and to isolate sex as the sole cause was unjustified.

This was incendiary enough for victimologists and moral fascists, but it was Rind *et al*’s next finding which ensured immediate and raging moral combustion: where sex occurred consensually, not the ‘informed’ consent of victimologists, where every liaison has to be countersigned in triplicate with a witness present before business can begin, just simple, mutual, pleasure, there were no detectable ill-effects; often the opposite was true. If a sexual incident was not experienced as abusive either at the time of its occurrence or subsequently, it seemed somewhat meaningless to refer to it as ‘abuse’ at all. Rind *et al*, under advise from the journal’s editorial board, distinguished between child sexual abuse, those cruel, forceful, violent incidents in which a child was coerced into a sexual act they neither wanted or enjoyed, and the more neutral term ‘adult-child sex’, in which a minor, often a teenager, took part consensually in a sex act that they found pleasurable with someone older than themselves (often, an older teenager).

The authors were not blind to the potentially controversial quality of their research; in their original paper, they were at pains to distance themselves from those who would use their findings to ‘morally disreputable’ ends. They wrote:

“..it is important to consider implications of the current review for moral and legal positions on CSA [Child Sexual Abuse]. If it is true that wrongfulness in sexual matters does not imply harmfulness ... then it is also true that lack of harmfulness does not imply lack of wrongfulness. Moral codes of a society with respect to sexual behaviour need not be, and often have not been, based on consideration of psychological harmfulness, or health ... In this sense, the findings of the current review do not imply that moral or legal definitions of or views on behaviors currently classified as CSA should be abandoned or even altered.” (24)

Whilst it is always easy to claim wisdom with the benefit of hindsight, I think Rind, Tromovitch and Bauserman were wrong to concede moral co-ordinates to fascist/victimologist bigots and hysterics. Such caution and restraint did nothing to spare them from the eruption of violent, ignorant spew which flooded over them. Whilst I do not wish to oversimplify the dense ramifications of competing ethical paradigms, I cannot help but wonder what might happen if wrongfulness and harmfulness were to find their long but deeply neurotic and unhappy marriage annulled in the court of reason (25). As we saw earlier, Freud abjured and deplored the intrusion of moralistic preconceptions into the scientific study of human sexual variation. In the twenty-first

century, thanks largely to the now entrenched coalition between victimologist paranoia and moral fascism, we are light years behind his measured, intelligent analysis of 1905. If something is ‘wrongful’, especially if it is harmlessly so, we perhaps ought to asking ‘wrongful to whom, to what?’ It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, if persons are not being harmed, perhaps a coercive moral ideology is.

A few years later, after their scientific exoneration, the researchers were in a more defiant mood. We saw in Chapter Two how ideologues managed to persuade a populist media to share their obsession with paedo-monsters, and how they began to manufacture spurious and wholly fictional statistics about the ‘epidemic’ of child sexual exploitation they deludedly believed in and wished to persuade everyone else to share. The fact that all of their claims were subsequently shown to be wholly imaginary, reflections of nothing more than their own repudiated fantasies, projected onto viable imaginary social scapegoats, has not deterred them from advancing their cause. Rind, Bauserman and Tromovitch, in one of several robust defences of their original analysis, described their awareness that, from 1984, sensational claims of satanic ritual abuse in day-care centres for pre-school children proliferated in the United States:

“Staff workers were accused of such things as assaulting four-year-olds with swords and curling irons, forcing them in ritualistic style to consume faeces and drink the blood of sacrificed babies, and molesting them in outer space or on ships at sea surrounded by sharks trained to prevent them from escaping. Meanwhile, by the late 1980s, a billion-dollar recovered-memory movement had developed, and diagnoses of multiple personality disorder (MPD) mushroomed. All over the country, women were entering therapy with vague complaints such as feeling unhappy without knowing why, then emerging with ‘recovered memories’ of bizarre childhood victimization – sometimes for many years, even decades, without ‘remembering’. Often, these women were led to believe that this purported victimization had fragmented their personalities into a dozen, a hundred, or even a thousand alters.” (26)

The researchers’ suspicions had been aroused by the horror-laden descriptions offered by the victimologists of the consequences of child sexual ‘abuse’, a term which they had stretched to include non-contact episodes (e.g., flashing), sex between children of different ages, and episodes of mature adolescents willingly participating in sex with older teens or adults. In victimology-land, all were seen as horrifyingly traumatizing; dramatic analogies were routinely used by the Salvationists, such as slavery, head-on car crashes, being mauled by a dog, and torture, in order to convey their belief about the nature of any and all childhood sexual experience. The research team wrote:

“But sex, in general, is not like being mauled by a dog or torture, which are always painful and traumatic. Sex is often just the opposite – the most pleasurable experience one can have. It therefore cannot be assumed a priori that a fourteen- or fifteen-year-old,

for example, will react with trauma rather than pleasure just because his or her partner is older. In fact, teens of this age often do not react as orthodoxy insists they must ... (27)”

Rind and his associates go on to describe how, eventually, scientific sceptics began questioning the stories coming from day-care cases and therapist’s offices, although not before unquantifiable harm had been done to those accused by these ‘victims’. The sceptics provided empirical evidence showing how even bizarre memories can be implanted, how children can be manipulated and coerced into telling preposterous stories, how people can be induced to believe that they have thousands of ‘personalities’. As Rind and his colleagues noted, day-care cases ceased, convictions were overturned and some of the more egregious practitioners of MPD therapy were successfully sued for malpractice. However, an immeasurable amount of irreparable damage and distress had been inflicted on wholly blameless people before the lunacy was stopped.

An Ethic of Sexual Autonomy (Sane Sex)

Having expended a good deal of time on sexual lunacy, it might now be a good moment to refer back to what Michael Warner has called an ethic of sexual autonomy (“surely”, he writes, “it should be possible to live a sexual life that is compatible with every else’s sexual life.”) This is a simple statement, yet it holds potentially revolutionary potential. Of course, one should expect victim feminists, policemen and judges to savage it, caricature and cartoon it, just as Bollas warned in his typology of fascism. Those who have built not only lucrative personal careers but institutions and structures of power on their benighted ideology of obligatory anodyne decency are not likely to relinquish their privileges to reasoned argument.

Nonetheless, we ought perhaps to be free to wonder whether what passes presently as a universal sexual morality is not in reality a form of violent and sadistic immorality. If sexual morality means controlling the sex of other people, rather than living ethically with one’s own sexual principles, it is by definition a dishonest, scapegoating and profoundly immoral enterprise. A more humane and capacious sexual morality, far from shaming people into suicide, or locking gentle, non-violent men up with violent rapists and psychopaths, ought perhaps to be about fighting the corrosive, debilitating and murderous effects of organised sexual shame. We would do well to drop our paranoid and deluded belief in organised paedophile rings and turn our scrutiny instead onto the truly organised and State-funded shaming rings. The shaming rings have created a class of pseudo-paedos – often intelligent, valuable, highly educated people - who will be deprived of everything they have ever achieved, wholly sacrificed in effect, in order to carry the stigma of a social hallucination. Rather than have you question the ideological forces which have created this psychotic mirage, paedo-hunters demand more and more shame, more and more social murder. An ethic of sexual autonomy would radically refuse this.

An ethic of sexual autonomy would not be blind to the ‘dignity’ argument. Presently, if you have your picture taken below the age of eighteen, with too much flesh on show, especially if genital flesh is on display, your dignity is being destroyed, even if you consented to the picture. For your own good, for the maintenance of moral order, anyone who looks at an image of your flesh will have to be eliminated. Dignity, it seems, from this perspective, depends on a belief in the absence of sexual desire. Like its twin, decency, dignity can only be conferred on those who don’t get involuntary stiffies or tingling clits. Upright *bleep*s and appetitive growlers are indecent and undignified. Once upon a time, a relatively sane hypocrisy conditioned this mad public posturing: of course we all get unexpected (and expected) erotic thrills; but we’ll just not mention these and pretend that we are all deeply committed to procreative reproduction only, family values and all that, and that we spend the rest of our time collecting stamps and listening to the wireless. We all know this isn’t true, but for the sake of decency and dignity, we’ll turn a blind eye, so that the system can keep ticking over. Militant victimologists, however, have blown this compensatory hypocrisy to smithereens. Decency and dignity, for the victimologist Red Guard, are true and real and literal. If you secretly have indecent fantasies, you must be exposed and punished.

Decency might mean other things: it might mean altruism, empathy, and solidarity with the socially vilified. Christ would recognise this version of decency, although He would, I think, abjure scapegoating and self-aggrandising sadistic righteousness. Similarly, dignity might mean more than sexual constipation and neurotic lying (“what, *me*, get an erection inappropriately, to an inappropriate image? Never!” – as the judge said to the condemned offender). Michael Warner writes:

“Dignity has at least two radically different meanings in our culture. One is ancient, closely related to honor, and fundamentally an ethic of rank. It is historically a value of nobility. It requires soap. (Real estate doesn’t hurt, either.) The other is modern and democratic. Dignity in the later sense is not pomp and distinction; it is inherent in the human. You can’t, in a way, not have it. At worst, others can simply fail to recognize your dignity. These two notions of dignity have opposite implications for sex. The most common judgements about sex assign dignity to some kinds (married, heterosexual, private, loving), as long as they are out of sight, while all other kinds of sex are no more dignified than defecating in public, and possibly less so. That kind of dignity we might call bourgeois propriety. In what I am calling queer culture, however, there is no truck with bourgeois propriety. If sex is a kind of indignity, then we’re all in it together. And the paradoxical result is that only when this indignity of sex is spread around the room, leaving no one out, and in fact binding people together, that it begins to resemble the dignity of the human. In order to be consistent, we would have to talk about dignity in shame.” (28)

‘If sex is a kind of indignity, we’re all in it together’: it is a phrase which invites repetition because it is so massively denied by the dominant culture. Tony Duvert, in a scintillating, scabrously eloquent, sanely enraged polemic written in response to a nauseatingly normalising and reactionary ‘sex education’ encyclopaedia designed for the young (compiled in the early 1970s and masquerading as liberal enlightenment – lying in the guise of truth again) found himself challenging the predominant ideological authorities of his time – medical sexologists. Today, these white-coated experts have given way to thrusting prosecution lawyers and NGO victimologists, who presume to know how everyone should be living their erotic lives. With this succession in mind, and with apologies for his uncompromising language, he is worth quoting at the height of his fury, railing against those who see themselves as experts on sex. Sarcastically marvelling at the fact that humanity was able to live for such a long time, to prosper, reproduce, invent, rule, be cheerful sometimes, when there was no sexology (or, we may now add, victimology) to teach it the right path to happiness, he writes:

“It’s true that our ancestors were ‘unbalanced’: they *bleep*ed in every kind of position, wore their hair long, fornicated without hiding it, sucked and ass-*bleep*ed each other, walked on bellies to cause abortion, had orgasms far and wide, without consideration for age and sex ... Nature’s aberrations, which bourgeois society has rectified: years ago, the Puritans of America demanded that domestic animals – dogs or horses – wear boxer shorts in public to hide their private parts .. “ (29)

It is hardly humorous to note that our new Puritans – Child Victimologists – are the contemporary advocates of not only boxer shorts but child-sized burkhas. Duvert is perhaps the most eloquent exponent of unpoliced erotic pleasure I have come across – he was enraged by the presumptions of the more earnest bourgeois moralists of his day, with their preposterous belief that the constipated, dreary, joyless version of sexual morality they embraced was as good as it could possibly get. For Duvert, erotic pleasure was possible only when it was freed from the tyranny of productivity, a freedom which children have to have actively *uneducated* out of them. Growing up in an erotophobic world, for Duvert, meant that great violence had to be meted out on children’s pleasurable polyvalence – an idle, unproductive potential which must be coerced and bullied out of them into conventional unhappiness. And free pleasure absolutely could not take place if a policeman, social worker, judge and bishop were peering over your shoulder instructing you on what was ‘appropriate.’

If your ‘ethical’ position is that all that counts is your own enjoyment, you cannot be practising an ethic of sexual autonomy. Simple, mutual, uncoerced reciprocity is all that is required, but it is required. You must not encroach on the sexual autonomy of another, but that’s the only prohibition: in other words, your sexual autonomy must be consistent with everyone else’s. This seems to me an infinitely less violent and ruinous formulation than present day ‘age of consent’ laws, which insist that, no matter how horny you are,

you absolutely must not have any form of sexual intimacy with anyone else until you have passed your eighteenth birthday. Whenever a section of society presumes itself to have the authority and wisdom to regulate the sexual expression of others, great violence will inevitably result. An ethic of sexual autonomy would require the repeal of many sexual ‘offences’, leaving only demonstrable coercion, violence or the unwanted intrusion of sex into a non-sexual situation on the books.

We have, perhaps, only begun to wonder about what sane sex might be like in this chapter. If sane sex is so remote, so difficult to achieve, if we have allowed fascist and puritanical demagogues to re-write the statute book, we need to ask “What makes us so credulous? Why are we so willing to believe the most lunatic rumours about sex and children?” If the moralists argue that sex is intrinsically demeaning, I would argue that it has not been ‘de-meant’ enough, by which I mean disentangled from the plethora of coercive hysterical injunctions which have been glued to it. Maybe this should be our next exploration: how we might de-mean sex and ‘childhood’ from fascist tyranny.

Notes and References to Chapter Five

(1) Slavoj Zizek (2008) *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, pp. 84-85, London: Profile Books Ltd.

(2) Albert Camus (1953/2008) *The Fastidious Assassins*, p. 20, London: Penguin Books (Great Ideas Series).

(3) Slavoj Zizek, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.

(4) Slavoj Zizek, *op. cit.*, p 84.

(5) Advanced knowledge of computer technology, which the police undoubtedly hold, is of a radically different nature to advanced knowledge of the complex, ambiguous and essentially enigmatic relationships between human motivation, fantasy and behaviour. Computer hard drives are not the same as minds and it is, frankly, madness to assume that they are, or even to assume that it is possible to read off causal links between what appears in a computer cache and its owner’s behaviour or intentions. It is a wholly unjustifiable extrapolation to assume that if *some* who abduct and molest children have ‘indecent’ images in their possession, this somehow constitutes proof that *all* who possess such images are molesters. If a serial killer happens to be a general medical practitioner, we would not be justified in assuming that all GPs are serial killers.

(6), Kathleen S. Williams (2004) “Child Pornography Law? Does it Protect Children?” *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law* 26 (3) 2004: pp. 245-261.

Williams argues that the decision to focus on private possession rather than production and distribution, with the attendant shift to categorising the content of images, including *pseudo-* images, which involve no children only computer generated depictions, was motivated principally by moral revulsion – i.e., the need to uphold moral standards - and not by the desire to protect children. As the location and prosecution of manufacturers is altogether more complicated and, with the present state of technology, far harder to execute, one might note in passing that prosecution lawyers were given a guarantee of prosperity when the focus of legal annihilation shifted away from producers to people who looked at pictures in the privacy of their homes. As many of the images are decades old, the ‘children’ sought so avidly by salvationists for protection may well be near to, if not actually, drawing their pensions today.

(7) Amy Adler (2001) “The Perverse Law of Child Pornography” *Columbia Law Review*, March 2001.

(8) George Orwell *An Age Like This, 1920-1940 v. 1: The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Vol. I, p. 7, Boston, Massachusetts: David R. Godine; Reprint edition (26 April 2007).

- (9) Richard Rorty (1989) *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 176, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- (10) Christine Hoff Sommers (1994) *Who Stole Feminism: How Women Have Betrayed Women*, p. 92, New York: Touchstone.
- (11) *ibid.*, pp. 90-91.
- (12) *ibid.*, p. 91.
- (13) *ibid.*, p. 113.
- (14) Camille Paglia “No Law in the Arena: a Pagan Theory of Sexuality” in Camille Paglia (1994) *Vamps and Tramps*, p. 30, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.
- (15) Janet Halley (2006) *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism*, pp. 20-21, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- (16) Ian Hacking (1995) *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory*, p. 64, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- (17) Nelson, Barbara (1984) *Making an Issue of Child Abuse: Political Agenda setting for Social Problems* Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- (18) Hacking (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 65.
- (19) Hacking (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 65.
- (20) Danya Glaser (2000) “Child Abuse and Neglect and the Brain – A Review” Vol. 41, pp. 97-116, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*.
- (21) Halley, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- (22) An informative and unsensational account of this lamentable episode is given by Professor Scott Lilienfeld, a social scientist at Emory University, USA. See Scott O. Lilienfeld (2002) “When Worlds Collide: Social Science, Politics, and the Rind et al. (1998) Child Sexual Abuse Meta-Analysis” Vol. 57, No. 3, pp. 176-188, *American Psychologist*.
- (23) Rind, B., Tromovitch, P., & Bauserman, R. (1998) “A meta-analytic examination of assumed properties of child sexual abuse using college samples” *Psychological Bulletin* Vol. 124, pp. 22-53.
- (24) Rind, *et al.*, (1998) *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- (25) Ian Hacking describes the contours of this dispute – *utilitarian* ethics (based on the measured consequences of particular actions) and *deontological* ethics (an intuitionist view, based on deep-seated beliefs concerning an action’s wrongfulness, irrespective of its consequences). See Hacking, 1995, *op. cit.*
- (26) Bruce Rind, Robert Bauserman and Philip Tromovitch (2000) “The Condemned meta-Analysis on Child Sexual Abuse: Good Science and Long-Overdue Skepticism” pp. 68-72, July/August, *Skeptical Inquirer*.
- (27) Bruce Rind, Robert Bauserman and Philip Tromovitch (2000) “The Condemned meta-Analysis on Child Sexual Abuse: Good Science and Long-Overdue Skepticism” p. 69, July/August, *Skeptical Inquirer*.
- (28) Michael Warner (1998) *The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics and the Ethics of Queer Life*, p. 36, New York: The Free Press.
- (29) Tony Duvert (1974/2007) *Good Sex: Illustrated*, 2007 version translated by Bruce Benderson, p. 80, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series.

Chapter 6. Disgusted Decency: the Case for De-Meaning Sex.

