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**Paedophilia**  
**The Radical Case**

**by Tom O'Carroll**

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~~New preface (1998)~~

by Tom O'Carroll

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Paedophilia – The Radical Case

by

Tom O'Carroll

by the Editor of this 2013 special .PDF e-book edition.

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For those less familiar with footnotes, the following may be useful:

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# Preface

Considering the passions the subject generates, there are surprisingly few books on paedophilia. It may be that some 'professionals' – psychiatrists, criminologists and the like – are reluctant to express too great an interest for fear of being thought prurient, or self-interested. Their contribution tends to be confined to articles in specialist journals, or the odd page or two in huge textbooks on 'abnormal' psychology.

Except covertly, in novels and poems, there have been few contributions from paedophiles either, for the very good reason that being an 'out' paedophile in our society is a hazardous business. In any case the taboo against paedophilia has rendered it literally 'unspeakable' (hence 'unwriteable') except when referred to in the most denunciatory terms.

I am a paedophile, and in the chapters that follow it will become apparent why I have felt it necessary to crash through the barriers of societal disapproval by speaking out. The fact that I have been able to do so owes much to the work, described in Part Three, of the Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE), a group with which I have been closely connected, which has been campaigning since its inception in 1974 for the open discussion of paedophilia, and for abolition of the laws against consensual sexual acts between children and adults.

PIE's struggle has been a tough one. There have been threats, and violence, against us. Members' careers have been shattered following 'exposure' in the press, and now, thanks to charges of 'conspiracy to corrupt public morals' levelled against PIE's organisers (including myself), this struggle is about to see us into the dock at the Old Bailey. The writing of this book has been jeopardised on two occasions, in 1978 and 1979, when police raided my house, along with those of other PIE members, and seized a large quantity of research material. By the merest good fortune, the material seized on each occasion consisted largely of papers I had already studied and used in the draft of my book.

Such pressures are the penalty to be paid for speaking the unspeakable. And yet it is arguable that the 'radical' case presented here is not so radical at all. There are elements of our case on which PIE and myself no longer stand alone, and cannot easily be dismissed as a libertarian 'lunatic fringe': the recent report of the National Council for One Parent Families, *Pregnant at School*, has called for the abolition of the age of consent, for reasons which are completely in line with those advanced in relation to sex education, contraception and pregnancy in this book, and there are other, equally 'respectable', bodies that now support the abolition, or lowering, of the age of consent. In the Netherlands, as readers unfamiliar with developments in Europe will discover in the coming pages, even major church organisations and political parties are coming to the conclusion that the laws designed to 'protect' children from sexual experiences actually do them more harm than good.

Nor is my aim 'radical' if what is meant by that term is an attempt to 'strike at the very roots of society' by undermining 'family life'. I would be the first to acknowledge that there is nothing warmer, more secure, or more valuable to a child than a stable, loving family, and I can see every reason for supporting the best in family life, not destroying it. At the same time, I see no reason to shrink from the conclusion – a 'radical' and I hope constructive one – that families which deny children their sexual life, including the possibility of sexual contact with adults, are profoundly limited, however good they may be in other respects.

Such a view is not dependent upon scientifically speculative premises, Reichian or otherwise. It does not depend on the belief that sexual repression in childhood has a direct, biological impact leading to psychological and psychosomatic problems: what is much more plainly evident than this is that children learn, by being discouraged from sexual expression, that sex is 'bad' and 'dirty' – a belief that subtly dogs them all their lives.

My qualifications for making what may appear to be an academic judgement on such a matter may be doubted. But this is not intended to be an academic work, pioneering scientific advances by means of original theory or controlled empirical studies. My contribution, rather, so far as academic considerations enter into it, is to present a paedophile's perspective on what is already known – an exercise aimed at the 'expert' and the open-minded layman alike. My approach has been personal, and committed, rather than spuriously 'scientific' and 'objective', but I have made every effort to use my sources honestly, at all times, and to treat opposing points of view with cool, calm deliberation, rather than impatient dismissal. A publisher (not my present one) once told me that a radical book on paedophilia should be 'either a passionate tract or an icy rationale'. I believe that, paradoxically, this book is both.

Inevitably, the personal nature of my approach has resulted in certain limitations. As a lover of boys, I find myself tending to write more about relationships between boys and men than other forms of paedophilic encounters, including the apparently far more numerous contacts between girls and men. I have made a determined effort, however, to write a book on 'paedophilia', rather than on 'boy-love'. There are already a number of books about the latter which strike me as far too parochial. Some boy-lovers write as though girls did not exist – especially as they fail to address themselves to the all-important question of consent, which can only be fully answered by reference to the impact that adults *of either sex* can have on children *of either sex* in sexual encounters. Unfortunately, a book on general 'paedophilia' runs the risk of obscuring important psychological differences, at least so far as male paedophilia is concerned, between boy-love and girl-love – differences which have major implications, especially for feminist critiques of paedophilia, which are sometimes over-reliant on a unitary view of the male sexual psyche.

A further limitation is imposed by constraints of space. Perhaps the most important topic I have omitted is the reason, or reasons, *why* sex, particularly in 'advanced' societies, generates such powerful feelings of disgust and revulsion – not just paedophilic sex, or other 'deviant' behaviour, like homosexuality, but sex in general. The phenomenon is not to be explained simply in terms of what children have been taught by their parents over successive generations, for this leaves the question of why the relative lack of sexual inhibition that once prevailed was ever encroached upon. The problem is fundamental, and has been insufficiently explored in recent years.

Another omission, that of incestuous paedophilia, would appear to be serious in view of the questions incest raises about power in family relationships; the issue of power is considered in the context of paedophilia generally, but I feel that a chapter on incest would be more of a 'must' in a book on the strengths and weaknesses of 'the family' than in one on paedophilia *per se*.

A few stylistic points require some comment. I find it irritating to write about 'the penis' and 'the vagina', about 'masturbation' and 'sexual intercourse'. To use the four-letter equivalents of these words – providing it is not done in an aggressive, expletive way – enables one to de-medicalise sex, to talk about it in the enthusiastic way that healthy folk think about it. Such words, though robust and 'earthy', lie more easily with the softer, more tender, eroticism implied in such words as 'kiss', 'stroke', 'cuddle' and 'hug', than do the bloodless euphemisms of the medical textbook. Surprisingly

enough, the point has been well taken by at least one group of relatively enlightened psychiatrists, Kraemer *et al.*, in their book *The Forbidden Love*. Nevertheless, I have deferred to the view of my publisher, who feels that what I have to say is already controversial enough, and that any use of four-letter words could alienate otherwise sympathetic readers.

I have at all points referred to 'children' rather than 'kids'. Personally, I like the word 'kids'. I find it attractive in the same way that it is pleasant to call a friend 'Bill' instead of 'William', or 'tu' instead of 'vous': it implies closeness, familiarity, friendly regard. But I also recognise that the word 'kids' is not a million miles from the idea of 'mere kids', or 'little nuisances'. As readers will discover, this is not an idea I would wish to reinforce. Hence I have felt a formal designation to be appropriate.

In yet another respect I have also decided to override my natural inclinations, linguistically speaking. As a boy-lover, I always tend to think of the younger partner in a paedophilic relationship as 'he'. Since in reality the majority are probably 'she', I have used the female pronoun where appropriate.

Finally, I should point out that, where I have written about particular paedophilic relationships, real names have not, for obvious reasons, been used.

It remains for me to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who have helped me, especially Dr Kenneth Plummer, Lecturer in Sociology at Essex University, Ms Nettie Pollard of the National Council for Civil Liberties (now Liberty), and D. J. West, Professor of Clinical Criminology at Cambridge University, each of whom read the whole text in draft and made many valuable suggestions. In all but a handful of cases, where matters of judgement were involved, I have accepted the points made to me and made appropriate modifications to the text. In the few cases – it can only have been one or two – where I have dissented, I have only myself to blame for any error of judgement.

Many others read, and commented upon, individual chapters. Dr David Nias and Dr Glenn Wilson, both of the Institute of Psychiatry, London, proved to be my most ego-boosting consultants (though they would disapprove of such a Freudian term!), regarding the two chapters (5 and 10) I referred to them. Close on their heels, in this respect, was Mr David Watson, formerly Lecturer in Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University, whose scrutiny of Chapter 7 left it mercifully unscathed. Specialist comment on PIE's legal proposals was obtained at the time of their formulation by their author, Mr Keith Hose. I have subsequently received informal comment on these proposals from a number of lawyers, and have been impressed by the fact that they have stood up well – in my judgement – to professional scrutiny. Medical issues, especially cervical cancer, were discussed with Dr Robert Stalker, a community physician with the Doncaster Area Health Authority.

My comments on North America were checked by Ms Valida Davila of the Childhood Sensuality Circle, California, and by Mr David Thorstad and Mr Tom Reeves, both of the North American Man-Boy Love Association. Those on Holland were read by Dr Frits Bernard, psychologist, and Dr Edward Brongersma, lawyer and former member of the Senate of the Netherlands. I am also indebted to Mr Frank Torey, for the use of a number of his translations of articles from Dutch.

Help with source material, and useful suggestions, were received from Mr Victor Banis, Mr J.Z. Eglington, Mr Gerald Jones, Mr Warren Middleton, Mr D.W. Nichols and Mr Frederick Vinson.

Special mention should also be made of Mr Ray Thomas, Mr John Moore and Ms Marsaili Cameron, whose support during a very critical period has been of immense value.

I have always found that librarians are exceptionally pleasant and helpful, and never more so than when working on this volume. I am grateful for the help I have received at the British Library and the Radzinowicz Library, at Cambridge University's Institute of Criminology. Most of the references cited in my bibliography, however, have been obtained through the public library at Newport Pagnell, Bucks. The staff there, under the direction of Mr Norman Stone, have been unfailingly helpful over a long period: on several occasions miracles have been achieved, in terms of obtaining really obscure references via the Inter-Library Loan Service, with a despatch that would put some larger libraries to shame.

These remarks would not be complete without mentioning my publisher, Mr Peter Owen, and his directorial colleagues, who have needed both imagination and courage in promoting a potentially controversial project. In my editor, Mr Dan Franklin, I could scarcely have been more fortunate: the working relationship between us has been at all times constructive and amazingly free of the tensions that are sometimes felt at the 'interface' between author and editor.

Finally, my thanks must go to all those in PIE, without whom there could have been no book of this nature, and in particular to Mr Keith Hose, whose guiding spirit has pervaded my thinking throughout.

My thanks to all those mentioned in these acknowledgements should not be taken to imply that any of them agrees with the views expressed in this book.

Discretion dictates, alas, that I cannot credit individually those children who have had an influence on my writing. In any case, great as that influence has been, it would be difficult to acknowledge it without detracting from their total impact on my being.

*Tom O'Carroll,*  
London, November 1979.

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## Chapter 1

# The Seeds of Rebellion

Probably few people who have heard of T.H. White, author of *The Once and Future King*, a quartet of novels based on Arthurian legend, realise that he was a paedophile. Yet he made no great secret of the fact, and readers of Sylvia Townsend Warner's biography of him learn of his love for a young boy in a letter of awesome dignity and courage:

'... I have fallen in love with Zed. On Braye Beach with Killie I waved and waved to the aircraft till it was out of sight – my wild geese all gone and me a lonely old Charlie on the sands who had waddled down to the water's edge but couldn't fly. It would be unthinkable to make Zed unhappy with the weight of this impractical, unsuitable love. It would be against his human dignity. Besides, I love him for being happy and innocent, so it would be destroying what I loved. He could not stand the weight of the world against such feelings – not that they are bad in themselves. It is the public opinion which makes them so. In any case, on every score of his happiness, not my safety, the whole situation is an impossible one. All I can do is behave like a gentleman. It has been my hideous fate to be born with an infinite capacity for love and joy with no hope of using them.

'I do not believe that some sort of sexual relations with Zed would do him harm – he would probably think and call them t'rific. I do not believe I could hurt him spiritually or mentally. I do not believe that perverts are made so by seduction. I do not think that sex is evil, except when it is cruel or degrading, as in rape, sodomy, etc., or that I am evil or that he could be. But the practical facts of life are an impenetrable barrier – the laws of God, the laws of Man. His age, his parents, his self-esteem, his self-reliance, the process of his development in a social system hostile to the heart, the brightness of his being which has made this what a home should be for three whole weeks of utter holiday, the fact that the old exist for the benefit of the young, not vice versa, the factual impossibilities set up by law and custom, the unthinkable-ness of turning him into a lonely or sad or eclipsed or furtive person – every possible detail of what is expedient, not what is moral, offers the fox to my bosom, and I must let it gnaw.'<sup>1</sup>

At the time when, in my mid-twenties, I chanced on this terrible self-denying ordinance, its unspeakable despair decently cloaked in the brave stoicism expected of an English gentleman, I already had behind me nearly a decade of feeling exactly what White felt: time and again there had been boys, and a swelling of tenderness within me towards them – and that dread, inescapable feeling that I too had been born 'with an infinite capacity for love and joy with no hope of using them', for all the seeming-good reasons White spells out with such devastating clarity.

Yet unlike White, I could not accept. I could not believe that it was right that the love inside me should be repressed, crushed, aborted. It had to be there for a purpose. It had to be there to do good with. I'm not a Christian. I don't believe in God, but at times I wish I did, because then at least I could appeal to the idea that I have been made as I am as part of His Great Purpose, and my love made accordingly. This is a sentiment Iris Murdoch caught perfectly in her novel *The Bell*:

'Somehow it might be possible to go on knowing him, it might be possible to watch over him and help him. Michael felt a deep need to build,



to retain, his friendship with Toby; there was no reason why such a friendship should not be fruitful for both of them; and he felt a serene confidence in his own most scrupulous discretion. So it would be that this moment of joy would not be something strange and isolated, but rather something which pointed forward to a long and profound responsibility, a task. There would be no moment like this again. But something of its sweetness would linger, in a way that Toby would never know, in humble services obscurely performed at future times. He was conscious of such a fund of love and goodwill for the young creature beside him. It could not be that God intended such a spring of love to be quenched utterly. There must, there must be a way in which it could be made a power for good. Michael did not in that instant feel that it would be difficult to make it so.' <sup>2</sup>

It is not at all difficult for a non-believer to feel much as Michael did. Like him, I am profoundly sure that my innermost feelings towards children are benevolent. Like White, I see no inherent contradiction between the sexual nature of my love and the affectional aspect of it: the two are complementary. The problem lies in the obstacles society puts between me and the expression of my best intentions towards children.

What are these intentions, it may be asked, and what special road to hell am I paving with them?

I have been sexually attracted towards children, especially boys, since I was a child myself. From six onwards I recall consistently rejecting the overtures of little girls who said, 'I'll show you mine if you show me yours' – I would have been ashamed to do anything so rude – but beyond the age of ten or so the thought of other boys' bodies began to excite me beyond my power to resist.

My school days have in fact been the most sexually active ones of my life to date, particularly between the ages of eleven and fourteen; it was so easy then to slip into intimacy with one's peers, partly because they were as randy as I was, and partly because there was the opportunity to know them so well, without first having to climb over those artificial barriers of fear and prohibition that divide generations from each other. We didn't do anything beyond mutual masturbation, and indeed I had no wish to – not that there is anything 'cruel or degrading' about 'sodomy', in my estimation, providing the act is one involving mutual consent.

Only when I reached the fifth and sixth forms did things become difficult for me. Whereas other boys talked more and more about girls, and interested themselves less and less with each other, I gradually realised that I was not developing as they were. Girls, especially grown-up ones, held little interest; nor did boys of my own age any more, for I remained attracted only to the prepubescent ones, especially each year's new 'fuzzers' – the eleven-year-olds in their little grey shorts, who seemed ever more appealing. Not just in a sexual way, either, as it had been with my pals in earlier years. It was a sort of cross between a tender wish to protect and look after them – a 'maternal' feeling, if you will – and a romantic, chivalric even, extension of this feeling into something which I could identify as masculine. Nowadays I couldn't give a damn whether my feelings are 'masculine' or 'feminine', so long as they have a broad human validity, but in my youth I would have died with shame at the thought of being in any way effeminate. I even supposed I would eventually turn on to girls, and gradually become puzzled and anxious that it was not happening.

Little Osgood was my first love, though he never knew it. I never even found out his first name, as everyone called him 'Osgood' or 'Ossie'. We were in the same House, and although I had countless opportunities to talk to him I never dared. I thought I'd mess things up. I'd make a fool of myself. I'd offend him. And even if I didn't, what on earth could I find to say to him? I was in the sixth form now, discovering Keynesian economics and the philosophy of Enlightenment Europe. How

could I ever begin to feign an interest in Osgood's model aeroplanes or his stamp collection? And if I could, how could I sustain the patent insincerity of it, when all the time my thoughts would be on gently stroking the nape of his slender, delicate neck . . .

The nearest I ever came to intimacy with him was at one remove, a voyeuristic experience. It was the day of the House play, and Osgood was a 'native', whose face and arms and legs needed lots of brown make-up. I was in the play too, but even with the help of that connection I was too timid to talk to him in a friendly way.

'Can someone help Osgood black-up?' said a teacher. 'We don't have much time.'

What a perfect chance! But no. I just stood there, tongue-tied and foot-rooted, as the moment passed and a less inhibited sixth-former jumped at the opportunity. How they chatted and laughed, those two! How sensuously, or so it seemed to my longing eyes, the older boy daubed and rubbed Osgood's young limbs, letting his fingers stray unnecessarily far up the leg of the boy's shorts. I was sick with envy, of course, but also excited by the revelation that Osgood appeared to like being touched, seemed not at all offended by the older boy's wandering hands.

It has always been hard for me to believe that there are children, boys or girls, who actually like erotic involvement with people much older than themselves. Harder for me, probably, than for a lot of those who so violently denounce paedophilia. So throughout my early adult years all boys were on account of this like Osgood to me, an impossible dream; although I learned to talk to them, shyly, tentatively, I never came even remotely close to sexual involvement. Like Iris Murdoch's Michael, I kept thinking there had to be good in my love, but I had no idea how to release it: Young couples become parents and witness child sexuality at first hand (unless of course they are the kind of parents who instil shame and furtiveness about sex right from the first signs). I had only the model of my own childhood to tell me what children are like – and I could not remember having had sexual feelings at all before the age of ten, when almost overnight, it seemed, these feelings became quite intense, some three years before puberty. Not even then would I have welcomed the attentions of an adult. As an individual, I didn't personally feel any need for non-parental adult affection, still less adult sexuality, any expression of which would have distressed me.

My background, as you may have surmised, was rooted in the view that anything to do with the genital areas of the body was unspeakably rude; even the mildest physical affection between adults, such as an embrace, was considered 'sloppy'. Like many another child, when I was first told the facts of life (at school), my reaction was 'My Mum and Dad couldn't possibly do anything as dirty as that!'; but perhaps unlike so many other children, I cannot recall ever seeing my parents kiss each other, or embrace, in all the years of my childhood. As may be imagined, I never saw my parents naked, and the sight of any adult's genitals would have given me quite a shock.