“It is the worst case I have ever tried. That you, Taylor, kept a kind of male brothel, it is impossible to doubt. And that you, Wilde, have been the centre of a circle of extensive corruption of the most hideous kind among young men, it is equally impossible to doubt. I shall, under the circumstances, be expected to pass the severest sentence the law allows. In my judgement, it is totally inadequate for such a case as this. The sentence of the court is that each of you be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for two years.”
Mr Justice Wills, passing sentence at the trial of Oscar Wilde, May 1895 (1)

“People in the course of the civilising process seek to suppress in themselves every characteristic they feel to be animal.”
Norbert Elias (2)

“Disgust always bears the imprint of desire”
Peter Stallybrass and Allon White (3)

Disgusting Desires: ‘Tremendously attractive’ boys and adult gazes

During a stay in Venice in 1911, the author Thomas Mann was to have an experience which eventually sponsored his magnificent story *Death in Venice*. He became enchanted with a boy – one of the children of an aristocratic Polish family staying at the same hotel. Whilst he never touched the boy physically, he became beguiled and entranced by the youngster’s beauty. ‘Tadzio’ - the ‘beautiful boy’ who draws the ailing, middle-aged character von Aschenbach out of his ascetic seclusion into desire and dissolution was born. Mann’s widow, Katia, commented on the episode:

“All the details of the story, beginning with the man at the cemetery, are taken from actual experience ... In the dining-room, on the very first day, we saw the Polish family, which looked exactly the way my husband described them: the girls were dressed rather stiffly and severely, and the very charming, beautiful boy of about thirteen was wearing a sailor suit with an open collar and very pretty lacings. He caught my husband’s attention immediately. This boy was tremendously attractive, and my husband was always watching him with his companions on the beach. He didn’t pursue him through all of Venice – that he didn’t do – but the boy did fascinate him, and he thought of him often ... “(4)

In the book, Tadzio is fourteen (although Katia Mann describes him as about thirteen) and in Luchino Visconti’s visually ravishing film, the character is played by the fifteen year old Swedish actor, Bjorn Andresen. The real life ‘Tadzio’ who generated such

magnificent artistic perceptiveness in Mann's writing was later identified as Wladyslaw, subsequently Baron, Moes (during the holiday in Vienna, he was called by his family and friends "Wladzio" or "Adzio"). At the time of Mann's infatuation, he was eleven years old (5).

Mann's homosexuality was strictly forbidden in the world he had to live in; he could only explore it, express it, struggle with it, in his work. He spent his life gazing at beautiful boys, translating the images and desires he experienced into evocative, haunting and luminous prose, but never once laying so much as a finger on any of them. For Mann, as for Germaine Greer (6) in our own time, boys in early adolescence had a spectacular yet ineffable erotic beauty, a beauty which would eventually fade but was all the more moving and enchanting for that very evanescence. Was he a pervert?

Today's sex police would, of course, have no doubt about the answer to this question. Should they have become aware of his erotic interests (7) they would have destroyed him pitilessly long before he had a chance to write his fabulous novella, or anything else for that matter. 'Morality' would have been enforced, but the world would have been wholly deprived of his literary brilliance. Even so, the sex police would have performed such imbecilic destruction in great sincerity. As we saw in the previous chapter, sincere disgust, the basis of malignant decency, can be brutish, ruthless and lethal, especially when it involves lying in the guise of truth.

Since the sex police and their battery of allied professions, social workers, probation officers, and the sprawling edifice of child 'protection' advocacy charities they are inextricably bound up with, perpetuate their crusade and advance their careers with the weapon of disgust bequeathed them by our law courts, it may be an apt moment to return to this much used but little analysed emotion. What is disgust and sexual disgust in particular? And what is it about sex and 'children' (anyone under the age of eighteen in current UK law) that so effortlessly foments its most hyperbolised and murderous expression?

For all the non-violent, intelligent individuals who have been interrogated, humiliated, degraded and destroyed by ignorant policemen, strutting like black-booted thugs through your homes, your minds, your souls, spouting nescient certainties and socially endorsed bigotry, this chapter is for you, or for those who have been left after your entirely ethical decision to end your life.

Dissecting Disgust

(i) Cultural boundaries: Repression, exclusion and ecstatically beautiful experiences

Jonathan Dollimore, one of the most formidably brilliant thinkers on human sexuality writing today, made this astute observation in the course of an essay exploring the

complex and paradoxical interrelationship between desire and sexual disgust:

“Disgust is typically experienced at the boundaries of a culture, and of the individual identities of those who belong to it, and its focus is typically what is excluded by those boundaries and especially what is just the other side of them. Social cohesion requires that the securing of the boundaries of the larger culture, and the individual identities within it, should coincide, whereas in practise of course they often do not. To be sure, they *do* coincide, more or less, and this contributes greatly to social cohesion. From one angle it is the coincidence which seems conclusive; from another, the mismatch; from yet another it is the seemingly unbridgeable gulf between those differently positioned in relation to those boundaries: what to one person is the most ecstatically beautiful experience in the world, to another might be so repulsive it deserves reprobation, punishment, mutilation and death, and never more so than where sexuality is concerned.”

(8)

There are some dazzlingly apposite insights in this little paragraph: the fact that disgust can be aroused in a most virulent way by desires which lie just the other side of a dominant cultural boundary alerts us to the curious fact that it is the varieties of longing most *proximate* to the ‘in-group’, rather than the most remote, which inflame the most violent suppression. And that an appreciation of ‘ecstatic beauty’ which is not endorsed (consciously) by the centre can be redescribed by the powerful as an evil worthy of extermination.

Applauding the courage and tenacity of early gay liberationists like the author Andre Gide, who did much both in his fiction and most notably in his book *Corydon* to rebut the murderous disgust directed at people like him in his day, Dollimore nonetheless sounds a cautionary note. The liberation Gide played no small part in effecting may yet have contributed to the manufacture of new, replacement objects of disgust which are despised with even stronger revulsion than their predecessors. Dollimore notes that, in certain important public contexts at least, it is no longer possible to be freely racist, misogynistic or homophobic. But restricting the range of socially sanctioned disgust objects does not diminish disgust - it merely intensifies its expression onto a smaller repertoire of substitutes, rendering the revulsion considerably more malignant in the process. And it does not escape Dollimore’s attention that, presently, our favourite scapegoated term – the object we most love to hate – is ‘paedophilia.’

Whilst Dollimore only briefly alludes to it in this essay, he is nonetheless insisting that a specific structure of domination can, under the guise of liberalisation and modernisation, covertly maintain its essential hierarchy of power by directing and concentrating its violence onto a replacement ‘out-group’: “... it is cultural and other kinds of imperialism

which have led to repression and exclusion through the universalising of the culturally specific by those with the power to do so” (9). As with the tragic and murderous witch-hunts of an earlier era, in the days when most people believed that the devil was stalking the earth in order to seduce eccentric old widows into becoming his disciples, lethal social-scapegoating movements have only ever taken off when the educated elite have endorsed them. That said, terror and desire may be more implicated in one another than the decent amongst us would like to acknowledge. And like desire, disgust can migrate and mutate; it slides with serpentine ease from one object to another, and gets ever more concentrated in those places and persons designated as socially expendable scapegoats: those who stand a gnat’s whisker to the wrong side of the cultural line separating the decent from the indecent.

It is not, however, axiomatic why certain forms of desire are regarded with disgust, and Dollimore’s point that people are differently positioned in relation to hegemonic boundaries is a highly salient one. Taking seriously the remark by Stallybrass and White in the third opening epigram for this chapter, he nonetheless urges against a simplistic approach. Whilst influenced by Freud’s theory of intrapsychic repression, for example, Stallybrass and White’s analysis of identity formation in dominant groups, notably the bourgeoisie, keeps the psychoanalytic concept of *repression* distinct from materialist and anthropological accounts of *exclusion*.

The newly emerging bourgeois subject defined himself by the repression and exclusion of the ‘low’ other, with ‘lowness’ being figured in sexual, racial and social class terms. But as Dollimore notes, what was excluded socially became psychically central: bourgeois fantasy life came to be constituted by the return of what it excluded or repressed. In both psychic and social life, the radically different processes of repression and exclusion are often inseparable, even though there is no direct and linear correspondence between the individual mind and society.

Even so, perhaps this fact may lead us to concur with literary theorist Jacqueline Rose when she insists that the sociopolitical domain cannot “continue to be analysed as if it were free of psychic and sexual processes, as if it operated outside the range of its effects” (10). The relationship between psyche and society may be mediated, but it is also intimate.

It might be interesting to see where we end up if we were to take Rose’s suggestion seriously. We might think of Freud’s concept of repression as a form of reversible deceit (“I’m just not interested in that sort of thing, even though I can’t stop fantasising about it secretly”) and cultural exclusion as a much more violent spitting out (“No decent person should ever even imagine such a scenario and, if they do, they should be eliminated!”). I think that, even with Dollimore’s cautions against psychologistic reduction in place, psychoanalysis might yet come to our aid. The work of Melanie Klein and Jacques

Lacan may, as I hope to argue, be too valuable to ignore.

(ii) Emotion and the Rule of Law

It has been a principal argument of this work that we become exceedingly dangerous and cruel when we attribute to others whatever we do not wish to acknowledge in ourselves. Our wish for self-purity involves fantasies of splitting (I can surgically cut away what I refuse to accept in myself), disavowal (I never had that desire/impulse in the first place – ‘it’ does not belong to me) and projection (‘it’ is ‘really’ out there, in the bad people – ‘them’ – who therefore threaten my/’our’ goodness and so must be eradicated). These processes always work together, functioning as a kind of triad of deceit: they can be thought of as key components of perhaps the most malignant form of lying our species has devised, because they ultimately involve not only the pursuit of the impossible (namely, the attempt to escape the mysteries, horrors and mortality of our animal bodies) but the malice-driven destruction of other human beings. Whilst they undoubtedly function at the level of the individual mind, they also readily lend themselves to sociopolitical deployment. And when disgust is the motive force behind them, the resulting ideologies of ‘us’ and ‘them’ will be deeply inflected with a virulent malevolence, ensuring that violence, unfettered cruelty and even murder are never very far away.

Disgust-based splitting, disavowal and projection will be used, as it always has been, to justify evil in the name of purity, subjugation and persecution in the name of righteousness. If it has served an evolutionary purpose in our prehistory, acting as a kind of primitive warning about the danger of noxious and putrid materials, it is nonetheless a crude and often profoundly inaccurate guide to ethical living, especially as political scapegoats and dissidents - human beings - can be so easily redesignated as (social) ‘*bleep*’ under its sway. Disgust lies behind racial segregation, misogyny, homophobia and extermination camps. And, as Dollimore noted, it is always especially virulent when it is used to police sexuality. To the list we have just outlined, we must of course add our latest social pathology: our most fraught contemporary preoccupation - a kind of malignant, liberty-destroying hobby, as pernicious and misanthropic as it is deeply and covertly enjoyed – paedohysteria.

When our beliefs and actions arise from such aggressive projective processes, our acts may be regarded as ‘moral’ insofar as they conform with social norms, but may nonetheless be deeply unethical, in that they involve fundamental lies. For the purposes of our argument here, this is the principal distinction between what I have been calling morality (or moralism) and ethics: the former is a toeing of the dominant ideological line, irrespective of how much harm and misery it inflicts, but the latter requires a commitment to truth (or at least truthfulness), even - perhaps especially - when this is at odds with social convention.

If we believe that the rule of law should be temperate, reasonable and proportionate in secular liberal democracies, we do not have to insist that emotion should play no part in justice. This is an argument which quickly capsizes when you try to put any weight on it: emotionless law would require us to regard a woman who, in self defence, kills the partner who has violently terrorised her over years as equivalent to a gangster who shoots a passer by who accidentally stepped on his shoe, simply because both have killed someone. Anger and indignation, much as we tend to think of them as ‘negative’ emotions, can also constitute important elements of solidarity: we can identify deeply with someone who has been terribly wronged and harmed by another. It is hard to imagine a form of justice which is autistic about human emotionality: a system of law wholly indifferent to human suffering would be both grotesquely mechanical and insanely unjust.

Whilst contemporary cognitive psychology is slowly catching up with him, it was Freud who first showed that emotions are not simply neurotransmitters in the brain, biochemical substances in the blood or irrational bursts of passion – they involve complex cognitive evaluations, even if these do occur at a phenomenally fast rate. When we decide that a mother who snaps and kills the person who has murdered her abducted child has far more in her favour to mitigate her sentence than, say, a misogynistic rapist who simply enjoys torturing women, we are using emotions, which include reasoning and empathic identifications.

We may not be able to do without emotion in a system of justice but we would do well to be very careful about the kind of emotion we allow to inform law. Anger and indignation, as well as compassion and empathy, may, at times, be indispensable. But there are some emotions which we should never allow to contribute to law-making, because they are by definition excessive, unreasonable and disproportionate. I am thinking of disgust and shame. That these are the very emotions which have crafted ‘child pornography’ law in the Western world, powerfully governing enforcement, prosecution and sentencing, should give any reasonable person serious pause for thought.

Anger, indignation, empathy: none of these are fool-proof, as we can be mistaken in our evaluations, yet they are probably indispensable constituents of commensal human fellowship, imperfect though they may be. Anger can be an entirely reasonable emotion when we identify with the suffering inflicted on another human being, or any other animal, for that matter, as a result of someone’s cruelty, greed, or indifference (although I think indifference is itself a form of cruelty). From a psychoanalytic point of view, in a situation such as this, we are using ‘introjective identification’, taking into ourselves the suffering of the wronged person and imagining how we would feel if we were subjected to a similar wrong. Anger can in this way be the basis of empathy and compassion. But

when we resort to revulsion and shame, we inevitably corrode and poison fellow-feeling.

If compassion involves absorption, doing our best to take in what someone else is experiencing so that we might discover or create it in ourselves, even if doing so causes us distress, disgust involves expulsion. And any form of decency which uses expulsive disgust to police its imaginary purity is perhaps by definition an authoritarian-fundamentalist project: murder is never very far away. It may be worth our while spending a little more time elaborating on this distinction, as I think it enables us to discriminate between humane varieties of emotion on the one hand and pernicious, misanthropic enmity on the other, a distinction of pivotal importance when it comes to formal, public justice. It helps us to find grounds, in other words, to say yes to some forms of emotion and no to all forms of vituperation when we are considering the rule of law (as opposed, say, to the rule of policemen, NGOs, or judges, some, possibly many, of whom rather like the circulation of pernicious disgust, as it violently preserves the prevailing moral order).

(iii) Truth, Lies and the Making of Paranoid States

We have seen that identification plays an important, if not pivotal role, in empathy, even angry empathy. Identification, though, is also deeply implicated in disgust and humiliation (the act of shaming another person), but it is of a radically different nature to the kind we use when we are angry at the harm inflicted on another - almost the exact reverse, in fact. First described in 1946 by the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (11), it is '*projective* identification', imagining that we can get rid of despised aspects of ourselves by depositing them permanently in someone else, which governs the experience of disgust and shame.

What is potentially malignant about projective identification is not only that it militates against learning wisely (and truthfully) from experience, it actively manufactures fraudulent and even delusional realities. Unlike the act of projection Freud described, which is often only transient and amenable to correction through insight and truthful interpretation, projective identification tends to be intransigently refractory to change. It typically has the effect of violently obliterating all characteristics in the targeted person or group which contradict the projected attribute. As we saw in the last chapter with Slavoj Žižek's example of the Jew in anti-Semitic fantasy (or 'the black' in racist fantasy of a more recent vintage), the person or group on the receiving end of projective identification gets treated as though they were nothing but the projection. All evidence to the contrary is forcefully ignored.

Introjective identification generally enriches the mind, expanding our repertoire of thought and experience even, or perhaps especially, when it is uncomfortable or painful to do so, whilst projective identification depletes it and induces paranoia, since what is

projected is experienced as 'bad'. Klein believed that projective identification was far more primitive than the introjective form, and was the desperate defensive manoeuvre of the fragile, inchoate, infantile ego. Whilst all ordinary people are prone to both projective and introjective mechanisms of identification, in a healthy state of mind, the capacity for introjective identification predominates.

Klein's brilliant article made a further point: she described two radically different mental positions, which are not necessarily (or not only) developmental stages, since we can find ourselves moving back and forth between them throughout life. The more primitive is what she perceptively called the 'paranoid-schizoid position'. Here, massive splitting and extreme projective identification predominate: in a paranoid-schizoid state of mind, I may find you blissfully perfect right up until you say or do something which perturbs me or discomforts me in some way. Immediately, I will use this 'evidence' to convince myself that I now know the real truth about you: you are completely bad, you were only pretending to be nice before I unearthed the truth and you are obviously trying to harm me or poison me. In paranoid states of mind, we are always vigilant for any sign of malice in the environment largely because our unconscious act of projective expulsion has planted it there in the first place.

When I am clinically paranoid – as opposed to truly socially persecuted - I am conscious of pervasive hostility and danger, but I have radically obscured its source: myself. I allow myself to be aware of the hostility, but not of my act of projection. In the blink of an eye, I have split my experience into two radically discontinuous parts – those that are all good and those that are all bad: the paranoid-schizoid state cannot hold together incompatible or conflicting attributes. As people are vastly complicated combinations of so called 'good' and 'bad' attributes, this is not an especially sound basis for building any form of compassionate fellow feeling, chiefly because once you get revealed as all bad, you must be eradicated. The moment of turning bad, crucially, has in reality nothing to do with anything truly significant about you: it's just that your inadvertent action, comment, or slip of the tongue has massively mobilised my own unacknowledged and repudiated violence, which, through projection, I now experience as in you, not me.

Klein's work with profoundly disturbed patients led her to believe that, in psychotic and severe schizoid conditions, the paranoid-schizoid position was firmly ascendant. In more healthy development, the paranoid-schizoid position is supplanted by the more integrative and truthful 'depressive position.' This is perhaps an unfortunate choice of terminology as it suggests unhappiness and illness, whereas it is clear that Klein sees it as vitally necessary to psychic health. A British contemporary of Klein's, Donald Winnicott, who we came across in Chapter 3, preferred to call this momentous development 'the stage of concern.' Whatever we call it, the crucial distinction is that, in this new mental state, the mind becomes strong enough to bear the truth – namely, that I and other people are made up of qualities which are inextricably both gratifying and

frustrating. I cannot really carve experience up into neatly separate bundles marked 'nice' and 'nasty'. I begin to feel remorse and sadness at having raged at someone who I now know to be a source of love and comfort, too; I want to make reparation for any harm or hurt I may have caused (hence Klein's use of the term 'depressive', meaning the sadness and regret I feel at having wronged another person).

(iv) Law from a paranoid-schizoid perspective: from reparation and reintegration to revenge and humiliation

None of this is to suggest that we should never experience disgust; if it has been used to justify torture and extermination, it has also played a part in civilization's most exalted achievements. There would be no antibiotics, no analgesics, no sterile surgical operations if we had not developed a capacity to fear and distance ourselves from foul-smelling, putrid matter; all cultures dispose of their dung, after all. But perhaps it is the fantasy of proximity to *bleep* and waste, with its concomitant fear of contamination, which lies at the root of disgust. Here is Martha Nussbaum, Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, in her elegantly argued refutation of the role of disgust in law:

“Because disgust embodies a shrinking from contamination that is associated with the human desire to be nonanimal, it is frequently hooked up with various forms of shady social practise, in which the discomfort people feel over the fact of having an animal body is projected outwards onto vulnerable people and groups. These reactions are irrational ... both because they embody an aspiration to be a kind of being that one is not, and because, in the process of pursuing that aspiration, they target others for gross harms.

Where law is concerned, it is especially important that a pluralistic democratic society protect itself against such projection-reactions, which have been at the root of gross evils throughout history, prominently including misogyny, anti-Semitism, and loathing of homosexuals. Thus while the law may rightly admit the relevance of indignation, as a moral response appropriate to good citizens and based upon reasons that can be publicly shared, it will do well to cast disgust onto the garbage heap where it would like to cast so many of us.”

(12)

Nussbaum advances a robust liberal repudiation of those legal thinkers (13) who attempt to recruit disgust as a form of legitimate social glue, a necessary element in the cohesion of 'the' community, even when no one has been harmed or even witnessed the disgusting act as a third party. She notes that there have been recent attempts by apparently liberal thinkers to use disgust in this way (she mentions the communitarian liberal Daniel Kahan, but we need only think of the unprecedented deluge of new laws unleashed by

the UK's New Labour since it came to power in 1997, many of them disgust-motivated); but law permeated by this toxic and irrational emotion in the service of communitarian aims will inevitably be draconian and highly corrosive to individual liberty.

Moreover, disgust flatly ignores the need to make reparation which a wrong-doer may feel in the wake of a misdemeanour; instead, it stridently demands the penalty of vengeful humiliation (and when the wish for humiliation rules, reparation is foreclosed – reintegration into society is not the aim, permanent exclusion is). Convicted offenders, including sex offenders, in some parts of America are obliged to place bumper-stickers on their cars declaring their status to all and sundry. New Labour has enthusiastically introduced measures to publicly identify people given community sentences by forcing them to wear brightly coloured jackets labelled 'Community Payback'. Shame is intrinsically disproportionate. If anger requires some form of proportionate restitution to right the wrong, disgust requires the shaming of the entire person. Its sole aim is the removal, even the obliteration, of human dignity. Unlike mere embarrassment, it is never amusing, it is far less reversible and it can be literally lethal, as the suicides provoked by Operation Ore and its sequelae poignantly show. Sexual shame easily hardens, to use a somewhat phallic (though not entirely inappropriate) term, into permanent stigmatisation – for example, being condemned to spend the rest of one's life on a Sex Offender's Register for nothing more than looking at pictures, effectively ensuring permanent removal from society and relegation to a barely habitable zone of abjection. Nussbaum firmly believes that a humane system of justice should resolutely protect its citizens from shame, and should never wield it in the name of community cohesion or righteousness.

Whilst we often experience it apparently involuntarily and spontaneously, disgust is an emotion which is nonetheless intimately complicit with some especially vicious sociopolitical hierarchies. Following the work of Klein, my contention is that the anger and indignation we may feel at a deliberate wrong perpetrated on a human being as result of another's indifference, sadism or egotism are essentially depressive position responses, whereas disgust and shame are far more rooted in the paranoid-schizoid position. And since the paranoid-schizoid position is closely associated with madness, violence and excess, it is a very bad foundation for any form of public law. When this does happen, paranoid-schizoid states of mind can easily lead to a paranoid-schizoid State.

Disgust and Compulsory Illiteracy (Hiding from Humanity): Why we should 'de-mean' sex

Anthropologists have often noted a metaphorical parallel between the human body and the social body. The 'higher' levels of society try to keep a distance from the (dirty, contaminating) lower orders, just as in polite company we do not talk about the products

and activities of the lower parts of our bodies. An individual's socialisation takes place over a single life-time, with key beliefs being inculcated in the early years especially. Beliefs which have been passively absorbed as 'common sense' or 'normal' are notoriously difficult to call into question, an essential mechanism which dominant ideologies (14) depend on for their relative success in maintaining social stability – what is thereby becomes what ought to be. But whilst an individual may acquire these beliefs in the course of a single lifetime, the beliefs themselves evolve over much longer time spans: what, and who, gets to count as disgusting has often been categorised as such for centuries. Received wisdom, though potentially deeply irrational, can nonetheless appear in individual minds as unquestionable axioms.

We are strange and divided creatures; other animals are less fastidious about zoning the body in this revulsion-dominated way – giraffes do not appear to get embarrassed when they defecate *al fresco* in full view of others, even if these are simply other giraffes. Whilst I am not suggesting that we should become more giraffe-like in this respect, I do think that Nussbaum is onto something when she deems our attempts to deny our animality and mortality (a quest which inevitably involves attributing them to someone else) an impossible project. However, I think she does not quite convince when she insists that it is primarily an aversion to slime, *bleep* and putrescence which generates all varieties of disgust. She begins to get at the deeper cause when discussing the critical reception of D.H Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Walt Whitman's poetry. All met with the most devout and zealous disgust upon original publication. Nussbaum cites an example of an early review of *Ulysses*, which contains a condemnation of the book's 'leprous and scabrous horrors' and the assertion that 'All the secret sewers of vice are canalized in its flow of unimaginable thoughts, images and pornographic words.' As Nussbaum eloquently notes:

"Joyce believed that our disgust with our own bodily functions lay at the root of many social evils, including nationalism, fanaticism, and misogyny. Like Lawrence he held that a healthy society would be one that comes to grips with its own mortal bodily nature and does not shrink from it in disgust. Joyce's novel, of course, is the opposite of disgusting to anyone who reads it as it asks to be read. Like Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, it presents the body as an object of many emotions – desire, humor, tender love, calm acceptance. But one emotion that is conspicuously absent from both writers ... is disgust. The novels of Joyce and Lawrence were found disgusting precisely because the society that read them was so deeply in the grip of a kind of loathing of its own animality that it could not actually read the works."

(15)

Nussbaum hints at something here which she fails to follow up, a failure which ultimately leads her to endorse the censorious and disgust-laden views of anti-pornography zealots such as Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin (pornography

‘objectifies’ the female body; I think there is much more to it than this, a ‘much more’ which allows me to accept much of the MacKinnon-Dworkin *analysis* of pornography, but to draw diametrically opposite conclusions). Nussbaum remains bound by a liberal perspective - a more capacious, tolerant and intelligent outlook than the coercive moralists of communitarian conformity could ever come up with, but a liberal perspective nonetheless, with its inevitable limitations and blind-spots. Liberal views of human sexuality tend to regard it as alloyed to love, respect for personhood and long-term monogamous intimacy. There is a margin of deviant and perverse sexual behaviour and immorality, to be sure, but the centre is wholesome and good when these principals are adhered to.

As Leo Bersani has astutely observed, the weakness in the argument is how such a wholesomely good centre came to produce such perverse margins in the first place. It is the adherence to an anodyne, vapidly inadequate model of sexuality which is the problem, and which perhaps accounts for the illiteracy Nussbaum hints at above. And it is precisely the compulsoriness, the symptomatically reiterated insistence, that sexuality can and must be redeemed and pastoralised into a bland, insipid, polite niceness that ultimately generates witch-hunts and sexual fascism. What cannot be integrated into this model – the polymorphous, Dionysian, spiciness of sex – has to be projected onto ‘outsiders’. In other words, an inextricable and intrinsic aspect of human sexuality is, through the magical thinking characteristic of paranoid-schizoid fantasising, placed in the perverted margins in order to keep the wholesome centre pure. If this is the meaning of sex, it is high time that we de-meant it, as those human beings unfortunate enough to get placed in the ‘disgusting’ margins (or perhaps, at the ‘bottom’ of the social body) get treated by the centre or ‘higher strata’ exactly like *bleep*.

It is the final sentence of the quotation from Nussbaum which we might productively pursue further: these books were found disgusting because the society considering them was “so deeply in the grip of a ... loathing of its own animality that it could not actually read the works” in a way that they asked to be read. Another way of putting this is to say that socially dominant sexual disgust causes a kind of radical illiteracy, a fraught inability and refusal to receive these authors’ work in a ‘meaning-full’ way. To reduce work of this subtlety and complexity to ‘filth’ requires a considerable amount of violence. But the violence is of a particular nature, not simply what Freud might have called ‘repression’, because this implies a kind of remediable deceit. Repression involves taking in what we do not wish to know about and then hiding it from any further conscious processing, so that it comes back disguised as a symptom; but this kind of symptom is at least theoretically available to conscious appraisal – to truth – if we can overcome our resistances. It sits inside our protestations of disgust and outrage, making them ever more vehement, but threatening all the time to slip out in the form of a bungled comment or a disturbing dream. The violence of disgust is closer to psychosis than neurosis: it involves a much more absolute and profound form of refusal than

repression. It involves a frantic and terrified rejection, an expulsion which one highly innovative reader of Freud called ‘foreclosure.’ When a system of cultural meaning uses foreclosure to block and kill meaningful elaboration, it is, in one theorist’s diagnostic view, psychotic.

Perhaps now is a good moment to introduce you, if you have not already met him, to Jacques Lacan. The loathing-induced illiteracy Nussbaum refers to may have less to do with *bleep* and slime than with what Lacan called *jouissance*, a form of excessive, mad enjoyment that obliterates the distinctions between pleasure and pain, subject and object, self and other. I also think that secret *jouissance* accounts for the refractoriness of some forms of projective identification, especially that which is socially and politically mandated – sadistically ‘othering’ groups of human beings through the malicious lie of projective identification offers an addictive charge of occult, obscene enjoyment to those doing the projecting: it inevitably positions them in a one-way street, top down model of domination and power.

Social Reality: a regulative fiction

It will not have escaped the reader’s attention that, throughout this work, I have been exploring how a radical psychoanalysis might help us to bring into being a more enabling and generous vocabulary to think about sexuality, and especially children and sexuality, than the one we presently have. Shrill, authoritarian, panic-stricken, disgust-laden and vengeful, it ought to belong to a distantly bygone era; that it is the principal vocabulary of our twenty-first century child protection Jacobins is a lamentable tragedy.

One of the principal reasons why I think we should take Lacan’s version of psychoanalysis seriously is that he offers us a means of transcending the censorious authoritarianism we now know as ‘political correctness’; and since this is at its most extreme and, frankly, lethal, in the field of human sexual variation, Lacan’s thought has never been so urgent, so necessary, than in our present moment. By taking language, and language disturbance, seriously, Lacan offers us the possibility of a better fit between the symbolic world and the animal world of the human body.

We are accustomed to thinking of madness and mental abnormality as the unfortunate fate of a small number of individuals who have ‘lost touch with reality.’ The focus on the individual mind and its relation to ‘social reality’ is, of course, the bread and butter of most clinical psychologies and psychiatry. But there is a colossal piece of ideology at work in this assumption: who is to decide what constitutes being ‘in touch’ with ‘reality’ and what precisely might that reality be?

Conventional psychology, which is too often an ideology masquerading as a science, simply ignores this question. It assumes that our dominant political regime of normalcy

is the best of all possible worlds, rendering anyone deviating or straying from it, especially sexually, as abnormal, pathological or wicked. Or, more hubristically, it concedes that earlier times had different moral codes, but regards them as products of ignorance and prejudice on the behalf of our benighted ancestors, who suffered the misfortune of not being able to read any cognitive behavioural manuals. It does not seem to occur to them that such an attitude not only reduces Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton and Swift to myopic primitives who haven't seen the light but elevates the hosts of trashy 'spill-your-guts-on-TV' shows to contemporary prophets. We would have to believe that Oprah is more advanced than Orwell.

Today, our enlightened liberal totalitarians believe they can impose their world view on everyone else partly because, in the field of sexuality at least, the results of their crudely reductionist, primitively empiricist psychologism endorses their ideological preferences, 'proving' that the dreary sexual moralism they seek to enforce on all is True and right (the capital T signals that repressive coercion will inevitably be deployed). This is psychology as ventriloquism, an observation made by Leo Bersani (16): the questions it asks are devised to come up with the answers (and the social strategies) it has already formulated. It may be absurd to rule out an empirical court of appeal to balance and test ideological assertions; but it is equally nonsensical to convert empirical observation into the religion of empiricism. We would do well to remember Einstein's remark that not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted.

Cure, from the perspective of psychological normalism, means correcting errant ways; it inevitably involves 'training courses' and 'programmes', dogmatic, formulaic indoctrination schemes which effectively treat human beings as though they were circus seals or performing bears, all aimed at getting the wayward deviant 'back on track'. Back onto that nice, polite, liberal-totalitarian track, of course, where, it seems, everyone ought to be; even if, as Stephen Fry once remarked, tracks are simply upturned ruts (an observation which applies as much to our contemporary regime of illiberal liberalism as it does to vulgar Stalinism or theocratic fundamentalism).

We are living in times where 'leftist liberalism' now means little other than bossy authoritarianism, the attempt to establish compulsory codes of brittle, mannered politeness through frenetic criminal legislation and to interfere more and more intrusively in private behaviour (don't smoke, don't take any drugs, ever, don't drink, don't say anything which might cause 'offense', don't have fun). This is a liberalism which sedulously sacrifices liberty and freedom of speech to law and order ('security') or 'respect' (not offending anybody) and which casts classical liberals, who cherish free speech and abjure statist regulation, as nasty conservatives. With intolerant tolerance and punitive politeness in power, we are perhaps entitled to ask: under such circumstances is 'abnormality' always a sign of madness? If certain social norms can be shown to be mad, does our adherence to them make us crazy or sane, even if our conformity makes

us normal? Is sanity normalcy?

It seems to me that the psychologies of the rational individual are not only wholly unable to answer these questions: they can't even ask them. If we cannot question what we take to be our social foundations, how the rich man came to live in a castle with the poor man at his gate, or the liberal totalitarian in her ivory tower with the deviants tidied away in prison, the status quo rules: innovation, liberty, and growth have always come from scepticism, struggle and defiance, and never from the benevolent generosity of the ruling order. Freedom has always been won through struggle, defiance and intelligent scepticism; it has never been bestowed by benevolent rulers (being charitable to the lower orders is simply a form of tutelage). If what we call reality is a 'social construction' or 'representation', we are entitled to ask: whose construction or representation has the most merit? Or, if everything that develops in our lives is already encoded and rooted in an unchanging essential nature, what precisely is this essence made of? DNA? Inborn or God-given codes of righteousness?

With the facile binary opposites which govern these questions in place, we may never be able to go beyond the increasingly sterile, fruitless (and numbingly boring) stand-off between the nature/nurture, constructionism/essentialism arguments of the last two or three decades. Whilst I appreciate that he may bring a groan of frustration or simply puzzlement to many, I think Jacques Lacan offers a most productive route out of these interminable and enervating disputes.

To be moral you must be normal; but to be sane, you must embrace your eccentricity

For Lacan, the answer to the question of what determines our desires - nature or nurture - is: neither. If we are animals, we are also talking animals, and it is our capacity for language which makes all the difference. Language enables us to compose symphonies, epic poems and peer into the cosmos with exquisitely sophisticated telescopes. But, to borrow an image from the late American psychoanalyst, Ernest Becker, despite our almost limitless capabilities in art, literature, and technology, we have mortal, animal bodies; all of us, politicians and prisoners, prudes and perverts, have a small opening in our rears from which foul-smelling gases and waste solids emerge. We may be god-like in our achievements, but we all still have to take a *bleep*, and, eventually, like all animals, die – a curious combination which effectively makes us 'gods with arseholes', in Becker's memorable phrase (17).

We can only try to fit our animal bodies as well as we can into the language systems we grow up in. For Lacan, the fit is never going to be perfect, but some language systems (systems of cultural meaning, which he calls the Big Other) may be better than others, in that their vocabularies, their repertoire of 'signifiers', may be more generous and

capacious than others. But even so, there will always be a kind of excess, a tiny morsel of bodily experience which we can never quite capture in language even though we might have no alternative but to keep on trying to do so. Lacan saw this little scrap of fleshly sensation, this morsel of bodily *jouissance* which falls away from us and remains forever beyond our reach as soon as we submit to the laws of language, as the very thing that causes our desire. We can find it nowhere but we seek it everywhere. When I feel I'm getting close to it, possibly when I've become spellbound by the colour of your eyes, or the shine of your hair, a kind of jubilant enchantment arises – 'it', that missing, blissful 'X' that I can't quite describe, seems 'in you more than you', to use Lacan's phrase. However, as soon as I feel I 'have' it, I find that it has mysteriously migrated elsewhere. It keeps desire perpetually on the move.

In becoming linguistic animals, we sacrifice a degree of our primordial animality. Or rather, Lacan seems to be saying that our agreement to submit to the laws of syntax, grammar and linguistic intelligibility, upon which our membership of human communities depends, retroactively creates a powerful fantasy of blissful, boundless, pleasurable fusion with the (m)other – a sense of a limitless enjoyment which language forces us to give up. There'd be no need to learn to speak and communicate if we were forever in a state of seamless communion. This primary estrangement, this ineluctable alienation produced by our assuming linguistic (human) status, will haunt us forevermore. Lacan came to call this estranged, lost, enigmatic scrap of *jouissance* 'object petit a' (or 'object little a' in English, where 'a' stands for 'autre', the French for 'other'). In a characteristically evocative passage, he writes:

“The a, the object, falls. That fall is primal. The diversity of forms taken by that object of the fall ought to be related to the manner in which the desire of the Other is apprehended by the subject.”

(19)

Tim Dean, a brilliant Lacan scholar whose superb book of 2000 brings Lacan's psychoanalysis directly into conversation with contemporary sexual emancipation (“queer”) theories, notes that the concept of 'object a' fully “recognises the diversity of forms that erotic desire may take” (20). Moralists, of course, will be less than pleased with such argumentation. Lacan was scathing about what some have called heteronormativity (and which I prefer to call neurotic moralism), because those championing a spurious normality as a badge of honour were inevitably involved in a monumental deceit, not least toward themselves. And, from a psychoanalytic point of view, self deceit, the ways in which we refuse to know what we *could* know about our desires, is where all subsequent deception begins. Neurotic moralism tries to attribute to outside forces everything that it refuses to integrate; the sane eccentricity Lacan urges us to embrace simply requires us to stop lying about our polymorphous and diverse erotic desires and find good ways of living with them.