And yet my parents were happily married, so far as I could tell. I loved them, they loved me. Such physical affection as was evident in the family tended to be transgenerational. My father, for instance, was not a distant or aloof figure, as some fathers are, and he was affectionate, in a rough, manly sort of way. My mother was the tender one, and in my infancy and early childhood, since I was a particularly sickly, feeble specimen, I needed all the tenderness I could get. In later childhood, when I no longer needed all the kisses and cuddles quite so much, they continued unabated, much to my embarrassment. Small wonder, then, that I wouldn't have welcomed even more of such treatment from a grown man outside the family.

There are those who will detect in all this the aetiology of my 'perversion'. Let them. I am not interested in why I am a paedophile, any more than others are interested in why they are 'normal'. The point I am trying to make is simply that the

models of behaviour presented to me in childhood left me as an adult with a limited and far from universal view of what it feels like to be a child.

My own childhood led me to generalise falsely that all other children would think sexuality disgustingly rude; that they would be as frightened by an adult, especially an adult stranger, talking to them about it as I would have been. Even now, when talking to any child for the first time, I am still very conscious of exactly this assumption, and intend to remain so: for until I know otherwise – from her or his own behaviour – the child I am talking to might well be one of the many whose attitudes towards sex have already been poisoned by the guilty silence with which their parents hedge it around. But there are also plenty of children whose parents, fortunately, have a relatively healthy, animalistic view of sex. Their children grow up curious about it, wanting to know more about what Mum and Dad get up to, wanting to join in themselves, not being terrified of it, eager to involve themselves sexually with peers and adults alike.

It appals me now to think of the embarrassed, slightly old-fashioned, schoolmasterly way in which I have rejected children's sexual curiosity (and sometimes more than curiosity) in the past, simply because I couldn't believe the evidence of my ears and eyes that the children really wanted to involve me in any way in their sex lives.

I remember a hostelling holiday, when one night some of my third-year boys and myself (for I actually was a teacher then) had a dormitory to ourselves. On that occasion I was inveigled – not without considerable protest on my part – into a game of strip poker. As we were approaching the exciting stage, underpants only all round, I had no shortage of encouragement:

'Bet you've got a whopper, ain't you, sir?'

'D'you wanna see Woody's? He's bigger than you think!'

Just games, of course. Mere curiosity. Nothing important. To cries of 'Spoilsport!' I told everyone things had gone quite far enough. We had to be up early in the morning and it was high time we all got some sleep.

At other times, boys of no more than nine or ten have flaunted erect little penises at me in the changing rooms, introduced the subject of masturbation into the conversation, asked questions about homo-sexuality, requested me to take photographs of them urinating, and invited me to inspect 'operation' scars in private places – in all cases with a positive disinclination on my part to introduce what I thought for them might be a distasteful or frightening subject. Such incidents might happen to any adult who likes children enough to spend a lot of time in their company, and who is able to gain their confidence.

Thus did I gradually discover that children are not always appalled by sex, as I had been as a child. Similarly, because I had all the affection I needed from my parents, I supposed the same would apply to others too. At a conscious level I soon came to realise that this was nonsense – one could hardly help being aware that all too many children are deprived of parental affection – but at a deeper level I have found it hard to believe that the cuddles and caresses I might have to offer would not be repulsed, particularly by older boys. The dictates of social convention, the idea that it is sissy and unmanly for boys to want affection, have also served to militate in the direction of giving credence to my intuitive feeling: there are boys who really do need affection, and who have been socialised out of all ability to respond to it naturally – but there are others who can accept it and benefit from it.

Not always 'deprived' children either. Take Jonathan. He was nine when our paths crossed all too briefly on a camping holiday, although I would have guessed he was at least a couple of years older. To all appearances his family home was an idyllically happy one. His parents struck me as sensible, caring people. Yet Jonathan could not

have too much affection from me. Whatever we did on that holiday, wherever we went, he wanted to be in my company. At the very least he would hold my hand, and much of the time we would walk about arm-in-arm, to the puzzlement and possible consternation of other adults at the camp. He even asked if he could sleep with me, and I have reason to suppose that he meant more than just sharing my tent.

The belief that such things could happen has come only very slowly to me, as time and experience – and learning about the freer sexual expression of children at other times and in other cultures of the world – have eroded the notion that all children are 'innocent', and that there is no place for paedophile love.

Effectively, like T.H. White, I offered the fox to my bosom for years, sustained by just one slender hope; the hope that I might somehow make a go of marriage, and raise a family of my own. For then I could be a good daddy. I'd be able to express my love physically enough by hugging the children, and bathing them, and changing their clothes. They would never need to know that doing these things was a sexual turn-on for me. I would hide that for their sake. I would keep it in check. They would be very aware that I loved them, and rightly so, but they would never need to know that I was 'abnormal'.

The family doctor thought all this was a good idea too. He supposed that exposure to women would give me a taste for them, and that I would soon 'outgrow' all this nonsense about boys.

No one ever more assiduously tried to follow a doctor's advice, and my efforts were not without success of a kind: I never had the slightest trouble in attracting the interest of women. Very often pretty, and personable ones too, so that the social side of relationships was plain sailing. I never did find a skinny, boyish, flat-breasted one, though. In a way it would have been cheating. Instead, I tried desperately hard to find something exciting about women's breasts (put yourself in my position: try, for a moment, to get excited about little boys' penises), to learn to love nylon stockings and powder puffs and all the other alien incidentals that go with womankind, and which I had so far regarded with profound distaste. This was all absolutely necessary, because I could not cynically feign love for a woman in order to marry her, just to have her as a dam for the children.

I was engaged to be married, for a while. She liked me well enough, and would have gone through with the marriage, given an ounce of encouragement. I told myself I loved her, in a Gideon, cerebral way at least, and I tried to fool myself that I would come to love her body with more familiarity. Or rather I would lose my revulsion for it, just as a loathing for spiders can be mastered if one grinds one's teeth and makes a determined effort to get close to the little beasts.

I intend no disrespect to women in general, or my fiancé in particular, when I say that the task was too much for me; after only a few months the engagement was broken. My few belaboured, pitiful performances between the sheets, all role-playing and false passion, should have told me the inevitable fate of any future such liaisons, but that did not prevent me trying again, many times.

I advertised in the personal columns of magazines like *Private Eye* and the *London Weekly Advertiser*, to find someone interested in a rapid marriage, entered into on both sides with eyes open, but stripped of the hideous, drawn-out, romantic posturing of courtship. My hope was to find someone who wanted a man about the place to be a father and a breadwinner (or else house-husband to a career woman), rather than a giver of sexual love. At first I coyly described myself in the ads as 'fond of children', and met a number of divorcees and separated women, some of whom already had delightful children of their own.

In fact all sorts of women answered my ads, including, for no reason I could fathom, lots of nurses. One of these was a Chelsea swinger, who insisted on fellating me within an hour of meeting. It was a sort of sexual first aid, because I had told her I wasn't very good at making love. Others included a Moroccan belly dancer, a sixth-former, a nymphomaniac housewife whose husband couldn't stand the pace, a Salvation Army girl who I really thought might be my salvation, a fifteen-stone shop assistant, a 'fantastically thick chick' (her words) and several lesbians.

There were so many I couldn't keep up with their names. I just vaguely knew them as 'Miss Pinner, or Miss Finchley Central', or 'Miss Welwyn Garden City'. But I don't think I ever treated any of them cynically or dishonourably. As soon as possible I would try to tactfully introduce them to the real reason for my interest, and usually – not always – that would be the abrupt end of it.

Eventually, rather than wasting their time and mine, rather than building up false expectations all round, I tried to make my ads themselves more candid. Time Out balked at the word 'paedophile', but astonishingly they accepted an ad in which I described myself as 'crazy about choirboys, cub scouts and Alice-In-Wonderland little girls'. Even more astonishingly seven women replied to it, though not one of them had taken what I said literally. Yet again I found myself faced with a dreary round of explanation and failure.

Other aspects of my life were less bizarre. After graduating in history from Lancaster University in 1967, I went into teaching, at a big comprehensive, and for the most part reconciled myself to simply doing a conscientious job. An old undergraduate friend wrote asking how the job was going. In return he received an enthusiastic, but doubtless unspeakably boring, 2,700-word essay on the objectives, methods, priorities and problems involved in teaching English to eleven-year-olds! I was keen, you see. It just bubbled out of me. I wanted so much to be good at teaching. Partly it was the professional pride any other young entrant to the profession should feel, but I was also conscious of embarking on a labour of love.

At the end of my first year I went to Cambridge University to do my 'Cert. Ed.', and towards the end of the course, by chance, a history post fell vacant at the school I had just left. The Head was keen to have me back, so in the end I never needed to use the testimonials that my Head of English and Housemaster had given me. Like most open testimonials, they were perhaps more glowing than confidential references would have been; but I am still proud of them, and for the benefit of those people who think I am anything like the vile monster portrayed by the press, I believe they are worth quoting, even at the risk of appearing immodest. My Head of English had this to say:

'Mr T. O'Carroll joined the English staff of this school in September, 1967 and served with us for one year.

'His degree in History, and his lack of teaching experience, presented him with a not inconsiderable problem when it came to the teaching of English.

'However, right from the first week, he made every effort to discover for himself the best methods of approach, the various techniques of presentation, and the true purpose of what he was teaching. He was never afraid or reluctant to ask me or other staff for advice and assistance; at all times he tried to understand the attitudes and nature of the class that he was teaching; throughout he maintained the standard of discipline expected of him.

'His preparation was painstaking and very often his ideas and approach were original and rewarding. Although willing to seek advice, he was also forthright in expressing opinion, and his contribution to the overall progress of the English Dept. was quite significant.