For all who have been victimised or simply made weary by the demands of normalcy, this apparently small insight might repay closer consideration. If desire is not pre-ordained, if the ground upon which the sex police and the sex adjudicators stand is removed from beneath their feet (as I believe both Freud and Lacan have actually done, which is almost certainly why they are so radically ignored), we are left with a contingency, a universal contingency, perhaps, but a contingency nonetheless. For it is clear when you read him that Lacan did not believe that this determining piece of bodily jouissance, this lost thing which causes our desire, had anything to do with gender, age, class or any other form of rank. We might all have to experience it, as we all have to enter language; but the way in which we do so is highly idiomatic. And as we have seen, the multiple forms that this lost jouissance may take is indeterminable and irreducible to gender difference, age similarity, skin colour, or even whole persons (the penis, the breast, buttock, belly button, and so on – the list is endless – can all be seen as potential repositories for object little a).

For Lacan, conventional social reality is imaginary and normalcy is too often a form of pathological conformity. To be sane, as opposed to normal, one must seek out and embrace one's repudiated and repressed otherness, one's eccentricity to social convention. Only then can we lead full lives. But if you can be sane whilst estranged from social 'reality', you are mad when you refuse – foreclose - meaningful signifiers.

Social psychosis

It is quite impossible (and probably quite mad) to attempt to give a coherent account of Lacan's thought: he was suspicious of systematising endeavours because he felt that we could seduce ourselves all too easily into thinking that we were masters of reality, monarchs of knowledge. Such conceited certainties pave the road to tyranny, usually in the name of Progress. The unconscious for Lacan, as for Freud, qualified all such claims to mastery, rendering them ultimately specious and riddled with self-deceit. His writing is extraordinarily difficult to comprehend but I do not think that this was simply the result of a wish to be mysterious or obscure in order to circumvent critical scrutiny, as some of his more pre-emptively hostile critics have alleged. I think he was requiring us to engage with his work by tolerating uncertainty and even incomprehension, and by regarding enlightenment as an endless and infinite process.

In a brilliant essay summarising an earlier year-long seminar (Lacan improvised a series of spontaneous seminars every year in front of a live audience – he was hardly toeing a line or following an orthodoxy), he more than hints at the possibility that a *social order* can be psychotic, not merely a few crazed individuals (18). Taking issue with those scientists, including psychoanalysts, who believe they 'know' what reality is, he is scathing about their unquestioning adoption of prevalent social assumptions, many of

which Lacan regards as delusional (just because a large number of people believe in Father Christmas does not make the belief sane). He writes:

“There is no doubt that such a [social] psychosis may turn out to be compatible with what is called an orderly state of affairs, but that does not authorise the psychiatrist, even if he is a psychoanalyst, to trust in his own compatibility with this orderly state to believe that he is in possession of an adequate idea of the reality to which his patient supposedly proves to be unequal.”

(21)

At the time Lacan wrote this (1959), it was the deluded normalcy he refers to which enabled homophobic clinicians to pervert psychoanalysis and use it to classify gay and lesbian people as psychiatrically sick and morally twisted. Lacan would have nothing to do with such crude categorisations, which he regarded simply as the misapplication of popular prejudice to clinical practise and, by definition, thoroughly anti-psychoanalytic. He totally repudiated the view that psychiatrists and psychologists could ever assume that they were in a position to ‘know’ reality better than anyone else, or that patients had strayed too far away from it. For Lacan, this was the height of arrogant self-deception. Boorish, under-educated sex policemen would be dismayed to find that their doltish parroting of sex offender ‘treatment’ manuals would be regarded by Lacan as nothing more than a stupid, self-aggrandising confidence trick.

So what did psychosis mean for Lacan? To be a little mischievous with ordinary language for a moment, from a Lacanian point of view madness has nothing to do with straying too far from (linguistically manufactured) social norms, and everything to do with a terrifying proximity to what he called ‘the Real.’

Madness has nothing to do with the refusal of ‘reality’ (it’s the refusal of words we have to worry about)

How can we know if someone (or a system of beliefs) is sane or mad, as opposed to merely normal? Lacan suggests that in order to find the answer to this question, or rather, in order to pose this question in the first place, we need to drop the ideology of the individual, conscious ego, master of all it surveys, just as Freud had done. With this ideology in control, all we are left with is measuring the extent of deviation from socio-political norms, which has the perverse effect of elevating normotic pathology, which we saw in the last chapter is a dire state of robotic conformity, into the essential benchmark of psychic health.

In Lacan’s radical return to Freud’s texts, he brought out the pivotal role of language in Freud’s scintillatingly original discoveries about human subjectivity. We are animals sharing a great deal of our DNA with other species. But as speaking, writing and reading

animals, animals capable of art, we inevitably become animals governed by symbols far more than by instincts. However, whatever we cannot translate into words, whatever dimension of experience resists our efforts to symbolise it, will insist as symptom, as cause of our desire and as dream (Lacan called this dimension ‘the Real’).

To return to Lacan’s 1959 article on psychosis, we can see that he was working on isolating a structural difference between psychotic and neurotic subjects. He was already very aware that psychotic patients exhibited severe language disturbances: language functioned very differently in the psychotic subject to the way it functioned in the neurotic. The latter, whilst having to submit to the rules of grammar and semantics, could nonetheless use language creatively and meaningfully, too. Neurotics (i.e. ordinary people) have a degree of linguistic agency and can creatively exploit the inevitable ambiguities of language. Psychoanalytic interpretation itself relies on this – it is a kind of generative redescription of a previously frozen storyline, restoring some much needed loose ends (and, as psychoanalyst Adam Phillips once put it “... the looser beginnings”: we may never be able to change the historical events of our lives but we can subsequently change the meanings we attribute to them (22)).

Psychotics have none of this capacity. Whilst they may be completely baffled about what a comment or word might mean, they are nonetheless convinced that it does mean something very specific, and that whatever it is, it is directed at them, even if it has taken the form of an auditory hallucination. There can be no ambiguity; uncannily like the stripped down, cartoon, good guy/bad guy psychology beloved of child protection fanatics, psychotics live in a ‘this means that’ world, although a world in which even this precarious and brittle certainty is under perpetual threat of catastrophic dissolution. This is one reason why psychotics cannot be persuaded to relinquish a delusion: the delusional system is all that is holding them together.

Lacan believed that the future psychotic had *foreclosed* something utterly vital: a symbol he called ‘the Name of the Father’ or the ‘paternal metaphor’. This foreclosure (a most violent expulsion) occurred at a critical moment, more of a logical moment than a chronological one developmentally, but critical nonetheless. To return to mothers and babies for an instant: Lacan believed that we all, as infants, begin to sense at some point that we are not, as we had previously assumed, the sole focus of the mother’s desire. And this begins to intrigue and torment us. Whilst we subsequently fictionalise the era before this moment of anxious intrigue as a time of joy and blissful communion, Lacan suggests that it was never so: we were faced throughout it with the ineradicably troubling question of what, precisely, we are in the (m)other’s desire? What does she see in me, want from me? Just as we begin to have doubts about whether we can fulfil her wants (and what those wants are), we notice that her desire keeps going elsewhere - and perhaps this is an occasion for some relief as well as disillusionment. And elsewhere is where the father is located.

For Lacan, this recognition of the place and role of the father, which does not have to be the natural father or even a male, is pivotal for the path we subsequently go on to take. Father starts to break up the union between mother and infant: his function is to step between us, prohibiting the fantasy of endless fusion and inviting us to become separate, symbol-using subjects in our own right. Where identity and sameness was, a triangle appears: you, me and him (or her). We all struggle with this: he frustrates our desire to be the sole object of the (m)other's desire, but relieves us of the burden of assuming that role. We get a chance to use the space he opens up for us to identify ourselves as beings separate from the mother. I notice that I am referring to father as 'he' – an example, perhaps, of how difficult it is to release oneself from deeply sedimented social assumptions. Lacan is reworking Freud's notion of the Oedipus complex, but he does it in a radically innovative way. Unlike Freud, who did not have access to the field of structural linguistics that Lacan was immersed in, the Lacanian father is not a person, but a signifier, a metaphor. The father is, in Lacan's model, the symbolic position where the mother locates her desire.

At this point we seriously start to wonder what he's got that we haven't. And we come to think that he has (or is) that 'X' we looked at a moment or so ago. To begin with we try to draw the mother's desire back onto ourselves – we try to get her to believe that we are/have 'X' - before reaching the conclusion (if we're fortunate) that, with the father in position, we haven't got a chance (23). We have to come up with an alternative strategy.

For Lacan, this struggle over 'X' (object little a), takes a momentous turn: our alternative strategy, eventually, is to let go of the idea that 'X' is a really existing, material thing or property, such as a penis or big muscles, and see that it is actually a symbol of what the mother lacks (she would not desire if she were not missing something). This substitution, symbol for thing, marks our entry into language: this is the principle of signification, of speech and language. Meaning is constantly deferred until I have completed my statement (we often don't know what someone is getting at until they've finished talking); my words are always substitutes for things. And I will never be able to complete all my statements, to speak the whole truth, to bring about speculative closure, in effect, until death silences me (and even then, people can continue to speculate about what I really meant).

However, the acceptance of the symbolic father, the paternal metaphor, anchors something: whilst inevitably ambiguous, words also convey meaning: some meanings seem tied or quilted to the words signifying them. We would be permanently unintelligible to one another were it not for this 'quilting' effect produced by certain important symbols. Without this tie, words and meanings would either come adrift and slide all over the place, producing semantic disintegration, or in a desperate effort to stave off such dissolution, adhere to one another so frantically and rigidly that signifier

and signified, word and thing, become equivalent and literally identical. A psychotic hearing the word 'stool' will find it hard to distinguish between a piece of furniture and a turd.

It is the paternal metaphor, which we can think of more broadly as a meaningful signifier (or cluster of signifiers), which the psychotic radically and primally refuses. And this refusal has terrible consequences. Language might frustrate us, and convince us that we have had an original deep enjoyment taken away from us. But, even though this deep enjoyment is itself an effect of language (rather than an antecedent), as linguistic creatures we require a safe, protective barrier to stand between us and 'it', just as we needed the paternal metaphor to mitigate and separate our mad desire for exclusive, eternal fusion with the mother. We are mad when we believe we can have direct, unmediated access to 'it', the 'Real.' What bars us (and preserves us) from unmediated jouissance is the word.

Lacan's view is, of course, radically different from that of our ruling victimologists. For Lacan, trauma is constitutive: it is the condition of possibility for becoming linguistic subjects and it is generative as well as limiting (we get to be agents in language). Our refusal to accede to it is liable to make us psychotic (the victimologist view is that trauma only happens when nasty men do horrible things to women and children).

When I was a schoolboy, a rather strict (but actually very good) 'metalwork' teacher displayed a large leather belt in his workshop. It had painted on it the phrase "For when words fail." Needless to say, he had no discipline problems (he was actually a rather nice man). But to take his phrase seriously, the failure of words can make us excessively violent – far more so than other animals.

Tim Dean takes this notion, along with Lacan's suggestion that a social order can be functionally psychotic, very seriously: if the refusal of meaningful signifiers in an individual leads to psychosis, the refusal of meaningful signifiers by a dominant social order leads to a far more widespread madness:

"I'm claiming that Lacan redefines psychosis in terms of the loss of the signifier, rather than the loss of "reality." Yet I'm also claiming that in order to understand what this means we need to look at what Lacan does with the theory of the real – which designates not reality but the point at which the signifier fails."

(24)

'The point at which the signifier fails' is the point where jouissance (the unsymbolisable 'real') threatens to erupt, but via projective identification, it is immediately perceived as an external threat to our decent, civilised, moral way of life. Following Dean, my

contention is that signifiers always fail precisely at those cultural fault lines which defy dominant narratives of unity (such as ‘the community’) and innocence (such as the imaginary child). Sexual children? Community psychosis beckons (as does murderous suppression).

The Theft of Enjoyment: the Conceptual Paedophile, the Imaginary Child and the Obscene Father (or, How to Make a Spectral Sexual Hell)

Becoming human agents in language entails, for Lacan, a traumatic cost: we get a certain agency and freedom of association, for sure, but it is as if the symbolic father has cut us off from a pre-existing joyful unity, a limitless source of gratification, which by means of the impenetrable barrier or irreversible alienation inflicted (or bestowed) by language, now seems like ‘*jouissance*’ – boundless, unconstrained, purposeless enjoyment. Barriers create fantasies of enjoyment: when we look at beautifully wrapped gifts, our appetites and excitements are aroused. Without the wrapping, however, they’d just be a bunch of everyday objects (Christmas without wrapping paper is just another day). We are always inclined to imagine that, whilst ‘we’ civilised types have made the sacrifice of giving this excessive enjoyment up, ‘other’ uncivilised types have not.

When immigrants are accused by one and the same group of coming into ‘our country’ and draining off welfare benefits in order to live a life of indolent, sexually promiscuous comfort on ‘our’ hardworking backs, whilst simultaneously stealing our jobs and driving us into unemployment, the accuser is rarely aware of the mutually exclusive contradiction in his thinking. Slavoj Zizek, as we might now have come to expect, has some compellingly persuasive responses to these contradictions.

In his outstanding analysis of anti-Semitism, Zizek both likens it to and differentiates it from other forms of racism. By now, we know that racism and scapegoating depend on ‘othering’. Zizek is intrigued by why anti-Semitism has involved mass extermination, whilst other forms of racism have undoubtedly involved subjugation (dehumanisation) but not necessarily annihilation. He thinks an additional element is present in genocide: classical racism propounds a belief in national superiority, which justifies domination and enslavement. But anti-Semitism, in Nazi guise especially, justifies wholesale slaughter.

The Nazis justified their genocidal regime of repression by means of an appeal to the ‘decent’ German people to join the fight against the great danger of the ‘Jewish threat.’ The threat posed by ‘the Jew’ in Nazi thinking, Zizek insists, is the necessary condition for the emergence of a new, pure, Aryan society – the society the Nazis were determined to bring into being. But ... the threat did not precede the Nazis: it was actively created

(manufactured) by them. Nazism depended upon the fabrication of an imaginary threat – the ‘conceptual’ Jew – for its rise.

We saw earlier that the advent of the paternal metaphor substituted the (incestuous) desire for endless enjoyment with the mother for what Lacan called the ‘law of the father’: the first step into the world of symbolic and publicly codified law. But there is a founding paradox here: the prohibition creates the desire it sets out to prevent. Prohibitive law creates the desire to transgress, to ‘enjoy’ precisely that which is forbidden. How we go about managing this conflict can have massive social consequences. It is as if we are torn between the public, symbolic father who says ‘You may not!’ and a corresponding hidden and obscene ‘anti-father’ who says “You may!”

The Nazis managed this intrinsic conflict by claiming that they were bringing about the new, harmonious world of Aryan perfection and purity; in order to do this, and persuade people that their authoritarianism and violent repressiveness was the path to utopia, they had to unite people against an external threat which required total eradication. In an intriguing paragraph, Žižek writes:

“What ‘holds together’ a community most deeply is not so much identification with the Law that regulates the community’s ‘normal’ everyday circuit, but rather *identification with a specific form of transgression of the Law, of the Law’s suspension* (in psychoanalytic terms, with a specific form of *enjoyment*).
(24)

The first act of annihilation performed by the Nazis was the obliteration of complexity and diversity: an entire people were designated by one word, ‘Jew.’ And in Nazi ideology, the signifier ‘Jew’ was used to enforce a radical mass illiteracy: it was to mean only what the Nazis required it to mean, namely, ‘threat to our way of life’ (Aryan racial purity in this instance). A series of compulsory, disgust-ridden equivalences were welded together by this three letter word: threat = contaminant = human waste, to be eliminated (in Nazi propaganda, the Jewish people were frequently depicted as vermin and insects). The way in which the ‘Jew’ was perceived to be different was through the attribution of *excessive* enjoyment - of wealth, of the pure youth of the Aryan master race - an enjoyment they were stealing from the good, decent people of Germany. The belief in the theft of enjoyment authorised mass extermination on a scale which still defies description.

The Nazi’s ‘conceptual Jew’ spuriously (and compulsorily) homogenised a diverse and heterogenous swathe of humanity in a single word, portraying them as stealing the enjoyment of the good and decent. This is social psychosis at work. It is the resulting illiteracy, the refusal and foreclosure of all other meaningful words and sentences, which ultimately authorises death and destruction, and at the very least social cleansing

operations.

Whilst I do not wish for an instant to make light of the holocaust, or to seek to diminish the indescribable torment not only of those who perished but of those who survived it, I do think that Žižek's analysis, which he extends to other forms of racism (25), lends itself instructively to our fraught cultural preoccupation with what is simplistically referred to as 'paedophilia'. Again, a word is being used to forcibly refuse all other descriptions and attempts at meaning. A similar process is at work in dominant accounts of children and sexuality: they don't have a sexuality, nor any recognised entitlement to an erotic life. If they are caught having one, they are designated either as victims of prior abuse or wicked. Since the UK has one of the highest rates of 'under-age' pregnancy in Western Europe, there seems to be rather a lot of this non-existent sexuality going on. The resulting illiteracy renders some depictions of erotic beauty as nothing other than indecency and abuse, a form of semantic violence which authorises witch-hunts and lynch mobs.

Towards an adequate model of sexuality

I mentioned earlier that a vapidly inadequate model of sexuality lay behind our present paranoid-schizoid politics of sexual shame and stigmatisation. As we saw in the last chapter, Leo Bersani insists that it is the redemptive project to purge sex of 'impurities' that lies behind the brutalities directed at those who are figured in our culture as either hyper-sexual (e.g., gay men and paedos) or nonsexual (children, who will suffer terribly if the purists discover any hint of erotic play amongst them). Commenting on MacKinnon and Dworkin's work on sex and pornography, he writes:

"What bothers me about MacKinnon and Dworkin is not their analysis of sexuality, but rather the pastoralizing, redemptive intentions that support the analysis. That is ... they have given us the reasons why pornography must be multiplied and not abandoned, and, more profoundly, the reasons for defending, for cherishing the very sex they find so hateful. Their indictment of sex – their refusal to prettify it, to romanticize it, to maintain that *bleep*ing has anything to do with community or love – has had the immensely desirable effect of publicizing, of lucidly laying out for us, the inestimable value of sex as – at least in certain of its ineradicable aspects – anticomunal, antiegalitarian, antinurturing, antiloving."

(26)

It is to these ineradicable aspects – and the consequences of embracing them rather than denying them – that we might productively turn next, in developing a more adequate model of sex.