'As a colleague I found him stimulating, loyal and unselfish. He would make a positive and provocative contribution to any staffroom, and he has a personality one soon learns to like and respect.

'I am pleased therefore, to support his application without reservation.

And the Housemaster:

'I am very pleased indeed to support Mr O'Carroll in his present application. He came to --- School after taking a good degree in history, seeking a challenging year's teaching before going on to take an education diploma course. This course of action gives some indication of his professional approach to his work and also of his determination to do well.

'In the year that followed he proved his professional integrity and determined character to the full. As a groupmaster in charge of a complete cross-section of our intake, which ranged from backward to potential university students, he had to get to know each boy well, introduce them to the hectic life of a large comprehensive, and weld them into a coherent whole. This is no easy task for it requires an understanding of widely different boys, an approach both firm and sympathetic, great enthusiasm and energy and a willingness to spend a great deal of time outside normal school hours. Mr O'Carroll rose to the task with characteristic thoroughness and determination, gaining the affection and respect of his group so that the boys were ready to work hard for their group and also the House.

'Though his teaching was not directly under my charge I saw enough to learn that he was thorough in preparation, clear and incisive in his teaching and able to hold the attention of pupils by the interest and variety he put into his work.

'He entered fully into the life of house and school, taking assemblies as required, playing a full part in all group and house activities, from all sporting activities to every kind of competition, and being ready to propose and organise new activities. His greatest success was perhaps his chess club. Under his guidance this was the most active society, and so proficient was his instruction that our first year house team was able to take on every senior school team and beat them all. In addition the team was successful against other school teams up to sixth form level. The amount of time and energy he gave willingly in this activity was nothing short of enormous.

'As a colleague he proved most loyal. In the staffroom he gained the friendship and respect of his fellows. He is a man of high character and I can unhesitatingly recommend him for a post in any school. In addition, I will willingly answer any questions about him should further information be required.'

One of the members of that junior house chess team had been Chris, a raven-haired little charmer of a boy, and a teacher's pet if ever there was one, so far as I was concerned. Not that I didn't have a lot of favourites. In all, at the end of my brief career, I counted thirty-three boys from my ten classes, all of whom I was in love with to some degree.

But Chris was rather special: beautiful, but not by any means the most compellingly sexy boy I knew, in a directly physical sense. The attraction lay in his seductiveness, which grew as he learnt how much I cared for him, although this did not happen straight away. As an eleven-year-old in his first year, which was my first year too, he had been just another attractive boy. Although it was a wrench to leave him and all the others for Cambridge, I wasn't heartbroken about it, and neither was he. It was just one of those things.

Besides, he did write to me in Cambridge, and I was able to see him at his home a couple of times during the holidays. He'd invite me up to his bedroom, covered with pictures of football players and other heroes, and we would play chess, there to be 'discovered' doing so, like Ferdinand and Miranda, by Mum bringing up a tray of tea and biscuits. These out-of-school links established what he clearly came to recognise as a 'special friendship' by the time I resumed work at his school again. He came to know that I loved him. Many a nuance of conversation and gesture told me beyond doubt that he was well aware that he held my heart in his hands, and was happy for it to be that way.

But to actually say it, to actually tell him that I loved him, was another thing, as well I knew. Rightly or wrongly, I did exactly that. I enjoined no secrecy on him, and, as I fully expected, he talked about it with his parents. In my naivety I had supposed they would understand. I believed they would continue to think of me as they had before. As a friend to Chris. As a positive influence. They did not, and soon my whole world was brought crashing down around me.

If I had only lied my way out of it, all would have been well. The Head all but invited me to.

'What's all this about you telling a boy you love him?' he said. Surely it's just a misunderstanding, isn't it? You didn't actually say that did you? Or maybe it was a joke of some sort?'

It was not a joke, I said solemnly. I had said I loved him. I had meant it, and that remained the case.

Alarmed as he was, the Head avoided over-reacting; he felt it was enough to put me on my best behaviour and tell me to keep my mouth shut. Unfortunately for him and myself alike, he had not reckoned with the amazing scope of my stupidity. For I made an attempt to persuade Chris's parents that they had nothing to fear from me. It only made matters worse, and at their further prompting the Head asked for my resignation, and when I refused to give it he suspended me from duty.

To my great surprise, the Director of Education for the city, and the school governors who considered my case, appeared anxious not to sack me, and an extremely generous offer was made. My suspension was to be lifted, and I was to receive sick pay for an indefinite period, under psychiatric attention, until such time as I was deemed medically fit to work again. At that point I was to be transferred to a teaching post elsewhere in the city.

Alas, I could not accept. Once more I found myself walking down paths trodden long ago by T.H. White, who was dismissed as a prep school master 'to all intents and purposes. . . owing to my Socratic intransigence.<sup>3</sup> You may judge for yourself what manner of intransigence mine was. In formally declining the offer put to me by the Director of Education, I replied as follows:

'Since the Governors' meeting at ---- School on Tuesday, I have thought about the position very carefully, as you advised me to. Although I regret that my suspension was considered to have been just, I am aware that I received a very fair hearing at the meeting, and that the proposed settlement was indeed generous. For this I must extend to both yourself and the Governors my most sincere thanks.

'Generous as it is, however, I am still unable to accept the settlement. I feel it would be wrong to accept medical treatment aimed deliberately at destroying, or "redirecting" as doctors would call it, those very deeply held affections for another person which in normal people are held to be amongst the finer manifestations of the human spirit. I cannot accept that anyone with any self-respect would consent to being "treated", that they

would buy this particular euphemism any more than they would consent to being "doctored" like a tom cat, or "put down" like an unwanted mongrel.

'I apologise if this sounds aggressive, but it is in no measure meant to be disrespectful; I do appreciate that you have been more bountiful in good will and courtesy than I might have expected as a very junior and perhaps truculent employee.

'Naturally, I am very sad that this means the end of my service with the Authority and with the teaching profession but perhaps, in the circumstances, this is as well.'

I had been suspended for the whole of a summer term before matters came to a head in this way – lonely months spent moping about the house through the long hours of sunshine, in sorry contemplation of my lost Eden.

In some ways I was lucky. Despite everything, I had the unfailing, and doubtless ill-deserved, support of my parents. I had friends: old, loyal friends from my own schooldays. My staffroom colleagues were good to me too: they still made me feel welcome of an evening, over a beer at the local teacher's club. Even the lonely daytime hours were less barren than they might have been, for I was at least able to apply myself to writing a novel with a paedophilic theme.

Yet for all this, it was a disturbed and even dangerous time of my life. I've never been one to harbour resentment or bitterness for long, but these were exceptional circumstances, in which I experienced such a sense of hurt and rejection that I had a wounded animal's inclination to hit back ferociously. At a conscious level my anger was directed at 'society'. I wanted to change the world. I screamed inside at what I felt was the injustice, the folly, the waste in society's inability to acknowledge at least the possibility that love – not violence or hate, but love – could be a power for good. Why couldn't they see that by rejecting love, by making those who offered it feel alienated and despised, they were doing everything in their power to turn kind, useful people into embittered, dangerous ones? They had not just taken away my livelihood. That was a trifling matter. Their real crime was to stop me being of use, to myself or anyone else. To children. To individuals who needed me. To boys like Chris.

I thought a great deal about Chris. Obsessively. Frantically. I longed to know what he was thinking, and to my horror I found myself hating the parents who had come between us. I knew they thought they were doing the best thing for their boy in keeping him away from me. They weren't to know that their fears were groundless. But I couldn't help hating the stupid, blind, socially programmed inevitability of their rejection of me. I felt they were poisoning Chris's mind, filling him with their own anti-sexual, and specifically anti-homosexual, prejudice. I had to get through to Chris and his parents some conception of what was happening. I rained letters on the household: emotional, polemical, but not abusive, letters.

They were all ignored, and although my persistence can be seen as an intrusion, an assault on parental 'rights', the compliment was returned with assault of a more tangible kind. When, admittedly emboldened by drink, and aggressive with it, I visited the family home in a bloody-minded refusal to let them get away with their agonising silence, I was so effectively beaten up – not by either of Chris's parents but by a neighbour and a policeman – that for a long time afterwards I looked as though I'd gone through a car windscreen. (There can be no doubt that I pestered Chris's parents. But when the tale came out in the News of the World, eight years later, it took on a very different hue, for it was alleged, by an unnamed teacher informant, that Chris's mother had complained about me 'pestering her son' in a variety of ways. The story was totally untrue. The one thing I had never done was to make a nuisance of myself towards Chris.)



That I embarked on such a desperate escapade at all gives some idea of the dangerous state of mind I was in. A state wholly induced by the rejection I had experienced right along the line, from my suspension onwards. A state not peculiar to myself, but one which could be induced with almost the predictability of a chemical reaction in any human being treated as I had been.

I am ashamed to say – the concept of personal responsibility dies hard – that this dangerous state of mind also translated itself into something as close as I have ever been to sexually predatory behaviour. Released from the rules that bound me in the teaching profession – released from having anything to lose by breaking them – I was determined to find a boy, or boys, for what I assured myself would be mutually pleasurable and affectionate sex. I would spare myself the hopeless, romantic yearning I felt for Chris, and instead just concentrate on giving the child a sexual turn-on, by masturbating him. All I had to do was pop out to the nearest canal bank, or swimming baths, or park and start chatting up boys. I'd soon find those who were into it, if only I had the guts to actually talk sex, to respond with an open and unequivocal interest in the body to such boys as let anything 'naughty' slip into their conversation. These would be the sexually relaxed ones. they wouldn't be appalled, and for some at least it would be a turn-on. It is possible to chat up boys casually. I know plenty of people who have done so successfully.

But I wasn't one of them. At that stage in my development, in 1970, it was virtually inevitable that I would fail in the most disastrous way. Nothing would go right then. That was my nadir. My time of total despair. Against the backcloth of all that had happened to me I couldn't be relaxed, and cheerful and spontaneous with lads, as one needs to be. Instead I made a nervous, dry-mouthed, guilty, almost totally out-of-the-blue pass at the paper boy – whose own conversation had never been at all earthy or overtly sexual. The tension in my manner transmitted itself to him. I was behaving like a classic Strange Man, the kind of guy the poor child might have expected to leave him strangled in a ditch. Not surprisingly, he was terrified, and the more I tried to sound kind and reassuring, the more inescapably I knew I was sounding – and indeed behaving – like the loony I appeared to be.

As the realisation came to me of what I was doing, the impression I was creating, I was overcome by the most searing sensation that everything I had ever believed of myself was totally false. I had built my life on the belief that I loved boys. Yet for the sake of my lust there I was, large as life, terrifying a poor child out of his wits. There was no way in which I could fail to accept total culpability. It was different with Chris. I could blame all the trouble on the parents who were poisoning his mind, or the school who had sacked me for no more than being in love with a boy and saying so. But as I stood there face to face with Kevin, looking into those frightened eyes, I felt that every last shred of my integrity lay in tatters. I was nothing. Just a shit. Just a child molester.

I felt sick.

I said simply

'I'm sorry, Kevin, believe me, I'm sorry. I shan't trouble you again, honestly. Off you go now. I'm sorry. Really ... '

In the empty, lonely hours that followed, all I could see ahead of me in life was a relentless ache. There would be no positive use for my feelings after all. That hope had been devastatingly exposed as a vain illusion. There was nothing to look forward to but the eternal pain of staving off a repetition of the despicable behaviour to which I had sunk. There was only one way out – and it would not be without a smack of honour.

A.E. Housman had the words for it:

*'Oh you had forethought, you could reason,  
And saw your road and where it led,  
And early wise and brave in season  
Put the pistol to your head.'*

In fact I had neither the gun nor the courage, and although I went so far as to hack away at myself somewhat ineffectually with a blunt kitchen knife, I accepted my father's timely intrusion without demur. I felt pathetic, gutless and lost. There seemed no move to make that could possibly make things better, and existence just drifted on, from one numb day to another.

Some weeks later I saw Kevin again in the village, walking along on the other side of the road. To my infinite surprise he waved cheerfully and called out, 'Hello Tom!'

So he was OK. I almost wept with relief, and at last had the feeling that the world was perhaps not quite at an end.

Why am I saying all this? What can be the point of rattling the skeletons in my own cupboard so publicly? There are several reasons, but perhaps the most important is that in doing so I will have given quite a powerful indication that it is not my intention to dodge any issues, or overlook any unpalatable truths. I know from my own life that there are problems, immense problems, in paedophilia, just as T. H. White said. I know that it is not an easy option. In fact it is not an option at all. People do not turn to paedophilia to avoid the responsibilities of an adult relationship, as some would have it believed – it seems to me that the responsibilities of a relationship with a child are in any case more onerous than one with an adult, not less.

In spite of all this, I still feel as strongly as ever that my attachment to children, and that felt by my fellow paedophiles, can be, and ought to be, a power for good. I make that now as an assertion, and confess that it is near to being an ineradicable article of faith with me. How could I live with myself if I ceased to believe it? None too easily, as my attempted suicide showed. Let's say then that I am emotionally committed to a point of view, which may or may not be right. The working out of that commitment, the ideas and evidence educed in pursuit of that article of faith, occupy the pages that follow, and I trust that the reader will accept that they are presented with a serious concern for the truth.

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## **Ch 1 - Notes and References**

1. Sylvia Townsend Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography*, Jonathan Cape Chatto & Windus, London, 1967, pp. 277–82. [^](#)
2. Iris Murdoch, *The Bell*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1958, pp. 157–8. [^](#)
3. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 55. [^](#)

## Chapter 2

# Children's Sexuality: What Do We Mean?

It is more than half a century since Freud began to shock polite society by his revelations on infant and child sexuality. Time enough, one might have thought, to absorb the shock, even for those who least wanted to face the facts. Yet there are those who still insist that children are 'innocent', in the sense of being asexual creatures. Some even hide behind Freud to do so. Mary Whitehouse, leading British campaigner for so-called 'morality', talks of 'the latency period' when she wants to convey the idea of childish innocence. What she does not do is to add that since Freud there has been copious evidence for the existence of children's sexual feelings and behaviour in the years leading up to puberty (the supposed latency period), and that complete sexual latency was regarded even by Freud as merely a theoretical extreme. As he put it:

'It is my conviction that no child – none at least who is mentally sound, still less one who is mentally gifted, can avoid being occupied with sexual problems in the years before puberty.'<sup>1</sup>

It is not surprising that Freud should have talked of sexual 'problems', writing as he did in an age in which any form of sexual expression by the child, including solitary masturbation, was regarded as a 'problem' to be eliminated. Things haven't changed a lot since then. It is now medically recognised that masturbation, for instance, is entirely harmless, but most parents and teachers still steer children away from it and from any other expression of sexuality. They still behave as though they would like children to be non-sexual, as though there is some mental block, some resistance, to them recognising the child's sexual feelings.

It is important at the outset to say what I mean by children's 'sexuality', as there are widely varying interpretations as to what does or does not constitute 'sexual' behaviour in children. Freud himself was the arch-proponent of the view that many aspects of bodily pleasure in infants and children are 'sexual', not just those which arise or lead to, specifically genital gratification. Although this view is illuminating in some ways, an awareness of the diffuse sensuality of infants is essential for an understanding of their needs and development – it also serves to dilute the claim that children are 'really' sexual: for most people, the only sensual response which can properly be called sexual is one directly associated with the genitals, tending towards orgasm. When I talk about children's sexuality in this chapter, it is this specifically genital, orgasmic, aspect that I mean. <sup>2</sup> 2a 2b 2c

In what follows, attention is concentrated on evidence relating purely to sexual behaviour in childhood, with little emphasis on its emotional or social context. This is emphatically not because I feel such matters are unimportant (the rest of the book is largely devoted to them), but because the only way to establish that children are indeed sexual beings is to talk about their sexuality, and not about anything else.

A number of empirical studies have established some unassailable facts on the subject. The most famous of these sources is of course the work of the biologist Alfred Kinsey and his co-researchers,<sup>3</sup> which made almost as much impact in the early post-war years as Freud had in his time.

Perhaps the most striking of the Kinsey findings, as they concern pre-adolescent children, relates to their capacity for sexual orgasm. 'Orgasm has been observed in boys of every age from five months to adolescence,' Kinsey wrote. Also, 'Orgasm is in our records for a female babe of four months.' In reporting this, great care had been

taken to establish exactly what was meant by the word 'orgasm', and the physiological identifying factors are described in some detail:

'The orgasm in an infant or other young male is, except for the lack of ejaculation, a striking duplicate of orgasm in an older adult . . . the behaviour involves a series of gradual physiologic changes, the development of rhythmic body movements with distinct penis throbs and pelvic thrusts, an obvious change in sensory capacities, a final tension of muscles, especially of the abdomen, hips and back, a sudden release with convulsions, including rhythmic anal contractions followed by the disappearance of all symptoms.' <sup>4</sup>

Also:

'In five cases of young pre-adolescents, observations were continued over periods of months or years, until the individuals were old enough to make it certain that true orgasm was involved; and in all of these cases the later reactions were so similar to the earlier behaviour that there could be no doubt of the orgasmic nature of the first experience.' <sup>5</sup>

In the volume on the female, Kinsey reports the 'typical reactions of a small girl in orgasm, made by an intelligent mother who had frequently observed her three-year-old in masturbation'. The mother had reported:

'Lying face down on the bed, with her knees drawn up, she started rhythmic pelvic thrusts, about one second or less apart. The thrusts were primarily pelvic, with the legs tensed in a fixed position. The forward components of the thrusts were in a smooth and perfect rhythm which was unbroken except for momentary pauses during which the genitalia were readjusted against the doll on which they were pressed; the return from each thrust was convulsive, jerky. There were 44 thrusts in unbroken rhythm, a slight momentary pause, 87 thrusts followed by a slight momentary pause, then 10 thrusts, and then a cessation of all movement. There was marked concentration and intense breathing with abrupt jerks as orgasm approached. She was completely oblivious to everything during these later stages of the activity. Her eyes were glassy and fixed in a vacant stare. There was noticeable relief and relaxation after orgasm. A second series of reactions began two minutes later with series of 48, 18 and 57 thrusts, with slight momentary pauses between each series. With the mounting tensions, there were audible gasps, but immediately following the cessation of pelvic thrusts there was complete relaxation and only desultory movements thereafter.' <sup>6</sup>

In both girls and boys, Kinsey found, masturbation to orgasm occurs at all ages. His records also show that even from an early age a child's outlet is not solely masturbation. He found that no less than 10 per cent of boys aged five engaged in some form of sex play, and as with other pre-adolescent age groups, this was largely with other children, of either or both sexes. This figure rose steadily to 39 per cent at age twelve, including 23 per cent engaged in heterosexual play, 29 per cent in homosexual play, and no less than 13 per cent in coitus. Even at age ten, 11 per cent of boys had coitus. Taken cumulatively, 57 per cent of the adults on whom Kinsey relied for his data recalled taking part in some pre-adolescent sex play, and information was also taken from boys, of whom 70 per cent admitted involvement in such play. Most of the activity occurred between the ages of eight and thirteen, though there was some activity at every age.