Notes and References to Chapter Six

- (1) Cited in Neil McKenna (2003) *The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde*, p. 2, London: Century.
- (2) Norbert Elias (1978) *History of Manners*, p. 120, New York: Pantheon.
- (3) Peter Stallybrass and Allon White (1986) *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, p. 191, London: Methuen.
- (4) Katia Mann, quoted by Colm Toibin (2002) “Thomas Mann: Exit Pursued by Biographers” in Colm Toibin *Love in a Dark Time: Gay Lives from Wilde to Almodovar*, p. 123, London, Basingstoke and Oxford: Picador.
- (5) Anthony Heilbut (1996) *Thomas Mann: Eros and Literature*, pp. 246-9, New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- (6) Germaine Greer (2003) *The Boy*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- (7) Whilst he did not have a computer hard drive to raid, he did keep detailed diaries in which, amongst his intellectual explorations, he meticulously recorded the scenarios of erotic captivation he experienced upon seeing any boy who evoked his desire. When the rise of the Nazis drove him to leave Germany, he worried perpetually about the fate of these intimate diaries he had had to leave behind.
- (8) Jonathan Dollimore (2001) “Sexual Disgust”, Chapter 4 of *Sex Literature and Censorship*, p. 47, Oxford, Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity.
- (9) Dollimore, *ibid.*, p. 63.
- (10) Jacqueline Rose (1993) “Margaret Thatcher and Ruth Ellis” in *Why War? Psychoanalysis, Politics and the Return to Melanie Klein*, p. 41, Oxford: Blackwell.
- (11) Melanie Klein (1946) “Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms” in Melanie Klein (1987) *The Writings of Melanie Klein, Volume III: Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946 - 1963* London: Hogarth.
- (12) Martha C. Nussbaum (2004) *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law*, pp. 74-75, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- (13) The UK’s Lord Devlin famously amongst them, with his 1959 image of the ‘man on the Clapham omnibus’ feeling revulsion at the mere thought of a non-normative sexual act (Devlin was arguing against the decriminalisation of homosexuality between consenting adults – see Patrick Devlin (1965) *The Enforcement of Morals*, London: Oxford University Press). Whilst I was an impoverished university undergraduate in the 1970’s, I met many diverse people on this famous omnibus – I lived in a curiously permanently refrigerated hovel near Clapham – but I can honestly say that I was never asked once by anyone remotely resembling the esteemed Lord what my views on anything were. I guess he decided that he simply knew what simple folk like me would feel. It’s astonishing to behold what extraordinary psychic powers a privileged background and a wig can bestow on one. Authoritarians, we might note in passing, have always regarded the moral order as on the brink of disintegration and requiring ferocious enforcement in order to avert catastrophe.
- (14) By which I mean those culturally reproduced stories aimed at justifying divisive social hierarchies through appeals to nature and morality.
- (15) Nussbaum (2004), *ibid.*, p. 138.
- (16) Leo Bersani (1995) *Homos*, p. 12, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press.
- (17) Ernest Becker (1973) *The Denial of Death*, New York: The Free Press. I include this reference not simply to use rude words, but because the juxtaposition of animality and sophisticated linguistic capability has fateful consequences.
- (18) Jacques Lacan (1963/1990) “Introduction to the Names-of-the-Father Seminar” in Lacan (1990) *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, p. 85. Text established by Jacques-Alain Miller. Edited by Joan Copjec. Translated by Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, Annette Michelson, and

Jeffrey Mehlman, New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company.

(19) Jacques Lacan (1959) "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis" in Jacques Lacan (2006) *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, Translated by Bruce Fink in collaboration with Heloise Fink and Russell Grigg, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company.

(20) Tim Dean (2000) *Beyond Sexuality*, p. 60, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

(21) Lacan (1959) "On a Question ...", *ibid.*, p. 480.

(22) Adam Phillips (1993) *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored: Psychoanalytic Essays on the Unexamined Life*, p. xx, London and Boston: Faber and Faber.

(23) Babies unfortunate enough to have a mother who repudiates or denigrates the location of the father - who persists, in other words, in the delusion that the infant is and always will be the be all and end all of her life - are in for a hard time. They will find it extraordinarily difficult to develop any kind of separate subject position for themselves. This does not mean that single mothers (who are more often than not abandoned mothers) drive their children mad: if the metaphorical father has a sound symbolic position in the mother's mind - another place for her desire to go to - this will protect against the psychosis of folie-a-deux.

(23) Tim Dean (2000), *op. cit.*, pp. 102-103.

(24) Slavoj Zizek (1994/2005) *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality*, p. 55, London and New York: Verso.

(25) For example, as Zizek notes in the same book, black men are often portrayed in racist ideology as having access to excessive sexual enjoyment.

(26) Leo Bersani (1987) "Is the Rectum a Grave?" in Douglas Crimp (ed.) (1988) *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*, p. 215, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press.

Chapter 7. Sexuality in 2D: Cartoon psychology and problem of human complexity.

“It is no accident that in the United States the phrase ‘sex and violence’ is used as one word to describe acts of equal wickedness, equal fun, equal danger to that law and order our masters would impose on us. Yet equating sex with violence does change the nature of each (words govern us more than anatomy), and it is quite plain that those who fear what they call permissiveness do so because they know that if sex is truly freed of taboo it will lead to torture and murder because that is what they dream of ...”
Gore Vidal (1971/1999), (1)

“Police believe that up to 50,000 sexual predators are surfing the net at any time.”
The Daily Mail newspaper (UK), 6th August 2006 (2)

“Those who rule us have brilliantly applied the maxim that the best defence against truth is the unswerving repetition of lies.”
Leo Bersani (2008), (3)

Pleasure and Danger

i) Criminalising fantasy

If you believe that, today, children are imperilled as never before by sexual predators stalking the internet, that an overstretched police force is beleaguered by inadequate funding in its efforts to hold back massive high-tech child exploitation, that every child porn image is an image of abuse, a permanent record of a crime scene, and that every time it is viewed the child depicted is re-abused, that the police insistence that anyone who views these images will inevitably go on to assault a child must be accepted without question, and that this is why these individuals must be pursued and punished with the utmost ruthlessness - you should stop reading forthwith. There is little comfort, let alone confirmation, for you in what follows.

In the climate of a virtual wall-to-wall media endorsement of these assertions, it may appear certifiably insane to suggest a radically contrary view: that a far greater danger to the well-being of children is posed by the intrusion of police forces and law courts into the sacrosanct (and irreducibly ambiguous) space of intrapsychic erotic fantasy, that this violation is causing the most appalling and irreversible damage, agony and destruction in the lives of alarmingly large numbers of ordinary, harmless men and their loved ones, and that children are being horrifically traumatised by the invasion of the State into personal privacy. Even so, this is precisely the argument which forms the foundation for

what follows.

To compound matters, I concluded the last chapter with Leo Bersani's claim that the victim feminists' analysis of sexuality can be used to advocate the precise opposite of the straight-laced sexual chastity they have been promoting; in other words, it gives us the grounds for advocating *more* promiscuity, *more* pornography, *more* sex. As is becoming rather customary, in order to prove that I am not simply unhinged, I find myself again with quite a bit of explaining to do – enough, I should forewarn you, to fill this chapter and the next.

What follows is not primarily based on the chilling information unearthed by investigative journalist Duncan Campbell in the UK that the British police catastrophically ignored obvious and unambiguous evidence that many of the men they were rounding up in dawn raids during the first wave of the witch hunt, Operation Ore, were innocent victims of credit card fraud (4). If true, this represents professional neglect and contemptuous indifference of breathtaking proportions (and appears to have resulted in multiple suicides amongst the accused); but I think the real crime of the 'child porn' witch-hunters is more malignant even than this.

The drive to elevate the private possession of some categories of pornography to the same level as sexual assault is closer to my concerns in this work. Lowering the threshold for the definition of serious crime is a relatively effortless way of creating the helpful illusion that the police are catching more criminals. It's far easier, after all, to shoot fish in a barrel than to go to all the effort of angling or deep sea fishing; just label a bunch of hapless, net-surfing depressives who would never harm a child as 'paedos' and you've got a crime wave to crush. As for those who abduct, molest and assault children – well, they're far too difficult to track down, too small in number to make a viable career out of and they require too much time and tedious donkey work to boot. Better by far to pretend that the two groups are the same; then you can round impressive numbers of people up and throw them in gaol to a great fanfare of media adulation. This is the lie which is authorising the devastation of many lives in the name of justice.

ii) Fantasy, Intention, Behaviour (FIB)

Gore Vidal manages in the single epigrammatic paragraph quoted above to say what has taken me six chapters to articulate: 'words govern us more than anatomy.' I'd like to stay with this theme and see where it leads us. Words seem to transmogrify us from frail animals trying to survive the awesome power of nature's contingencies into frail animals who can also compose symphonies and build fabulous bridges. Amongst other things: the dark side of our status as speaking animals is that we appear to be the only species on the planet capable of genocide (as Terry Eagleton once noted, there is a depressingly long list of human agents of massacre but we have yet to find the giraffe guilty of one).

Despite our astounding capacity for good and evil we cannot escape the rude limitations of our animal bodies – as we saw in the last chapter, like penguins and antelope, we still have bowel movements and, ultimately, perish (we are, as Ernest Becker put it, gods with arseholes).

Language, which I believe should include all the means we humans deploy to convey messages to one another, both verbal and extra-verbal, has had a tremendous effect on our species' sexuality, making it wholly incommensurate with that of any other living creature. One may draw similarities vis-à-vis anatomical structures or the mechanics of procreation by studying other species, but there all similarity ends. A dog may hump your leg with wild abandon, but it is doubtful whether he is having complex erotic fantasies whilst doing so. To put this another way, we humans may indulge frequently in what our ancestors called the sin of self-abuse but it is inconceivable that we are *not* entertaining all manner of imaginary sexual scenarios as a precondition for such debasement. Whilst it is not improbable to find one person turning to another after making love and saying, "I'll tell you who I was thinking of if you tell me who you were thinking of", it would be beyond the limits of credulity to suppose that such fantasmatic accompaniments adorn the sex acts of squirrels or rabbits, even though the latter reputedly go in for more sex acts than most.

If sexual fantasy is one of the most defining distinctions between humans and other animals, we might do well to explore it. Where do sexual fantasies come from and why do we have them? What are we to make of them? What are they? Wakeful dreams? Wishes? Thoughts? Child Salvationists claim, of course, that they already know: sexual fantasies are intentions. If this were so, the incidence of sexual assault, molestation and 'inappropriate' touching would probably rise to include every man woman and child on the planet, so it might be wise to ditch this ludicrous assertion without wasting too much time on it.

(iii) Refused Questions

The salvationists appear to be exercised by just one question to the exclusion of all others: how can we stop people from having 'inappropriate' sexual fantasies? Unusually in the field of human sexuality, there appears to be only one sane answer: we can't. Even the most avidly puritanical victimologist is unlikely to be able prevent herself from experiencing spontaneous and unbidden erotic stirrings toward a passer-by in the shopping mall, a work colleague, a friend or neighbour, or, heaven forbid, that colleague's or friend's adolescent son or daughter. A sane response to these unwilled imaginary scenarios might be simply to enjoy them while they last, speculate (free associate) about why they might have affected us as they did, and shrug them off afterwards; few of us feel compelled to act on everything that passes through our minds - an essential indicator of sanity is the ability to distinguish between fantasy and action.

Those who feel dangerously close to acting on their fantasies may require aggressively enforced prohibitions, but just about everyone else can separate their private fantasies from their behaviour (the argument that ‘others’ might act out their desires in a ruthless and uncontrollable way is a displacement or projection: the ‘othering’ of desires we would rather not own up to having).

It would be more productive to explore the questions the victimologists would prefer us not to consider. “What are erotic fantasies and why do we have them?” is a rather more open-ended query than the porn police would like it to be. Rather than responding as though we were being interrogated by the sex inquisition, with the implication that there are right and wrong (straight and deviant) answers, we might instead try a more speculative approach. To do otherwise, to delineate definitive formulations, would be to distort and congeal an inherently enigmatic and mutable phenomenon (there is a limit to what we can learn about the lives of butterflies once they have become samples in a cabinet; like authoritative theories of sexuality, they may look impressive but they are, nonetheless, dead objects removed from their habitats). There are, I hope to suggest, good reasons for supposing that it is the free flow of speculation which makes sexuality at least liveable with, whereas all efforts to petrify it in formulation convert it into a dangerously neurotic symptom.

Our species has made pleasure dangerous, in more ways than one, and our masters have throughout the ages elaborated rigid and prescriptive rules about which pleasures are permissible and which are to be damned. This is not to dispute that some varieties of ‘pleasure’ are inherently malignant: few of us are blithely permissive toward those who take their pleasure at the expense of others, who thrill to another’s humiliation or pain (although victim feminists and their allies in the sex police seem to have made socially valorised careers out of such sadism). But the rules I am referring to have little relation much of the time to anything that might sanely be considered ‘harmful’. There may be a universal human disposition toward seeking pleasurable experiences, but when the neurotic moralism of our rulers intervenes, you can be sure that, wherever there is pleasure, there is danger. In addition to the queries raised so far, we might ask why this should be so – why should pleasure be so fraught with danger?

In posing these questions I am not pretending that definitive answers, in the sense of authoritative conclusions, can be reached because they clearly cannot. To ask ‘What is the meaning of sex?’ is necessarily to inaugurate interminable conjecture, conjecture which moral authoritarians would like to close down. It is more a psychoanalytic question than a test; it is free association, not formulation, which is likely to produce the most interesting (and emancipatory) responses. And it is free-associative speculation, rather than spurious oracular authority, which will keep us humane.

As has become tiresomely predictable, I find myself unable to proceed directly to a

speculative reply without first taking the now customary detour. Before I can think about what a good sexual life might be, I find myself having to dispense first with what it is not.

“Learned Deviant Behaviour” and Cartoon Psychology

i) Perverts, perversion and preferred prejudices

During June 2009, the mainstream media experienced one of its perennial convulsions about child molestation as stories of women who sexually abuse children began to emerge. In the UK, a thirty-nine year old female nursery worker, Vanessa George, was arrested and charged with sexually assaulting and making indecent images of some of the children she was working with. Before Ms George was proclaimed guilty of the charge, a number of ‘experts’ came forward to give instant pronouncements on the phenomenon of female sexual abuse of children. Not untypical is the following excerpt from an article written by Dr Michele Elliott in the UK’s Guardian newspaper:

“Like most male abusers, female abusers tend to have been abused themselves as kids. Paedophiles ... often try to claim their attraction to children is a sexual orientation, like homosexuality or bisexuality; ... it isn't – it is a learned deviant behaviour.”
(The Guardian newspaper, 11th June 2009)

Dr Elliott is the founder and director of the ‘child safety’ UK charity Kidscape and a prominent child protection campaigner of many years standing. She and others like her have helped elevate the ‘danger’ of ‘paedophilia’ to such a degree that it has become a national panic out of all proportion to its actual extent: ‘promoting child safety’ almost invariably means ‘provoking parental paranoia’ by fanning florid and groundless paedohysteria. The British sociologist, Frank Furedi would, I suspect, classify Dr Elliott as an especially accomplished ‘fear entrepreneur’ – one of those who have successfully exploited the burgeoning market in irrational anxiousness which characterises our age. With that said, perhaps we might take her assertions seriously, which of course does not mean accepting them at face value.

We ought to be able to safely ignore her first sentence: it is just popular mythology, a kind of folk-psychology, but we can see from the casual way in which Dr Elliott uses it as unquestionable fact, it has come to form a foundational belief for most child salvationists. More precisely, we might X-ray Dr Elliott’s comment for its core fantasy: she cleverly inverts the line of causality, a well-established ruse of unconscious mental processes, because what she is actually saying is: “sexual ‘abuse’ *causes* sexual abuse.” This is the principal reason why ‘minors’ who have had ‘underage’ sexual experiences (who are automatically designated by salvationists as ‘abused’ or ‘abuser’, irrespective of their own experience of the activity) are compelled to undergo coercive and

manipulative ‘treatments’ along with frankly abusive long-term surveillance, the principle, panic-stricken, aim of which appears to be to prevent them from ‘abusing’ others in the future. The evidence in reality is far more ambiguous – research by a team from Great Ormond Street Hospital (5) strongly suggested that large numbers of sexually assaulted children do *not* go on to sexually offend. Some do, but many don’t.

The most important and compelling inference emerging from this team’s work with 25 sexually abused adolescent boys was that early exposure to intrafamilial violence was a significantly more potent risk factor for future sexual offending than a history of prior sexual assault. Boys who had not experienced family violence did not offend sexually. This corresponds with the research of Rind, Bauserman, and Tromovitch which we looked at in Chapter Five. Perhaps its failure to correspond with the populist folklore the child exploitation industry has worked so hard to cultivate over the last few decades accounts for why it, like Rind *et al*’s research, has been largely ignored.

ii) Beastly baddies, narcissistic repair and transformational objects: 2-D psychology or psychoanalysis?

One of the Great Ormond Street study’s most powerful features was the painstaking in-depth work undertaken with these young people (three of the researchers were psychoanalytic psychotherapists); unlike much of the research using larger sample populations, this data did not primarily arise from psychometric questionnaires but from careful analyses of the fine detail of psychotherapeutic conversations.

With a questionnaire, you can simply appoint your preferred self as respondent, the version of you which tries ceaselessly to show you in the best possible light. However, you can be sure of one thing: in this field of evaluation, as soon as you have been re-classified from human being to thought-crime sex offender, the questions fired at you in the test will be heavily loaded with the examiner’s presumptions: “You make a sexual pass at a child: will she/he be excited, frightened, proud, etc? Tick the answer you consider most likely.” The fact that by far the vast majority of the men rounded up for looking at pictures – most of whom are sane but slightly depressed individuals who have no difficulty in distinguishing between fantasies and behaviour - wouldn’t consider for a moment making a sexual pass at a child doesn’t have any place in such a ‘psychometric evaluation.’

Psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas (whose extraordinary analysis of the fascist state of mind we looked at in Chapter 1.) repeatedly found in his clinical work that many people seemed driven to seek a unique kind of experience, an experience they could not readily formulate in words but yet intuitively had a deep familiarity with. For Bollas, when we find ourselves, as adults, seeking ‘objects’ which enable an uncanny sense of fusion with them, of an inexpressibly deep healing, we are re-visiting an early, pre-verbal

experience. He notes the deep subjective rapport we sometimes have when encountering such an ‘object’ – a psychoanalytic term for anything that evokes powerful emotional responses in us, including aspects of other people, like eye colour, voice, mannerism, body shape (the list is endless). Bollas mentions other such objects: a painting, a poem, an aria or symphony, or a natural landscape (I would only add ‘an image’).

Bollas’ startling take on these uncannily familiar occurrences – which we can sense very vividly, even when encountering something entirely new, is that they simultaneously evoke early, pre-representational experiences of both successful *and* failed self-transformation. When Donald Winnicott insisted that there was no such thing as a baby, he meant that infants are born so helpless that they would rapidly die unless there was also a ‘primary carer’ (a mother) to nurse them, hold them, nurture them. Bollas develops this Winnicottian truism into the concept of the ‘transformational object:’ before we have enough of a self to relate to the mother as a complex person in her own right, when we assume that she is there solely to keep us going and fulfil our needs (and whims) on demand, we experience her ministrations as psycho-physical *metamorphoses*, as profound transformations in self-experience. Hunger becomes satiation, cold becomes warmth, wet becomes dry, loneliness becomes company, and helplessness gradually becomes agency.

The mother is the prototype of the transformational object: the provision of ‘good enough’ primary emotional and physical attentiveness facilitates transformative developmental integrations, including learning to walk and play, talk and think. Puberty and adolescence, also, are radically transformational self-experiences, a transition which may readily be imagined as a transformational object, wherein the infant-child body irretrievably disappears and a new, sexually-charged subjectivity begins to grow. The adult experiences of transformational object-substitutes Bollas describes are uncannily familiar to us precisely because, new as they may be, they are evoking something we have lived through before:

“Such aesthetic experiences do not sponsor memories of a specific event or relationship, but evoke a psychosomatic sense of fusion that is the subject’s recollection of the transformational object. This anticipation of being transformed by an object – itself an ego memory of the ontogenetic process – inspires the subject with a reverential attitude towards it, so that even though the transformation of the self will not take place on the scale it reached during early life, the adult tends to nominate such objects as sacred.”(6)

These are experiences, in other words, which are experientially known but may never have been represented in thought (the ‘unthought known’ in Bollas’ evocative terminology). These areas of ‘unthought known’ are not confined to a handful of psychiatric patients or ‘perverts’ but are present in everyone. For most psychoanalysts, and Bollas is no exception, it simply is not possible to get through infancy and

childhood, no matter how loving and reliable one's parents might have been, without accruing some degree of trauma, some pieces of parental 'failure', along the way. No parent can ever perfectly attune to infantile needs and states of mind; there is always at least some degree of mistuning, of the intrusion of parental moods and preoccupations, into the emerging space of infant and childhood mental development.

From a psychoanalytic point of view, these 'failures' (although, since they are inevitable, it seems a little punitive to refer to them as defects) always leave behind a mnemonic trace. Thankfully, much of the time, most parents, and especially those who are rather clumsily termed 'primary caretakers' (and who most of us would refer to simply as 'mothers'), get it right more often than they get it wrong. When we find ourselves driven to seek out these uncannily familiar aesthetic and psychosomatic experiences of fusion, we are attempting to re-find, to re-collect, successful transformational object experiences. But we may also be attempting to tend to, to nurse and soothe, faults and deficiencies in self experience. This is a symptom, perhaps, but a symptom which is itself an attempt at self cure, at self repair.

In our quest for 'narcissistic-' or self-repair, from a psychoanalytic point of view, we may seek *images* of youthful perfection in an attempt to restore and rejuvenate a deeply damaged, wounded or simply worn out and depleted self-image, a quest which has nothing to do with actually wanting to have sex with youths, even if it does involve an appreciation of their erotic beauty. Gazing at erotic images, just as much as gazing at art or natural landscapes, can frequently, in and of itself, be solely the seeking out of a transformational object-image. The sense of fusing with the image is the behaviour, the aim; there is no intention, wish or desire to stalk anyone, molest anyone, or sexually coerce or humiliate anyone.

In looking at erotica, most people are merely trying to re-evoke experiences of *erotic* transformation, like that of puberty itself, from the vantage point of the present. And this is especially likely if the present happens to be a time where the storyline we have been living seems to have ground to a halt, or become too boring, stressful or fraught (or all of these things). When there is precious little occasion for positive self-metamorphosis in reality, we may seek it in imagination, in fantasy. 'Wishing to be' (or to be *like*) in *fantasy*, - which allows for the impossible, is radically different to 'intending to *have*' in behaviour (human beings are the only species on the planet to conduct a vast amount of their sex lives in fantasy rather than in action). Those who insist that such imaginary experimentation always amounts to an intention to ravage a child are saying rather more about what is going on in their own psyches than they would really like us to be aware of.

Psychoanalysis – a body of work either wholly ignored or ignorantly cartooned by victimologist ideology - enables us to see that overt behaviour alone is a poor and most

unreliable guide to true subjective motivation. Only a facile and crude empiricism would insist that manifest action is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. If victimologists had even the most rudimentary grasp of the concepts of narcissistic repair and transformational object seeking, they would find a gigantic hole blown in their good vs. evil view of the universe, with its saintly (if suspiciously sour-faced) sisterhood on one side and moustache-twirling molesters laughing maniacally on the other. But having ignored and avoided the complex psychoanalytic discoveries about erotic fantasy life, and therefore lacking any concept of the sheer *drive* for self-repair and the search for transformational objects, the impoverished two-dimensional psychology favoured by victim ideologues begins from the violently simplistic premise that, if you look at erotica of any kind, you're a compulsive groper and molester. One might have thought that, if you're about to irretrievably destroy someone's life, the onus should be on you to prove an assertion such as this rather than merely assume it.

Returning to our questionnaire's designer – charged with the task of measuring deviance from the vantage point of normative assumptions, in the field of sexuality at least – he or she will merely pose queries designed to confirm already preconceived beliefs, wrong-footing your preferred self's responses along the way if possible. Two lines of mendacity, however, rarely result in anything truthful.

(iii) Approaching truth: psychometrics or free association?

With a psychoanalytic session requiring uncensored speech, however, things get rather more complicated. There is a radio show in the UK (BBC Radio 4's *Just a Minute*), which invites a panel of celebrities to improvise for sixty seconds on a given theme without hesitation, deviation or repetition. It is virtually impossible to speak for an entire minute without erring in at least one of these categories. In psychoanalytic work, you are required to speak, improvisationally and truthfully, not for the impossible single minute of the radio show, but for forty-five or fifty minutes. This is free association, the principal method of psychoanalysis; unlike a State-appointed psychologist or apparatchik, the analyst asks no questions and waits calmly and quietly for you to begin reporting whatever happens to be in your mind at that moment. Like you, he has no idea of what you will find yourself speaking about. Over this extended period, your ego, your inner PR consultant, will inevitably fail to prevent the interruption of your intentional discourse by those versions of yourself you would prefer not to know about (and would certainly prefer others not to overhear). As the psychoanalyst Adam Phillips once deftly put it, the unconscious is the part of us which joins in without ever fitting in.

From a psychoanalytic point of view, human sexuality is irreducibly and insolubly enigmatic, making 'knowing' in this field a questionable project. By contrast, paedofinders and moralists seek to circumvent intractable mysteries like this with spurious omniscience (violent certainty). They appear to believe that they already know

everything that needs to be known about the subject, a conceit which naturally leads them to suppose that they already know all that needs to be known about you – they’ve memorised all the training manuals and (selected, ideology-confirming) ‘research’ don’t forget - so it’s hardly worth you bothering to respond to their interrogations at all. All your statements will be assimilated to their theories about you, which they rigidly substitute for the more complicated (and messy) business of truthfully engaging with the ambiguities and nuances of your faltering narrative (of honestly trying to get to know you, in other words).

A psychoanalyst actively suspends his acquired theoretical knowledge during the analytic hour, in order to meet you in all your unique complexity and contradiction; paedofinder psych-technicians will, by contrast, cling like limpets to the theories and received wisdom they have swallowed and pounce on those small sequences of your speech (you *will* be questioned) which, when decontextualised, fit well with their rigidly predetermined concepts. It should come as no surprise to discover that they will wholly ignore the rest and rapidly pronounce you guilty of confirming their assumptions. By contrast to punitive-correctional psychological technologies, psychoanalysis cannot be compelled: it can only be offered (compulsion would pre-emptively kill its principle method, free association, rendering it unreservedly useless).

(iv) Fearful fantasies and fabricated fiends

I strongly suspect that it is fear which plays the leading role in the difference between the two approaches; we are inclined to become dogmatic and rigid when we are frightened of something, when we are doing our best to prevent that ‘something’ emerging in our conscious thoughts. ‘The paedophile’, as I hope to argue in Chapter Eight, is a lurid fiction of the moralist mind, manufactured by massive splitting and projecting, false accusation and malignant paranoia, and functioning as a kind of fantasmatic bogeyman whose purpose is to hold that mind’s deepest terrors at a distance. If we refuse an adequate language for desire, if we insist on using only the signifiers ‘abuse’ and ‘paedophile’ to discuss child sexuality and our adult relationship to it, dangerous delusions of righteousness and knowingness will replace the intrinsic uncertainty and ambiguity accompanying any true enquiry into the erotic imagination. Murderous scapegoating will be the inevitable result (converting a form of desire into a type of person is intrinsically an act of violence).

Returning to the Great Ormond Street study, my personal reservation about it is not the relatively small sample size – the wealth of data from psychotherapy sessions more than amply compensates for this – but the researchers’ failure to define precisely what they mean by ‘sexual abuse’. They asked for referrals from Social Services Departments of boys in the local authority care system who had been sexually abused in the past but it is not clear from the published work exactly what this ‘abuse’, or the subsequent abuse of

others some of them allegedly committed, consisted of. Rape? Coerced molestation? Social workers' inferences? Or 'underage' consensual sexual experimentation? Being coy about the term 'sexual abuse' leaves it full of unexamined assumptions and fantasised attributions; we are clearly all meant to know what it means without having it spelled out for us. But in the age of abuse hysteria, the spelling out is as indispensably necessary as it is systematically refused: this term is so often used by salvationists to refer to harmless, mutually consensual sexual play between minors. However, even if we assume that the term refers to coerced and intrusive sexual assault, the research remains a powerful rebuttal of the argument that being sexually abused causes further sexual abuse.

The most important issue arising from this discussion, however, is the relationship between sex and violence. It would appear that the attempt to purge sexual fantasy of passion, lust and aggression is itself an act of violence. And the attempt to purge childhood of sexuality, the insistence on discussing it only and always as 'sexual abuse', is perhaps the most violent and panic-stricken expression of this impossible purification process. Another deferred response awaits. We might need to consider deviant sex first.

(v) Learned Deviant Behaviour

To return to Dr Elliott, who we rudely interrupted with this impolite questioning of her first assertion's validity: the next most obvious thing to note is what she fails to mention. The 'learned deviant behaviour' which she condemns so vehemently and wishes to exempt normal folks and cuddly gays from, was *precisely* the same language that her predecessors in the moral righteousness movement deployed in order to justify the entrapment, hounding, imprisonment and destruction of homosexual men. Maybe the entitlement to an unchallengeable 'sexual orientation' depends on what era you were born into. Like those who are today being ruined by 'child porn' and 'paedophile' accusations, many of these men committed suicide after arrest rather than endure the imprisonment and social vilification they would inevitably face upon appearance in court. Today, gay-bashing is unfashionable: it has (rightly) become rather distasteful. Homosexuals and bisexuals, after all, have a 'sexual orientation' like normal folk, albeit a different one. And like normals, their 'sexual orientation' was bequeathed them 'naturally' as part of their constitutional make-up; moralists of yore were, it seems, wrong to hound them as pitilessly and murderously as they once did.

This, however, leaves our moral guardians with a problem: what's a neurotic, erotophobic bigot to do with all that surplus sexual hate now that gays are considered as normal as anyone else? The answer, of course is: manufacture a new monster - the all pervasive paedobeast. Hence the statement: "Paedophiles ... often try to claim their attraction to children is a sexual orientation, like homosexuality or bisexuality; ... it isn't - it is a learned deviant behaviour." Homosexuals were routinely presumed to be

seducers and molesters of children in the all too recent past; today, they are permitted a measure of respectability – they have a ‘sexual orientation’ – on the strict condition that they never experience (openly at any rate) forms of desire which blur the line splitting compulsory innocence from sexual sin: the great, arbitrary age divide (which I believe is far more violently policed and frantically enforced than the former great ‘hetero’/’homo’ divide ever was).

(vi) Compulsory Innocence and the Denial of Desire

The fraught adult need for children to be innocent of sexual desire is, as James Kincaid has lucidly argued (7), quite probably the single greatest cause of ‘paedophile’ fantasising ever to have been conjured in human history (in Jacqueline Rose’s words “... childhood innocence [is] ... a portion of adult desire.”) (8). In a searing little passage, which is worth quoting at length, Kincaid notes,

“Childhood in our culture has come to be a largely coordinate set of set of *have nots*: the child is that which *does not have*. Its liberty, however much prized, is a negative attribute, as is its innocence and purity. Moreover, all these, throughout the nineteenth century, became more and more firmly attached to what was characterized as sexually desirable, innocence in particular becoming a fulcrum for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ ambiguous construction of sexuality and sexual behavior. Innocence was what came to you in heaven, or in marriage, as a kind of prize. Innocence was that which we have been trained to adore and covet, to preserve and despoil, to speak of in hushed tones and bawdy songs. ... The construction of the modern ‘child’ is very largely an evacuation, the ruthless sending out of eviction notices. Correspondingly, the instructions we receive on what to regard as sexually arousing tells us to look for (and often create) this emptiness, to discover the erotic in that which is most vulnerable to inscription, the blank page. On that page we can write what we like, write it and then long for it, love it, have it. Children are defined, and longed for, according to what they do not have.” (9)

As I will attempt to argue shortly, calmly *recognising* children’s sexuality, along with its corollary, a pervasive, ordinary adult erotic investment in children, would, I suspect, largely eradicate the malignant wishes of those drawn to defile and spoil the pristine and pure. It is the adult *fantasy* of solicitous innocence which excites villainous spoiling, a fantasy which represents a terrible failure of interpretation, a mistranslation of a fundamentally enigmatic sexual message. My argument, outlined later, is that it is largely the refusal of any symbolic elaboration of this benign, non-pathological erotic interest in children’s sexuality which actively promotes child abuse, which inflames the madness of those who seek to abduct, molest and even kill children.

Real children are far more complex, far more charged with passionate impulses,

including rage, jealousy and desire, than sentimental adult wishfulness can accommodate (anyone who has experienced the cruelty and spitefulness of children in their own childhood should know that they're not all that innocent).

The adult insistence on childhood pre-sexual innocence is itself a form of cruelty because it is founded on massive denial: children are punished severely for their inevitable failures to live up to this unattainable ideal, and especially so when they betray evidence of their sexuality. It is the insistence on this impossible innocence which inevitably generates its own inherent 'perverse dynamic', to use Jonathan Dollimore's perceptive notion (i.e., oppressive and coercive social norms generate the seeds of their own subversion) (10). Of course, as we have seen, such internal dissidence is quickly re-imagined by those embracing oppressive beliefs as an external threat (eternal paranoia is the price of oppression). Kincaid continues:

"... the major point and dilemma is that we are instructed to crave that which is forbidden, a crisis we face by not facing it, by becoming hysterical, and by writing a kind of pious pornography, a self-righteous doublespeak that demands both lavish public spectacle and constant guilt-denying projections onto scapegoats. Child molesting becomes the virus which nourishes us, that empty point of ignorance about which we are most knowing. It is the semiotic shorthand that explains everything, that tells us to look no further: having been on either side of the child-molesting scene defines us completely. Lawyers know this, as do politicians and storytellers." (11)

(vii) Scepticism or splitting?

If normative assertions about 'learned deviant behaviour' were being enunciated on a psychoanalyst's couch, as opposed to in a quickly shelled newspaper article, the speaker would find herself meeting a slightly impertinent response. Instead of the adulation and crude, populist affirmation she canvasses, she would meet with robust scepticism: 'Why, I wonder, do you feel the need to be so emphatic, so rigidly foreclosing of all other interpretations, at this point?' I suspect she would find it difficult to answer this question after exhausting the predictable moral grandstanding and 'defence of innocent victims' sermons, without engaging with her own disavowed fantasies. And heaven forbid that a moralist should be faced with this option; better by far to trot out banal tracts for newspapers, trumpeting tired old prejudices as though they were divine revelations.

We are again faced with the question of what, precisely, is a paedophile? Moralists would prefer us not to dwell too long on this, and reply instead with an apparently visceral, common sense reaction: 'evil beast!' They would, in other words, prefer us to adopt the educational horizons and moral coordinates of a medieval peasant. But we are not medieval peasants, and we might productively question such terms and assertions.

Child salvationists, it seems, would have us to believe in a simplistic, stripped down, good-guy vs. bad-guy, this-causes-that psychology: bad people with bad desire freely and knowingly choose to do nasty things, whereas good people with good desire decide to do good things and stay on the straight and narrow path of righteousness. In this cartoon psychology, which armies of prosecution lawyers have grown fat on, sexual desire is a simple behaviour, like driving, which can be practised more or less considerately. It is, in other words, a form of pathological splitting, an attempt to separate what cannot in reality be separated. And maintaining massive splits requires massive ongoing violence. Substituting anodyne fantasies of the way the 'real' *ought* to be for the way the 'real' *happens* to be inevitably entails suppressing, with the utmost force, each and every manifestation of reality which threatens the fantasised utopia.

From a Freudian point of view, sexuality is the seat of the most intractable and insoluble conflicts inherent in human life, which no mortal is immune to (and no mortal can escape). The crude, reductionist psychology embraced by victimologists sees 'learned deviant behaviour' as a failure to conform to prevailing social norms, and it presumes that what is normal is what is healthy. For Freud, learned deviant behaviour is conformity to joyless social norms, a pathological constriction of the polymorphous pleasurable potentials we come into the world with. Paranoid sexual moralism leads all too frequently to lethal stigmatisation, incarceration, psychological torture and endless social vilification. Professor Freud's ethics could lead us instead to a kinder, calmer and more free-thinking autonomy.

Cartoon psychology and the question of evidence

(i) Cartoon psychology and compulsory 'treatment'

The psychological ideology embraced by the child salvationists of our world is resulting in appalling numbers of non-violent men – men who have never sexually abused another person let alone a child - being imprisoned, compelled to undergo degrading 'treatment programmes' and placed permanently on sex offender registries on the basis of what they *might do in the future*. Most will never find employment again, unless you feel that highly educated and greatly skilled professionals like university professors or medical doctors are most usefully deployed in picking up litter for the rest of their days.

Forcing sane and capable people, against their will, to undergo compulsory 'treatment programmes' (rigidly formulaic psycho-behavioural conditioning regimes) as though there were no ethical dilemmas to consider in dragooning intelligent human beings into highly questionable forms of conformity, as though, in other words, there were no differences between people and performing bears or circus seals (which are at least protected by animal rights campaigners), would in any other context be seen for what it

in fact is: assault. The coercion I am referring to is mendaciously packaged as consent – only those voluntarily complying with these programmes will be included on them. But since refusal will certainly result in your official classification, without further ado, as a high risk offender, with imprisonment (or re-imprisonment) as a very real possibility, this is a curious form of consent. It is rather like volunteering for something you despise, knowing that the alternative is to be shot. Is consent still consent when it is backed by terror? If a doctor forced medical or psychological treatments on sane, competent patients in the face of their refusals, he would shortly find himself behind bars. Probation officers and other porn police officials get promoted instead.