Giving a glimpse of what could be the case in a future, sexually liberated society, he argues:

' . . . and it is probable that half or more of the boys in an uninhibited society could reach climax by the time they were three or four years of age, and that nearly all of them could experience such a climax three to five years before the onset of adolescence.' <sup>7</sup>

Adult women reporting pre-adolescent sex play amount to 48 per cent of Kinsey's sample, a figure which it was felt was probably well below what actually took place, thanks to lack of recall (just as, as we have seen, in the case of men recalling such sex play, the figure was much lower than the more recent recollections of boys). Unlike the pattern for boys, the sex play of girls tends to tail off rapidly in the years immediately before adolescence, and Kinsey felt this could be clearly attributed to cultural factors:

'As the child approaches adolescence, parents may increasingly restrict the female's contacts with the opposite sex. They may warn her against kissing, general body contacts, genital exposures, and more specific sexual relationships. In many cultures the girls are more restricted at this age than the boy. In Europe, in Latin America and in this country [the United States], the opportunities for the girl to be alone with other children are fewer than those available to the developing boy. The cessation of pre-adolescent sex play in the later pre-adolescent years was taken by Freud and many of his followers to represent a period of sexual latency. On the contrary, it seems to be a period of inactivity which is imposed by the culture upon the socio-sexual activities of a maturing child, especially if the child is female.

'Pre-adolescent masturbation is, on the other hand, usually carried over from the pre-adolescent to the adolescent and adult years, probably because it does not fall under the restraints which are imposed on a socio-sexual activity. This provides further evidence that no biologic latency is involved in the discontinuance of the socio-sexual activities.' <sup>8</sup>

Those who continue to believe that sexuality is essentially an attribute of adulthood, would also do well to reflect on the fact that in at least one respect the child's sexual capacity is much greater than that of adults:

'The most remarkable aspect of the pre-adolescent population is its capacity to achieve repeated orgasm in limited periods of time. This capacity definitely exceeds the capacity of teenage boys who, in turn, are much more capable than any older males.' <sup>9</sup>

The cultural factors referred to by Kinsey are vastly more important than most people ever imagine. His work was undertaken among a sample of the white population in the United States, and although it is remarkable that so much pre-adolescent sexual activity was found to occur in such a society, which like our own has been traditionally divided between attempts on the one hand to deny that it exists and on the other to stamp it out, it is probable that much more sexual expression would be found in a similar survey undertaken in a sexually freer culture.

Although large population surveys like Kinsey's have not been undertaken in such cultures, there is now nonetheless a great deal of anthropological data to back up this claim – data which, despite the publication of such classic works as Clellan S. Ford's and Frank A. Beach's *Patterns of sexual Behaviour*, have failed as yet to make the impact they deserve on the popular imagination.

Just as the homo-sexual activities of the Ancient Greeks were carefully censored from the attention of generations of schoolboys by Christian pedagogues, so there has been a similar conspiracy of silence on sexual behaviour in other cultures. Have you ever seen a TV documentary on child sex? Cameras and crews have been to all the

right places, deep up the Amazon and into the Australian outback, but they never report on what the scholars know about juvenile sex.

Interestingly enough, a disc jockey on a popular radio programme recently wowed his listeners with an 'isn't it amazing' exotic fact about the Trobriand Islanders, telling them that the natives bite off each other's eyelashes during lovemaking. The much more important, and equally exotic facts about Trobriand child sexuality are, of course, never mentioned on such 'family' shows.

In righting the balance, I can do no better than to quote Ford and Beach at some length. As well as involving free child sexuality, it is no coincidence that the attitudes described include giving rein to a good deal of child-adult sexual expression:

'Adults in a large number of societies take a completely tolerant and permissive attitude towards sex expression in childhood. Under such conditions, youngsters engage in a certain amount of sexual play in public. . . . Handling the genitals of others of the same or opposite sex occurs frequently under conditions of free sex play. Additional forms of sexual activity on the part of young children sometimes include oral-genital contacts and attempted copulation with a sex partner.

'In a few permissive societies adults participate actively in the sexual stimulation of infants and young children. Hopi and Siriono parents masturbate their youngsters frequently. And in these societies self-masturbation passes practically unnoticed during early childhood, adults taking a tolerant and permissive attitude toward all sexual behaviour at least until the age of puberty. Among the Kazak, adults who are playing with small children, especially boys, excite the young one's genitals by rubbing and playing with them. In this society autogenital stimulation on the part of young children is accepted as a normal practice. Mothers in Alorese society occasionally fondle the genitals of their infant while nursing it. During early childhood Alorese boys masturbate freely and occasionally they imitate intercourse with a little girl. As the children grow older, however, sexual activity is frowned upon and during late childhood such behaviour is forbidden to both boy and girl. Actually, however, they continue their sexual activity, but in secret.

'Among the Pukapukans of Polynesia where parents simply ignore the sexual activities of young children, boys and girls masturbate freely and openly in public. Among the Nama Hotentot no secret is made of autogenital stimulation in early childhood. Young Trobriand children engage in a variety of sexual activities. In the absence of adult control, typical forms of amusement for Trobriand girls and boys include manual and oral stimulation of the genitals and simulated coitus.' <sup>10</sup>

Simulated coitus? At this point Ford and Beach slip into the same error as Malinowski, on whose famous study of the Trobriands <sup>11</sup> they were relying. When Malinowski heard about real intercourse between quite small children, he simply couldn't believe his ears, as might be expected in anyone with a Western background:

'I often heard some such benevolent gossip as this: "So-and-so (a little girl) has already had intercourse with So-and-so (a little boy)". . . But this obviously can refer only to incomplete practices and not to the real act. Some of my informants insisted that such small female children actually have intercourse with penetration. Remembering, however, the Trobriander's very strong tendency to exaggerate in the direction of the grotesque, a tendency not altogether devoid of a certain malicious Rabelaisian humour, I am inclined to discount those statements of my authorities. If we place the beginning of real sexual life at the age of six to

eight in the case of girls, and ten to twelve in the case of boys, we shall probably not be erring very greatly in either direction. . . .'<sup>12</sup>

Rabelaisian humour or not, it is doubtful whether Malinowski's understandable scepticism is justified. Very young children are capable of full intercourse, as we shall see. Ford and Beach continue:

'In the societies where they are permitted to do so, children gradually increase their sexual activities both as they approach puberty and during adolescence. There are, indeed, some societies in which enforcement of the prevailing incest regulations is the only major restriction on sexual activity among adolescents. . .

'Among the Chewa of Africa parents believe that unless children begin to exercise themselves sexually early in life they will never beget offspring. Older children build little huts some distance from the village, and there, with the complete approval of their parents, boys and girls play at being husband and wife. Such trial matings may extend well into adolescence, with periodic exchanges of partners until marriage occurs. The Ifugao head hunters of the Philippines maintain a similar attitude towards the sex play of older children and adolescents. In this society unmarried individuals live in separate dormitories from early childhood. It is customary for each boy to sleep with a girl every night. The only check on promiscuity is that imposed by the girls themselves. Usually a girl is unwilling to form too prolonged an attachment to one boy until she is ready to be married. Boys are urged by their fathers to begin sexual activities early, and a man may shame his son if the latter is backward in this respect. Even after puberty there seem to be relatively few instances of conception resulting from this free sexual activity. Pregnancies do occasionally occur, however, and in that event one of the girl's lovers must marry her.

'The Lepcha of India believe that girls will not mature without benefit of sexual intercourse. Early sex play among boys and girls characteristically involves many forms of mutual masturbation and usually ends in attempted copulation. By the time they are eleven or twelve years old, most girls regularly engage in full intercourse. Older men occasionally copulate with girls as young as eight years of age. Instead of being regarded as a criminal offence, such behaviour is considered amusing by the Lepcha.'<sup>13</sup>

Ford and Beach report a number of institutionalized child-adult sexual contacts: <sup>14</sup>

'Among the Siwans (Siwa Valley, North Africa), 'All men and boys engage in anal intercourse.' Males are singled out as peculiar if they do not do so. Prominent Siwan men lend their sons to each other for this purpose.

'Among the Aranda aborigines (Central Australia), 'Pederasty' is a recognised custom. . . . Commonly a man, who is fully initiated but not yet married, takes a boy ten or twelve years old, who lives with him as his wife for several years, until the older man marries.

'The Kiwai (Kiwai Island, S.E. Coast, New Guinea) practise sodomy "to make young men strong".

'Bachelors of the Keraki (S.W. Papua, New Guinea) 'universally practise sodomy, and in the course of his puberty rites each boy is initiated into anal intercourse by the older males. After his first year of playing the passive role he spends the rest of his bachelourhood sodomizing the newly initiated. This practice is believed by the natives to be necessary for the growing boy. They are convinced that boys can become pregnant as a result of sodomy, and a lime-eating ceremony is performed periodically to prevent such conception.'

Of course, boys do not become pregnant. The Keraki got it monumentally wrong, and factors such as this make it all too easy for 'advanced', 'superior' westerners to assume that the customs of 'primitive' peoples can teach us nothing. There are aspects of what has been described which I feel it would be wrong to emulate. I do not feel we should 'single out as peculiar', men who fail to engage in anal intercourse, nor do I think fathers should push their children into unwanted sexuality, any more than they should prevent their sexual expression. Nevertheless, these accounts indisputably show us that given the opportunity children do develop a sexual life of their own, in which there is no 'latency period'.

There are probably those who will always remain sceptical towards the 'Rabelaisian humour' of natives in strange, distant places, whose evidence it is near impossible to check. So let's return a little closer to home. Before doing so, however, it is worth stating the main overall thesis developed by Ford and Beach in relation to sexual development: that in humans, and in other higher primates to a lesser extent, learning, as opposed to instinct, plays an enormously important role. In a sexually restrictive society, in which it is not the done thing to talk about sexual techniques, and there is no way of finding out about them, it is no good expecting the adult to 'do what comes naturally' when he is married. It won't come naturally: she or he is likely to be sexually ignorant and incompetent. Whereas if the learning process is set in motion in childhood by a gradual introduction to sex, either by older children or by adults, there is far less likelihood of the embarrassed crashing of gears involved in trying to get it all together in one go. <sup>15</sup>

Also, children in a sexually restrictive culture may appear to be non-sexual, or less sexual than they would otherwise be, simply because they fail to discover how to give themselves an orgasm. Lots of children do find out on their own, unaided. But lots don't. Indeed some people, especially women, make the discovery only well into adulthood, by reading about what to do, and they can be forgiven for feeling resentful that neither their parents nor anyone else had told them before! (It has been speculated that girls are less likely than boys to discover their capacity for orgasm, because the clitoris is less prominent than the penis, and less likely to be the subject of experimentation.)

Strong support for the learnt nature of sexual development, and for the inherent sexual abilities and inclinations of children, is to be found in a recent paper by C.M. Johnston and R.W. Deisher <sup>16</sup> on communal child rearing in the United States – a paper in which sexuality was only an incidental factor to the authors, but a striking one nonetheless.

They write:

'In two of the four groups with a number of older children, sexuality had come to be expressed very early. With parents who spoke openly about sex and with no taboos against physical contact, exploration of each other's bodies and actual intercourse took place between most children in these two groups by the age of five or six. These children related to sex as something interesting and enjoyable, but not of central importance. They would alternate between periods of enjoying sexual experimentation and periods when sexual activities seemed of little interest. They seemed casually open about their sexual activities to both adults and other children, but there seemed little stigma against children who did not wish to engage in sex.

'In response to the observer's questions about the possible harmful effects of early genital sexuality, several adults expressed concern that early sexual experimentation might lead to early development, thus cheating children of valuable childhood experiences. Most commented that they had



seen no evidence in the behaviour of the children to indicate that genital sexuality and traditional childhood activities were in any way contradictory. The potential difficulty of sexual interests interfering with the children's educational progress was recognised, but this effect had not been observed. The difficulty of relating to the sexual mores of the traditional culture after early genital exposure was seen by the other adults as a problem, but one not separate from the general problem of adjustment to the multitude of differences in behavioural conventions between the communal environment and traditional society. For the most part, parents expressed surprise at the rapidity with which the children developed a usually quite non-judgemental awareness of the behaviours acceptable and not acceptable when off-commune. Parents stressed two positive aspects of early sexual expression. First, in being freed of the moral structure that has left many in our society incapable of complete fulfilment in their sexual lives, these children may have a great asset in terms of personal happiness. Second, these children will be spared much of the adolescent conflict between physical readiness and social prohibition. It will be important to see, as these children develop, precisely what the effects of their early sexual experimentation will be.' <sup>17</sup>

This valuable little passage both asks, and begins to answer, a number of relevant questions. In terms of the general development of commune children, it may be useful to refer to Johnston and Deisher's conclusions, before going on to the specifics of sexuality:

'The majority of the children demonstrated a high degree of maturity, self-confidence, and self-reliance. With the exception of four children, three of whom had had contradictory and non-supportive parental situations, physical clinging, crying and whining, and attention-getting behaviour were rare. Early psychological maturation seemed the rule. The two older children observed were accepting nearly adult roles in their groups by the ages of thirteen or fourteen. With a few notable exceptions, children expressed both by their words and by their actions that they felt they had a meaningful place in the commune. Lack of fear of unfamiliar people and confidence in interpersonal relations were pronounced. . . . Ability to cooperate with other children and to resolve conflicts without adult attention developed early. . . . A general openness to express ideas and feelings freely, even when contradictory to adult opinion, was evident in almost all post-toddler children.' <sup>18</sup>

One can only guess at how much, if any, of this evidently satisfactory situation can be attributed to the free sexuality of the communes, but at the very least it would appear not to be a damaging or unsettling factor.

What will have caught the eye of sceptics, however, is the finding that although very young children engage in full intercourse, sex at age five or six was 'not of central importance'. To many adults, particularly those who are getting it, it is not of 'central importance either': the ready availability of a sexual outlet, usually a husband or a wife, may well mean that not every sexual opportunity is seized upon. Only for those who are sexually frustrated is it likely to become obsessional, just as food becomes an obsession in a land of famine.

Nevertheless, it may be thought that the need for continual sexual expression is only felt compulsively from adolescence onwards (and even then perhaps more in males than females), possibly due to the biologic, hormonal changes that occur around and immediately prior to puberty. Studies have revealed many cases in which the absence of hormones, following castration in men, and the menopause in women,

makes no difference, or very little difference, to the continuance of pre-existing levels of sexual activity.' <sup>19</sup> Sexual feelings and behaviour patterns appear to depend on a much wider variety of factors than hormones alone.

My own earliest recollection of orgasm dates from age ten. No sooner had I made the discovery of how nice masturbation was than I was completely hooked on doing it at least once a day – and it would probably have been a good deal more than that if I hadn't felt wretchedly guilty about it, to the extent of burning my fingers with matches to create a diversionary sensation from that of my demanding penis. The important thing is not whether this level or that level of sexual activity is 'obsessional' or 'unhealthy', but that a compulsive inclination towards orgasm made itself felt in me fully three years before any signs of puberty – before either the capacity to ejaculate fluid, or the appearance of pubic hairs. In at least a proportion of children this gap may be much wider, so that an intense urge towards regular sexual expression may make itself felt many years ahead of puberty.

Kinsey himself was at great pains to point out that humans vary immensely from one individual to another in matters of sex. Compare adults by height or weight, and they are all pretty much the same: at extremes, one person may be twice as heavy as another, or twice as tall. Sexually, they may differ by a factor of hundreds, or even thousands, without necessarily appearing to be any different at all. Amongst males, for instance, Kinsey points out that the average frequency of sexual outlet between adolescence and the age of thirty is three times per week. However,

'There are a few males who have gone for long periods of years without ejaculating: there is one male who, although apparently sound physically, has ejaculated only once in thirty years. There are others who have maintained average frequencies of ten, twenty, or more per week for long periods of time: one male (a scholarly and skilled lawyer) has averaged over thirty per week for thirty years. This is a difference of several thousand times.' <sup>20</sup>

With variability of this order being the case, those who do not have memories of a particularly sexual childhood of their own should be wary about generalising this experience (even supposing they have no repressed memories). The fact that a proportion of even quite young children are highly sexed is incontestable – and it is now accepted in the medical profession that among them are those whose sexuality is directed towards adults. This was recognised as early as 1912 by Moll, <sup>21</sup> and in numerous studies since then the phenomenon of the 'seductive child' has been acknowledged, more often dubbed 'the participating victim' of paedophilic so-called 'offences'.

Perhaps the most famous study, even now, is that of 1937 by Bender and Blau, <sup>22</sup> in which the authors stated:

'This study seems to indicate that these children do not deserve completely the cloak of innocence with which they have been endowed by moralists, social reformers and legislators. The history of the relationship in our cases usually suggested at least some co-operation of the child in the activity, and in some cases the child assumed an active role in initiating the relationship.'

Interestingly, Bender and Blau's attitude was highly traditional. They considered it their task to stop children from having an interest in sex. Their hospital 'therapy' was designed deliberately to crush sexual expression and to divert attention to more 'normal' childish interests.

Take the case of Virginia, aged seven:

'On one occasion she was discovered in sex play with a young boy, and she then told that she had had similar experiences in the orphan home. About five months previously, it was discovered that she was making frequent visits to the janitor of the apartment house for sex relations. The relationship included cunnilinguism [*sic*], mutual masturbation and fellation. During this period her aunt also said that she observed her in sex play with a dog.<sup>23</sup>

In hospital she was 'treated' for this strange disease known in common parlance as 'sexiness' or 'randiness'. The authors report:

'At first she discussed her sex experiences freely and shamelessly but after being *taught* shame, one gathers 'she later became more reticent and evasive'.

Bender and Blau studied sixteen children, all of them pre-pubescent, eleven of them girls. One of the boys was eleven-year-old Edward:

'At about four years of age he practised mutual masturbation with a girl cousin of the same age. . . From about six to eight years he lived with a younger male cousin, they bathed and slept together in one room; every night they would play with each other's genitals. At ten years he visited a beach and would undress in the same closet with a female cousin two years younger; on his invitation they repeatedly carried on sex play. . . . A boy of thirteen taught him paederasty,<sup>24</sup> and later he practised paederasty and fellatio with another boy. He was envious about sex in adults. He watched men undressing at the beach to see their genitals. . . The most recent experience was with a forty-year-old married salesman who was in the habit of watching the boys at play. One day the man was accidentally struck on the thigh and lowered his trousers to examine the injury; the boy expressed an interest in his genitals and the man invited him to sex play. . . mutual masturbation, fellation and intercourse *intrafemoris* were practised.'<sup>25</sup>

They met again and repeated the experience.

Bender and Blau comment:

'This eleven-year-old boy of average intelligence had a frankly hedonistic attitude towards sex. His sexual activities were both homosexual and heterosexual and date back to early childhood. It is not possible to say what early influences may have directed his interests. There is no doubt that the boy was the seducer of the adult in this case.'