Any refusal or defiance of these harshly administered ‘treatments’, which amount to little more than rulebooks for pathologically normative sexual moralism, could result in imprisonment. Clearly, when you get labelled a ‘paedo’ your status as a human being is officially removed. You become instead the embodiment of the disowned projections which have been violently lodged in you, a sub-human, Caliban-like brute, powerless to resist your deviant sexual demi-urges. To dispute this attribution is presently to invite scorn and derision: trying to present contrary evidence in the face of violent projective processes is as useless as trying to explain a joke to someone who doesn’t find it funny.

If your ideology insists that ‘this causes that’, in this case, looking at erotic pictures will cause you to sexually assault someone, you can be as draconian and merciless as you like to the ‘offenders’. But if the belief is wrong, no matter how sincerely you embrace it, you end up needlessly destroying armies of essentially peaceful, gentle individuals and condemning them to a life of permanent denigration and social abjection. As there is no credible research finding, despite more than half a century of zealous attempts to prove one, to support the moralists’ claim that viewing is equivalent to doing (or will lead to assault), we appear to be firmly in the ‘needlessly destroying’ camp.

(ii) Constructing pathologies to fit the treatment: the case of depression

The aficionados of cognitivist psychology typically claim that the compulsory treatment programmes and ‘profiles’ of offenders their disciples manufacture are scientifically evidence-based and that the ‘treatment’ derived from this psychology, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), is highly effective in producing desired results. We might, however, pause for a moment to wonder what, precisely, counts as evidence, and just what a desirable result is. In his superb critique of medicalised (or dogmatically empiricist) approaches to the human experience of depression, for example, the Lacanian psychoanalyst Darian Leader notes that the (largely unelected) managers of today’s anti-risk society seek swift and predictable results, absolute transparency and the removal of unwanted behaviour. And it is CBT which claims to offer precisely these solutions. The price to be paid, as Leader remarks, is “... a cosmetic treatment that targets surface problems and not deep underlying ones.” (12) I think it is worth staying

with Leader's critique a little longer, as it has strong resonances with the line of reasoning we are trying to articulate here.

He quotes an estimate by the World Health Organisation that by 2010, depression will be the single largest public health problem after heart disease, affecting between 25 and 45 per cent of the adult population, with rising rates in children and adolescents. But back in 1950, the picture was startlingly different – only 0.5 per cent of the population appeared to be affected. What has produced this epidemic? Leader identifies a convincing cause (and, after all, causes may not be reasons, or even remotely reasonable): depression was actively *created* as a clinical category in the second half of the twentieth century by largely commercial forces. He writes:

“There was a pressure to package psychological problems like other health problems, and so a new emphasis on surface behaviour rather than on unconscious mechanisms came to the fore; ... a new diagnostic category – and remedy for it – had to be popularized to account for and cater to the malaise of urban populations; and new laws about drug-testing favoured a simplistic, discrete conception of what illness was. As a result, drugs companies manufactured both the idea of the illness and the cure at the same time. Most of the published research has been funded by them, and depression came to stand less as a complex of symptoms with varied unconscious causes than simply that which anti-depressants acted upon. If the drugs affected mood, appetite and sleep patterns, then depression consisted of a problem with mood, appetite and sleep patterns. Depression, in other words, was created as much as it was discovered.” (13)

For Leader, the corporate manufacture of this ‘illness’ is a dangerous fiction, because it ignores the multiplicity of ways in which debilitating sadness is always an *array* of symptoms deriving from complex and always different human stories, rather than a checklist of behaviours or biochemical alterations. Whilst of course we are a species of animal, and neurotransmitters like serotonin are part of our biological make-up, to suppose that low serotonin is the cause of ‘depression’ is to make a potentially fatal category error. If a loved one dies, my serotonin levels may plummet, but it would be madness to attribute my grief to a chemical deficit. Bereavement is not an illness. Anti-depressant drugs like Seroxat, which aim to increase the amount of serotonin in the brain by inhibiting its re-absorption, received a good deal of publicity a few years ago because they seemed to *increase* the risk of suicide. Leader's view is that this is not so much a defect with the drug as a major flaw in the diagnostic approach. Depression can for some people serve a protective function, which, if removed, makes a desperate action more likely (he notes that some studies suggest that mild depressions may actually protect *against* suicide) (14).

Insisting that Freud was right in his observation that crippling sadness is a product of undigested loss, and emphasising the necessity of exploring the less visible, less

immediately accessible (contingent and idiosyncratic) factors in human suffering, rather than the superficial and obviously describable, Leader writes:

“When we lose a loved one, we have lost a part of ourselves. And this loss requires our *consent*. We might tell ourselves that we have accepted a loss, but acquiescence and true consent are fundamentally different. Many people, indeed, go through life obeying others while harbouring a burning resentment within themselves. They say, ‘Yes’ without meaning it, in the same way that a small child might follow the demands of potty training out of fear, without ever having really agreed to them. In mourning, we have to consent at the deepest level to the loss of a part of ourselves, and that’s why ... it involves an additional sacrifice. It implies logically that the only way to give up the image we took on for someone else is to question the way they looked at us.” (15)

The consent Leader writes of is, of course, far more difficult to reach when the loss one is suffering is the result of a violent and deliberately inflicted trauma. If we transpose Leader’s analysis to the rampant paedo-obsession of our times, we see some striking resemblances. Powerful vested interests have the means to construct perception – we are inclined, by suggestion, to see what they tell us to see. In this case, we are dealing not with transnational drugs companies but with transnational factions within police forces. If ‘depression’ has come to mean merely ‘that which drugs acts upon’, ‘paedophilia’ has certainly come to mean ‘those whom the sex police act upon.’ And for the most part, this does not mean those dangerous individuals who long to abduct and rape children, but slightly depressed and harmless men who have turned to the internet for a temporary escape from the intractable (but ordinary) problems in their lives.

As for effectiveness, the browbeaten conformity with the conditioning programme amongst men forced to undergo this treatment, often under threat of re-imprisonment for failure or refusal to participate, may be discernible, but it hardly represents successful ‘reprogramming’. Coercion rarely results in fulsome endorsement – superficial compliance, which can of course be behaviourally measured, is often a shield for simmering underground resentment and rage, which of course cannot be so easily calibrated. The latter are the inevitable (and humane) responses to what amounts to organised humiliation and bullying intimidation. Cruel and unusual treatment rarely produces happily ‘corrected’ citizens.

Writing about fascism, the historian Robert Paxton noted the following:

“Fascist regimes tried so radically to redraw the boundaries between private and public that the private sphere almost disappeared. Robert Ley, head of the Nazi Labour Office, said that in the Nazi state the only private individual was someone asleep. For some observers this effort to have the public sphere swallow up the private sphere entirely is the very essence of fascism ... Although authoritarian regimes often trample civil

liberties and are capable of murderous brutality, they do not share fascism's urge to reduce the private sphere to nothing."(16)

Whilst it would be somewhat excessive to describe the entire State in these terms, Paxton's description of fascism bears striking resemblances to child protection fanaticism, with its paranoid belief that 'abuse' is taking place everywhere, that people are looking at porn in the privacy of their homes and contemplating assault as a result, that all accused are guilty and must be crushed in order to deter others, and that privacy must be severely compromised for the good of the children. That our allegedly independent and free media, as well as more august bodies such as the Sentencing Guidelines Panel, have for the most part rigidly endorsed victimologist fanaticism and exaggeration suggests to me that something overwhelmingly pathological is occurring at the heart of democratic free debate.

In Defence of Humility

Perhaps now is a good moment to make a plea for the place of the irreducibly ambiguous and the unknowable in psychology, instead of the crude fiction that a singular experience – deed, desire, fantasy, or contingency – can reveal some defining and irrefutable truth about the individual concerned, or predict a future act. The former position goes with an outlook of humility and provisionality: we'll sceptically believe such and such for the time being, until we are persuaded it is no longer sound to do so and we'll always accept that whatever we provisionally believe, we could easily be wrong. The latter stance fosters a spurious and delusional knowingness: if I am an expert on something, I am full of authoritative certainty.

The salvationists might do well to take heed of the fact that such specious claims to positive knowing have led to death camps and gulags, ethnic cleansing and pogroms. Matthew Hopkins, Britain's first self-appointed 'Witchfinder General', with no experience, qualification or particular wisdom in the field he established his authority in, just 'knew' how to detect witches in seventeenth century England, using a battery of techniques which, like today's witchfinders, he shared with others in the war against sin. In other words, he trained people into becoming, like him, experts in humbug and delusion, torture and paranoia. And his inquisition slaughtered many innocent and vulnerable people (chiefly eccentric elderly women whose arthritic joints meant that, after physical torture, they often had to be assisted to place their necks in the noose at the gallows). Their crime, we now know, was to be noticeably oddball or to have crossed another vengeance-driven villager in some way in the past; in their day, these were sure signs of witchcraft, the work of the devil. Like 'paedo' today, the signifier 'witch' all too frequently meant a death sentence for those to whom it was applied. What we believe about the words we use to describe people determines what happens to real people.

In contrast to positive knowingness, we might prefer a more humane and humble starting point for any enquiry into the human soul: a simple acceptance that we fallible humans cannot possibly know all and the attempt to do so only too easily makes us cruel and tyrannical. It is the certainty arising from delusions of god-like knowingness that leads us to believe that witches, Jews, paedos, whatever our culture throws up as the dominant scapegoat term, have to be wiped out. Keats 'negative capability' – to 'be in doubt and uncertainty without irritably reaching after fact and reason' – provides us with a far kinder, gentler and more realistically human alternative to the spurious knowingness of rigid ideologies.

For the brilliant Kleinian psychoanalyst, Wilfred Bion (17), this was what psychoanalytic neutrality, the listening position suggested by Freud for clinical practise, actually meant. Bion's take on Freud's suggestion was this: in order to truly meet another human mind, eschew all memory and desire. Only when you have suspended your memory (of what the patient said last time, of what you have read about him in referral letters or reports) and desire (for the patient or miscreant to 'get better', to gratefully accept your ministrations and live in moral virtue) - only then can you hear what you weren't expecting to hear, only then can you be taken by surprise and learn something new – something, indeed, which might shake all your other beliefs to their foundations. This is perhaps what makes a good psychoanalysis more like a form of friendship than a doctor-patient relationship: few of us would stay friends for long with someone who thought he or she already knew everything we were talking about and couldn't actually hear a word we were saying. If your mind is already crammed with certainties, you can't hear or learn from experience: you have to go on courses instead. To be stupid is not to be empty; it is to be full of unshakeable prejudices.

It is unquestioned and unintegrated knowledge of this kind, fostered in salvationist conferences, courses, training programmes of many kinds, which has led to the groundless but widely believed notion that children 'disclose' sexual abuse when placed in the right setting (i.e., when interviewed by a child salvationist). There are some major problems, however, with the whole concept of 'disclosure', or, as I prefer to call it, 'revelation.'

Revelation or Truthfulness?

(i) Recollection or redescription?

“The truth that interests me is problematical, partial, modest – and still breathing. It is not normally dramatic or revelatory, and its attainment depends far more on thinking hard than feeling freely. To put it another way: I think that speaking truthfully is a more fitting ambition than speaking the truth.”

Leslie H. Farber (18)

Psychoanalysis is often thought of as a ‘depth psychology’, probing the hidden recesses of the human psyche. On the analytic couch, you find yourself speaking about all the things you never intended to say. In the bowdlerised version of psychoanalysis commonly privileged by counsellors and therapists, in this way you draw ever closer to the painful experiences you’d walled off, buried and fled from long ago. In this rendering of psychoanalysis, cure is revelation: speak the truth about whatever you have been on the run from all your life and never dared acknowledge, and you will be healed.

Whilst I would not wish to wholly repudiate this enterprise, I am also deeply sceptical about it. None of us can be wholly transparent to ourselves, as Freud discovered, because we inevitably come up against that intractable limit to introspection he called ‘the unconscious.’ Whilst another mind can help us to become aware of those fleeting manifestations of unconscious communication we might otherwise ignore – dreams, unintentional slips of speech and the innumerable bungled actions that clutter our lives – it would be a colossal error to conceive of the unconscious as a kind of warehouse or museum storing experiences like a video-recorder stores images. It is less a thing than a process, a living mental activity accompanying conscious thought but quite other to it; most of us are familiar with sudden and bafflingly spontaneous flashes of insight or inspiration (or panic and dread). We frequently feel that these intense moments have come into our thoughts from somewhere else, a place curiously other to the site of our conscious deliberations. As Richard Rorty has put it, the unconscious, the other place within (and between) us all, sometimes feeds us our best lines.

It is to the lines we speak and live by, including the unconscious messages which keep emerging between these lines, to which we might usefully turn. The lines I am referring to can aim at truthfulness or deceit: Freud knew that most of us prefer the immediate comfort of our own lies to those awkward intimations of truth the unconscious keeps sending us. Minds come with words (we could even say they are *made* of words) and whilst we are the creatures who can use words to speak truthfully, we just as readily use them to tell lies, both of the trivial kind and with big, shiny bells on.

The moment we introduce the word ‘lie’ we are inclined to impute a deliberate, even inherent, character flaw to its spokesman. That some lies are malignant is beyond reasonable doubt – as we have seen, the lies Nazis and other racists have told about Jews and ‘blacks’ fall unambiguously into this category. My contention is that we are often – too often – unaware that we are lying, and that psychoanalysis may be one of our wisest allies in assisting us to think and speak truthfully. But this is a psychoanalysis which has been mislaid, with some honourable exceptions, by many of its clinical practitioners.

Abjuring the depth psychology model, this psychoanalysis favours the possibilities of redescription and translation. By eschewing the notion that we are wholly determined

either by our biological constitutions or our personal histories, this scandalous psychoanalysis suggests that we may be the only creatures who can recast our pasts into more generative, open-ended futures. It is deeply suspicious of those models of ‘therapy’ which invite you to find an epiphany, a revelatory moment which defined the rest of your life (simply asking this question manufactures the notion that such moments could, or ought to, exist). It favours instead a quieter accumulation of incompatible, ambiguous and polyvalent possibilities. Human memory, as Freud knew, is treacherous. It is inclined to select, de-emphasise, and exclude. And it (or what it means to us) is mutable, changing according to our current circumstances. In this respect, contemporary cognitive psychology and neuroscience is belatedly catching up with the Viennese professor. Freud’s abandonment of his original ‘seduction theory’ of mental suffering owed less to a wish to conceal the awful truth of pervasive child abuse, the theory favoured by today’s ignorant, Freud-despising child salvationists, than to his painful discovery that we lie, even when we’re doing our best to tell the truth.

(ii) Farber’s epiphany

An almost painfully candid example of how lies can appear as truth in therapy (and, it has to be acknowledged, in everyday life) appears in the work of Leslie Farber, an extraordinarily wise but generally unflamboyant American psychoanalyst. He died in 1981, and his work appeared to be forgotten thereafter. However, it lived on in creative and intelligent practitioners of psychoanalysis, such as the veteran American analyst Stephen Mitchell and the British psychoanalyst Adam Phillips. This psychoanalysis is sceptical about dramatic revelatory moments, favouring instead small, incremental insights and precious, if momentary, glances of truthfulness. It sees human lives as far too complicated, far too messy and conflicted, to be reduced to a singular parable or preferred story.

In a characteristically sagacious essay, Farber recounts a moment from early in his training analysis (all psychoanalysts are obliged to undergo lengthy personal analyses with a senior analyst). He admits that his concept of free association was akin to watching a kind of mental movie and describing it as it played out. Shortly after the beginning of one of his early analytic sessions, he became distracted by the sound of a scratchy violin being practised in a nearby room, obviously by a beginner. Unable to even begin his ‘mental movie’ because of the discordant noise, he asked his analyst if she would mind ensuring that the young would-be maestro could practise his or her instrument at a different time to his therapy hour. Out of politeness, he added that even the virtuoso violinist Joseph Heifetz would have got in his way. The analyst quietly left for a moment, whereupon the sound ceased – her son or daughter quickly complied with the request for silence. Upon her return, she mentioned to Farber that she hadn’t realised he had been interested in music.

At this, Farber found himself thinking of his own early musical experiences and spontaneously recalled an intensely painful and humiliating episode when, as a child, he had entered a violin competition. Despite knowing he was a more accomplished musician than his nearest rival, on the night, stage fright got the better of him and nerves gave his bow-arm an unfortunate tremor. On returning home, his father asked him how he had got on. Here is Farber's account of how he found himself recollecting that upsetting occasion:

‘ “I lost,” I said mournfully. The movie began to go very slowly in this portion of my associations. Looking at my father's face I saw no trace of commiseration in his features. On the contrary, he looked furious, as though my defeat were a cruel reward for all those months of listening to me rehearse my dreadful piece. As I tried, in my analytic hour, to describe the effect of his anger piled cruelly on top of my humiliation over my musical collapse, my eyes filled with tears, my voice choked, and, to my astonishment, I found myself weeping noisily. Ordinarily, I do not weep, so my tears seemed fraught with significance. It was as though without warning I had been plunged into a sizeable pocket of grief that I never knew existed. I seemed to have stumbled upon a momentous event explaining a parting of the ways between me and my father. .. I thought I now understood ... why I had chosen not pursue a musical career.’ (19)

iii) Sanity and scepticism

Thankfully for Farber and his father, he was in psychoanalysis, not victim therapy. With truly courageous honesty, he quickly reports that his ‘revelatory binge’ proved to have little staying power. He began to recognise some serious flaws in the ‘my father emotionally abused me’ outburst:

“First, there never was a dramatic parting of the ways between my father and me. Our life together was hectic, full of struggle and reconciliation, both rewarding and disagreeable ... Second, my musical talent was modest and I knew it. There was never a serious inclination – leaving my fantasies aside – to make music my profession. When the time came to pack away my violin and get on with my medical studies, I did so with relief, not grief.”

(20)

How can such retrospective fabrication seem so powerfully truthful at the moment of enunciation? Farber suggests that such ‘revelations’ have an addictive appeal, largely because ordinary, fragmentary truth on a more modest scale appears by contrast to be trivial and inadequate:

“... [it] appears, in short, to be untrue, since it so conspicuously lacks the splendour and intensity of feeling by which one has come to recognise the validity of revelation. In this

way, one's assumptions about truth fasten on to the revelatory, and this habit of discover quickly becomes addictive.

It is clear, by now, that I have come to consider the revelatory mode to be a form of lying."

(21)

If I can convince myself that all my failures to live up to the ideals I have set for myself, or my obstinate blindness to my children's needs, or my self-absorbed denial of my partner's need for reciprocal affection and affirmation, all stem from that moment when I felt a nasty adult misunderstood or 'abused' me in my childhood, my family may continue to suffer from my boorish disregard for their feelings, but I get off scot-free. I am exonerated. All my shortcomings, all my mundane underachievements, all my unpleasant character flaws, impatience, envy, impetuosity, resentment, and jealousy, every one of them can be laid at the door of the one who now stands revealed as my wrongdoer. This is a disturbingly commonplace, and entirely iatrogenic, effect of what too frequently passes as 'therapy' and 'help' today.

I might even be persuaded by earnest moralists posing as my counsellors that every subsequent viewing of the photographs I allowed to be taken of my 'underage' naughty bits amount to 'secondary' rape and abuse. I could certainly proclaim this, with a little salvationist grooming, not least because I stand to make a quite a bit of compensation money out of it. But photographs cannot be raped or abused: they can only be viewed. And something that was simply good fun at the time that it happened does not become rape and abuse subsequently just because a moralist can't bear to entertain the notion of unregulated pleasure. If a picture of mutual sexual play between minors is abuse, there is likely to be rather more consensual abuse going on off-camera than our moral rulers would like us to acknowledge, most of it, thankfully for the youngsters involved, uncatalogued by the sex police.

Recovered Memory and Retroactive Causality

(i) Stirring the action: Imaginary abuse and imaginary abusers

The porn police, of course, regard any *picture* depicting a 'minor' in a state of undress as abuse, even if it originated wholly innocently, such as when, a few decades ago, families on naturist holidays regularly posed for photographs featured in magazines such as the now defunct *H&E* ('innocent' 'pre-sexual' schoolboys from my generation avidly tried to get hold of any and all magazines depicting nudity, including the slightly absurd ones from *H&E*, for purposes of self- and mutual abuse). Routinely, the police have used the most egregious (and numerically small) examples of adult sexual assault of minors to characterise *all* 'underage' erotica.

When Judith Levine, one of the few journalists to be deeply sceptical about such florid and lurid assertions, managed to actually view a collection of seized ‘child porn’ images in 1995, which the police, then as now, customarily insisted were records of crime scenes depicting the sexual torture of children, this is how she described her experience:

“ ... I was underwhelmed. Losing count after fifty photos, I’d put aside three that could be considered pornographic: a couple of shots of adolescents masturbating and one half-dressed twelve year-old spreading her legs in a position more like a gymnast’s split than a split beaver. The rest tended to be like the fifteen-year-old with a 1950s bob and an Ipana grin, sitting up straight, naked but demure, or the two towheaded six-year-olds in underpants astride their bikes.” (22)

We are told repeatedly by police paedo-slayers and their fervent allies in the child protection industry that the viewing of even the relatively innocuous imagery described by Levine is highly dangerous: paedos will use these pictures to justify and plot their next assault. If a small number of people who seriously plan to coerce children into have sex with them look at images like this, then, in the porn-police mindset, everyone who views such images is an active predatory paedophile. But whilst a small number of bloodthirsty religious maniacs may well have repeatedly watched footage of the ‘9/11’ atrocities, to suggest that everyone who did so was an al-Qaeda supporter would strike many as somewhat implausible.

If there is no credible connection between viewing pictures and sexual behaviour, and more than five decades of research strongly suggests that there is not, we are entitled to ask why the police (and the government) invest such huge resources in arresting and destroying the viewers of pictures such as the ones Levine describes as though they were dangerous rapists. The answer, Levine suggests, is that the government, frustrated with the paucity of the crime (child molestation) they have repeatedly claimed, on the basis of salvationist propaganda, is an epidemic and around which huge enforcement operations have been built, have to ‘stir the action to justify their jobs’ (23). Police sting operations inciting people to click on links to find illegal pornography are increasingly used. Specialist, secretive and enormously expensive police departments now exist to snoop on and arrest individuals who privately look online at any images they deem to be illegally indecent. One tragically predictable consequence of this Stasi-like prying into private life is that, in the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand, teenage boys and girls are currently being arrested for the entirely normal and unremarkable adolescent behaviour of sharing naughty photos of one another via their mobile phones (‘sexting’).

These innocent and playful activities are regarded by the police as ‘making indecent images of a child’, with the claim that paedos may find them and use them to justify assaulting a minor, and so ruthless punishment is necessary. Imagine being placed on the sex offenders register for years when you’re only sixteen, just for taking a snap of your

girlfriend's or boyfriend's nether regions (with the latter's full consent). It would appear that the real reason why teenagers and minors should refrain at all costs from experimenting with mutual sexual fun has less to do with their inability to handle sex than with the inability of certain powerful adults to cope with any evidence of spontaneous youthful eroticism. It reminds them, too painfully, of everything they have sacrificed, and those who do the reminding will, naturally, have to be savagely penalized.

(ii) To there-and-then from here-and-now

I'll return to the topic of 'porn' a little later; for now, we might wonder if 'abuse' is 'in' the image, or in the mind of the image's interpreter? Richard Rorty once noted that the world does not carve itself up into sentence-sized pieces: we do that, with our vocabularies and interpretations. And as most things can be made to look good or bad depending on how they are described, it is at least possible that those who can see only filth and abuse are mistaking their rigidly limited vocabularies for moral superiority. If images of 'underage' nudity are abusive and indecent, much Western visual art should be burned. Caravaggio's lewd 'underage' urchins, exposing their ass-cracks and hairless penises whilst smiling provocatively at the spectator, and Donatello's sculpture 'David', with its pre-adult dick, should surely be seized and destroyed because paedos might look at them and use them to grope a kid. Perhaps we might usefully explore what has happened in our contemporary culture to ensure that what were once regarded by most as sublimely beautiful or innocently titillating images must now be interpreted as the pinnacle of human evil. If a photograph of a nude adolescent is child rape, the blockbuster action movie is mass murder.

In a saner world, one would not take this sort of thing too seriously – breaking a toddler's back and beating him to death, as in the case of the tragic baby 'Peter' who received media attention in the UK in 2008, might be regarded as a rather more disturbing manifestation of human depravity. Even if I claim as an adult that the boy or girl who 'fondled' me when I was twelve 'abused' me and ruined my life as a result (despite my thinking it was rather cool at the time), I would still have some explaining to do on an analyst's couch, which might lead me to opt instead for a salvationist's confessional (disclosure) suite, where I would not have to bother with any indecorous scepticism and where I stand to make quite a handsome sum in compensation.

From a psychoanalytic point of view, there is no access to past experience – the 'there and then' - which is not mediated by the here and now. As I mentioned earlier, human minds do not store history in the way a camera stores images. Recollection, or what the victimologists still refer to as 'disclosure', can never be free from the contamination, the suggestions, hints, and dominant narratives of virtue and purity, circulating in the present. Freud often suggested that what is repressed will return as symptom. But he also

developed a powerful model of causality wholly at odds with the ‘this-causes-that’ simplifications of cartoon psychology. As Slavoj Žižek puts it, the answer to the question “From where does the repressed return?” is: from the future:

“Symptoms are meaningless traces, their meaning is not discovered, excavated from the hidden depth of the past, but constructed retroactively – the analysis produces the truth; that is, the signifying frame which gives the symptoms their symbolic place and meaning. As soon as we enter the symbolic order, the past is always present in the form of historic tradition and the meaning of these traces is not given; it changes continually with the signifier’s network. Every historic rupture, every advent of a new master-signifier, changes retroactively the meaning of all tradition, restructures the narration of the past, makes it readable in another, new way.”

(24)

Žižek is describing Jacques Lacan’s take on Freud’s intriguing concept of ‘*naetragslichkeit*’ (originally translated by James Strachey as ‘deferred action’ for the standard Edition of Freud’s Complete Works). Freud had repeatedly noticed in his clinical work that events which had had no discernible effect on his patients at the time of their occurrence in childhood later took on an enormous and usually pathological significance after adolescence or adulthood. It is Lacan and Jean Laplanche, however, who have drawn the full power of this theory from Freud’s work. Žižek is describing the effect of ‘retrodetermination’ – the way in which meanings which we presently have at our disposal can retroactively reconfigure the significance of events which happened long ago (Laplanche calls this ‘Afterwardsness’).

Psychoanalysis approaches the past from the future and it does so with great caution; the Buddhist-like emptying of the analyst’s mind in preparation for analytic work is a disciplined refusal to allow preconceived ideas to pre-emptively contaminate the analysand’s free associations. The analytic setting, with its refusal of censorious morality, its insistence on evenly-floating attentiveness, is designed to permit the emergence of as many symbols as possible to contain and integrate previously meaningless events and traumata.

However, if retroactive interpretation can construct truth, in less disciplined or spuriously omniscient hands, such as the pre-emptively all-knowing psychology of good vs. bad splitting we have been contemplating, it can also implant falsifications. Unwittingly anticipating the horrors which fanatical ‘recovered memory’ therapists were later to inflict on innocent fathers, with their active suggestions of parental abuse and wickedness as a magical antidote to failures of personal aspiration and responsibility, Farber movingly writes:

“Lying, no matter how natural to us, is also, in another sense, a treachery against

ourselves. A lie is a desecration of the given. And the given is exactly that – that which is given to us to receive by calling it by name. When I suffered my revelation about my father I lost him. He literally disappeared from my imagination and was replaced by a sort of cartoon figure I could barely recognise. I had lost him, and I had to work to get him back. I remember that occasion, too, for when, after considerable struggle, I changed my mind about my revelations, when I repudiated the simplicities of my therapeutic inspirations in favour of the much more complex and difficult realities of my relation with my father, I experienced this change of mind – and heart -with a sense of deep relief – I suppose it could be called joy. I would not have so named it at the time; it didn't seize my consciousness with cries of "I am Joy! An important emotion! Observe how I fill you with feeling!" On the contrary, what I felt was a profound rightness about my decision, I felt that something significant and truthful had been returned to me; I had retrieved one of my givens." (25)

This kind of cautious, humane scepticism toward ideas which 'fill us with emotion' is almost entirely absent from victimologist psychology. Children *disclose* – they never falsify, never respond to suggestion, never distort by omission and selection, never opportunistically seek revenge or sensation, or years later leap on police 'trawling' bandwagons in order to make an easy buck, and they never try to massage their responses to fit in with adult wishes – they just 'reveal' the unvarnished truth.

(iii) Disclosing abuse and the abuse of disclosure: truth-telling anuses

In 1986, a young paediatrician attended a course in Leeds in which she learned about an apparently fool-proof new technique for detecting sexual abuse in children: the Reflex Anal Dilatation (RAD) test. If a doctor parted a child's buttocks and the anus gaped, this was, allegedly, an incontrovertible sign of anal penetration. Dr Marietta Higgs was keen to try out this new medical discovery after her sensational training session. By May of the following year, Dr Higgs and a colleague she had trained in the same method had examined 165 children in this way, and found that a staggering 121 of them had been sexually assaulted, all of whom were reported to Cleveland Social Services. Such huge numbers of children were thereafter dragged away from their homes in dawn and midnight raids by social workers and police officers that Cleveland Social Services Department ran out of residential places for them.

The children were subjected to highly coercive and, frankly, brutal interviewing techniques by zealous social workers, during which they were repeatedly asked crudely leading questions, questions which would never have been allowed in a court of law, on the grounds that this was 'disclosure therapy' (an import from the USA). Videos replayed in the subsequent inquiry into the affair showed social workers brandishing hideous 'anatomically correct dolls' and openly threatening and bribing the children into

giving them the answers they wanted. Hardly surprisingly, large numbers of these typically very young children, torn from their loved ones and being subject to endless interrogation by strange adults in a strange place, ended up ‘disclosing’ what their inquisitors were looking for.

This shameful episode in mass hysteria, as we now know, became known as the ‘Cleveland Scandal’; the president of the British Paediatric Association, John Forfar, condemned Dr Higgs’ technique, carefully stating what every qualified doctor should have known anyway: that new diagnostic methods had to become carefully established within the profession before being routinely used, an inevitably cautious and lengthy process requiring the presentation of scientific evidence, publication in peer-reviewed professional journals and critical discussion in scientific meetings (26). Interestingly, and barely imaginably from today’s perspective, amongst the first to express scepticism about the sheer deluge of child sexual abuse incidents supposedly being ‘uncovered’ in Cleveland were the police. This was, of course, before they had set up new organisations – police forces within police forces, with highly arcane (and deeply questionable) ‘specialist’ knowledge-bases and media-savvy self-promotional ambitions - to launch child porn/paedo-slaying witch-hunts.

Britain’s most senior female judge, Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss, concluded her government-appointed inquiry with severe condemnation of the social workers’ techniques. Of the 121 cases identified by Dr Higgs as obvious examples of sexual abuse, only four resulted in successful prosecution. 80 per cent were dismissed by the courts on the grounds that the accusations were plainly false. Two defendants hanged themselves in Durham gaol.

Chillingly, the award-winning investigative journalist Richard Webster suggests that Butler-Sloss’s conclusions have actively paved the way for further abuses rather than curtailed them. Her report criticised naïve, over-zealous and under-qualified individual professionals, not the ideology of ‘disclosure’ or the use of ‘disclosure therapy’ as such, with the result that the inquiry censured merely the most egregious abuses (such as the most flagrantly intimidating leading questions and the grossly inept use of anatomically correct dolls). She advocated more inter-agency ‘working together.’ But working together on a fundamentally flawed premise is likely to *multiply* injustice and abuse, not limit it.

Butler-Sloss did not have at her disposal the work of the ground-breaking research into children’s suggestibility by psychologists such as Stephen Ceci and Maggie Bruck (their work was the winner of the prestigious William James Book Award in 2000) (27), nor was she to know that subsequent scientific assessment of the reflex anal dilatation test would show it to be without any empirical foundation: 121 families were irretrievably shattered on the basis of groundless bull*bleep*. But most disturbingly of all, as Webster

brings out in his article, “The unintended outcome has been that the very people responsible for the Cleveland affair have been able to perpetuate their practices and are now established in universities and at the centre of the child protection system as experts, policy advisers and trainers.” (28)

In repudiating disclosure therapy, we do not have to suppose that every traumatic memory is false. Clearly, the children dragged from their beds in the Cleveland scandal were cruelly abused by professionals acting in the grip of a fanatical delusion and it is most important that the viciousness facilitated by such catastrophic paranoia is not forgotten. In claiming that recollection is always mediated by the present, we are not saying that unpleasant events did not occur; we are simply saying that remembering is not a video replay.

But let us look at the child salvationists’ claims again. The principal one, which they have been braying and howling about since the 1980s, is that a far greater percentage of children than we are aware of are being sexually seduced by adults. I think there are good grounds – grounds which actually take the paranoid foundations upon which they stand from beneath their feet – for insisting that they have seriously underestimated the prevalence of such seduction. It is not 10%, or 20%, or even 50%. It is 100%.

Now might be a good moment to consider the work of Jean Laplanche. That is coming in Chapter Eight.

(1) Gore Vidal (1999) ‘Women’s Liberation: Feminism and Its Discontents’, republished in Gore Vidal (1999) *Sexually Speaking: Collected Sex Writings* San Francisco, California: Cleis Press Inc., p. 58, originally published in the *New York Review of Books*, July 22, 1971.

(2) “School children to be taught dangers of internet paedophiles” Laura Clark, *Daily Mail*, 6 August 2006.

(3) Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips (2008) *Intimacies* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, p. 62.

(4) See in particular Duncan Campbell (2005) “Operation ore Exposed”, *PC Pro Magazine*, 1st July 2005 and “Fatal Flaws in Operation Ore – the full story”, *PC Pro Magazine*, 10th May 2007.

(5) David Skuse, Arnon Bentovim, Jill Hodges, Jim Stevenson, Chris Andreou, Monica Lanyado, Michelle New, Bryn Williams and Dean McMillan (1998) ‘Risk factors for development of sexually abusive behaviour in sexually victimised adolescent boys: cross sectional study’ *British Medical Journal*, July 18, 1998; 317(7152): 175–179.

(6) Christopher Bollas (1987) “The Transformational Object” in Christopher Bollas (1987) *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*, London: Free Associations Books, pp. 16-17.

(7) James Kincaid (2004) “Producing Erotic Children”, in Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley (Eds.) (2004) *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

(8) Jacqueline Rose (1994) *The Case of Peter Pan, or The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction* Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania press, p. xii.

(9) Kincaid (2004), *op. cit.*, p. 10.

- (10) Jonathan Dollimore (1991) *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (11) Kincaid (2004), *op. cit.*, p. 11.
- (12) Darian Leader (2008) *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and Depression*, London: Hamish Hamilton (The Penguin Group), p. 20.
- (13) Leader, *ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
- (14) Leader, *ibid.*, p. 15. The implications of this finding in the great child porn witch hunt are deeply disturbing: if the men who looked at banned pictures were already mildly depressed, the violent labeling and rupture of their lives occasioned by the witchfinders is more than likely to result in a dangerous psychological decompensation, with suicide as a very real possibility.
- (15) Leader, *ibid.*, pp. 149-150.
- (16) Robert Paxton (2005) *The Anatomy of Fascism* London: Penguin.
- (17) Wilfred R. Bion (1965) *Transformations* London: Heinemann.
- (18) Leslie H. Farber (1975) 'Lying on the Couch', first published in *Salmagundi*, Spring 1975 and reprinted in Robert Boyers and Anne Farber (2000) *The Ways of the Will: Selected Essays of Leslie H. Farber* New York: Basic Books, p. 10.
- (19) Farber, *ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
- (20) Farber, *ibid.*, p. 8.
- (21) Farber, *ibid.*, p. 12.
- (22) Judith Levine (2002) *Harmful to Minors: The Perils of Protecting Children from Sex*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, pp. 36-37.
- (23) Judith Levine (2002), *ibid.*, p. 37.
- (24) Slavoj Zizek (1989) *The Sublime Object of Ideology* London and New York: Verso, pp. 55-56.
- (25) Farber, *ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
- (26) See the excellent account provided by Christopher Booker and Richard North (2007) 'The Modern Witch Craze' in *Scared to Death: From BSE to Global Warming – Why Scares Are Costing Us the Earth* London and New York: Continuum, pp. 187-192.
- (27) Stephen J. Ceci and Maggie Bruck (1995) *Jeopardy in the courtroom: The scientific analysis of children's testimony*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- (28) Richard Webster (4th December 2002) 'Shieldfield: how did it happen?' Article available on Richard Webster's website <http://www.richardwebster.net/shieldfieldhowdidithappen.html> .

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