A number of factors dispose Bender and Blau and others to think of the sexuality of children as pathological. Chief among them is the cultural factor that children in our society are not expected to have sexual relationships, certainly not with adults, and that any expression of such 'symptoms' is a sufficient indicator that they need 'treatment'.

The social work and medical professions are sustained in this view by the fact that many of the 'participating victim' children they find out about are indeed disturbed psychologically (often *before* any sex with an adult) and come from home backgrounds which exhibit many clearly unsatisfactory aspects. It will not have escaped attention for instance, that Virginia, described above, was from an orphan home, and she had in fact been for some time with foster parents who were said to be 'unstable' – the mother was rigidly puritanical about sex, and the father given to chronic alcoholism.

Weiss *et al.*,<sup>26</sup> in a 1955 study of girl 'participating victims', found a common factor in their family background in that there often appeared to be a conflict between the parents on their attitude to sex. One parent characteristically always enjoined modesty, and made sure of being fully clothed in the presence of the child, while the other encouraged the child to take a more relaxed view of the body. Weiss believed that this inconsistency stimulated the child to 'act out' sexually with an adult:

'The parents stimulated their children sexually in various ways. In some cases the mother warned her daughter from an early age to avoid men because of the sexual consequences, and in so doing made the child aware of the possibility of sexual relationships with adult men; the mother's warnings were at the same time prohibiting and stimulating to the child. Several mothers directly encouraged their daughters to be "sexy", as for example the mother who repeatedly had her six-year-old do a strip-tease act for company. In some cases, the child's father was very seductive with her and stimulated her physically by kissing, fondling and wrestling. A number of participant victims were stimulated sexually by having the opportunity to watch their parents having sexual intercourse.'

In many of the sexually freer cultures described earlier children were allowed to watch their parents' intercourse, or were masturbated by their parents, without any discernible adverse effects in terms of creating anxiety or emotional disturbance. However, it is totally understandable in a culture like ours, in which the prevailing mores against child-adult sex are so strong, that the breakdown of those mores should often take place in the context of a *general* breakdown of accepted family standards – in the context of conflicts between the parents going far beyond those over sex, and a context in which the entire competence of the parents in creating a secure, loving home for the child is in doubt.

But it is inexcusable to leap, as some researchers have done, from an analysis of the conflicts in a child's background to the presumption that the child's sexual expression is in itself undesirable. It may well be, as some researchers have found, that a child will find with an adult sexual partner exactly that love, affection and security which had been lacking at home. One should also add that children who come to the attention of psychiatrists account for only a proportion of those who have sex with adults – a very tiny proportion at that. Others, with more satisfactory home backgrounds, are far more likely to have undetected relationships.

My purpose in this chapter is simply to establish that children do behave in a sexual way, sometimes with adults, when circumstances favour it. These circumstances may in general terms be good, bad or indifferent, but they do not alter the underlying fact that once the social barriers are down, for whatever reason, at least a proportion of children enjoy sex with adults and seek it out. Some of the 'participating victim' research obscures this fact by seeking to explain the child's sexual behaviour *totally* in terms of their psychological reaction to stresses in the family. Thus Weiss writes about one child's motives entirely in terms of domestic power politics:

'She must have known that her father's permissiveness was not meant to lead her to actual sexual activity, so that her behaviour [i.e. sexual behaviour with an adult] was a kind of spiteful obedience to him. Also, she may have been aware that her behaviour would prove her mother right in the parental disagreement [she being non-permissive] and thus, in a sense, please her mother. She realised that her father would blame himself rather than her for this sexual activity, and that her mother, too, would blame him. Thus, in her sexual behaviour, the child expressed defiance toward each parent and ingratiated herself with each.'<sup>27</sup>

Speculative insights into the child's mind, such as this, may or may not have some truth in them. But it is highly significant that not a word is said in all this as to the possibility that the child, having discovered sexual pleasure, may, in addition to any 'political' factors involved, have wanted sex simply for its own sake, because she enjoyed it! Not a word is said about the quality of her relationship with the adult, either in a sexual or a general sense. Nor, amazingly, is it thought to be a subject on which her views should be elicited. Instead, all the thinking, all the questioning, is concentrated with a sort of Freudian myopia solely on the child's relationship with its parents. One wonders what 'political' motives Weiss would have come up with to explain Virginia's sex play with a dog, without twigging the simple possibility that it turned her on!

Children, as Freud observed, are 'polymorphously perverse',<sup>28</sup> particularly when they are too young to have assimilated the restrictive sexual mores imposed upon them by their parents (the castrating super-ego) and by society at large – or if, as is the case with many children in the 'participant victim' studies, their introduction to such mores has been flawed. That is why no one should be surprised by the Kinsey finding that children's sexual contacts with animals are higher than those in adolescence or at any subsequent age. Nor should they be surprised at children being attracted to mature animals of their own species, or homosexual contacts with their peers.

What is in greater doubt, and may make many people still hesitate about accepting that most children are 'really' sexual, is the proportion of children who are so highly sexed that they appear to *need* a continuous sexual outlet, either in masturbation or socio-sexually. It may be speculated, for instance, that a certain amount of the sexual behaviour described by Johnston and Deisher, or by Malinowski, is merely *imitative* of parental behaviour, or else *exploratory* in nature. I described earlier the compulsive nature of my own pre-adolescent sexuality, but was I simply one of a tiny percentage of freakishly sexual children? Could the same be said of the Bender and Blau, or the Weiss children?

Lindy Burton<sup>29</sup> and others have even considered the possibility that children with a strong sexual disposition might be suffering from brain damage:

'Certain children may indeed have stronger urges and a greater inability to control them. . . . Several studies have noted the restlessness, hyperactivity, and nervous mannerisms of sexually assaulted children, suggestive of a degree of neural impairment. The findings of this study would not contradict this. As a group these children displayed several minor nervous characteristics, and their inordinate craving for affection might well reflect an excessive need for stimulation caused by some form of minimal brain damage.'

Alternatively, the restlessness and hyperactivity in highly sexed children may well be attributable to the sheer sexual frustration they encounter when psychiatrists and others try to deprive them of sexual outlets.

It has become fashionable recently to reject altogether the idea of a 'drive' theory of sex. Unlike Freud, who conceived of sexuality as a restless energy within us, a great beast constantly struggling to be let out, which has to be tamed and disciplined so that we can behave as 'civilised' people (and unlike Reich, who believed that the attempt to repress the irrepressible makes neurotics and sexual cripples of us all), there are now sociologists who claim that sex only assumes importance to us as individuals because of the importance accorded to it, for whatever reason, by society.

There may be something in this, up to a point. In Western society, more women are now 'learning' to be sexual: their first experience of orgasm often *follows* socio-sexual

activity, whereas before this activity commences, and it can be quite late in life, there appears to have been no 'drive' sufficiently strong to compulsively push them toward seeking orgasm, either alone or with a partner. The same may be true of some children, who, once introduced by an adult, or other child, to their potential for orgasm, 'learn' to be sexual. Everyone, adult and child, so the argument goes, has from birth all the necessary mental wiring and bodily plumbing for sex to take place – but it needs a social, not a biological, stimulus to get it going and to accord it significance.

The theory becomes overstated, however, if it is claimed that no sexuality is compulsive. The evidence, at least in relation to males, is overwhelmingly that at some point, which is usually associated with puberty but is often well in advance of that stage, the attainment of orgasm (sometimes involuntarily, in 'wet dreams') is all but universal – and, what is more, the urge is felt so powerfully that no amount of social deterrence can contain it. Some adherents of the 'no drive' theory suggest that one only conceives of sexual feelings as 'powerful' because of the guilt which surrounds them in our society. Guilt itself, they say, is an element which makes sex exciting. Some people doubtless find it so, but for my own part, as a schoolboy, I recall sexual guilt as a matter of utter misery, not of excitement.

It has already been copiously established above that children are *capable* of sexual activity at all ages. It is also reasonably certain that a large percentage of boys, if not girls, become sexually *active* well before puberty, even in societies where this is severely discouraged. A study published in 1943 by G.V. Ramsey,<sup>30</sup> an associate of Kinsey, was based on interviews with 291 boys, mostly white, middle-class Protestants, in the American Mid-West. Five per cent of Ramsey's boys reported masturbation by age five. The figure rose to over 20 per cent by age nine, 60 per cent by eleven and 80 per cent by thirteen.<sup>31</sup>

The figures do not tell us how much of this masturbation was merely occasional and of only peripheral interest to each boy, or how much was part of an habitual and compulsive pattern of behaviour. But bearing in mind that they were growing up in a culture in which a massive degree of shame attached to masturbation, it would seem reasonable to infer that many of these boys must have felt a great urge to masturbate, a compelling temptation, in order to do it at all. That a majority should have done so by the pre-pubertal (for nearly all boys) age of eleven, despite every attempt to deter them, is in my view testimony to the fact that many pre-pubertal boys have a high level of libido.<sup>32</sup>

The study of sex offenders by Gebhard *et al.* acknowledged the strong sexual inclinations of boys in the 12-15 age group, a group which could be expected to include, at the lower end, a high proportion who had not reached puberty. The study said that these boys exhibit 'an intensity of response matching or frequently surpassing that of an adult. This fact is well known to many homosexual adults who are thereby subjected to temptation that the heterosexual adult is largely spared.'<sup>33</sup> If twelve- to fifteen-year-old girls had as developed libidos as boys of the same age, our penal institutions would burst at the seams.'<sup>34</sup>

The development of sexual behaviour in girls, like that of grown women, appears to be far more susceptible to cultural factors than that of boys. Women, as remarked earlier, can much more easily than men go through the whole of their life without discovering their capacity for orgasm; but once having discovered that capacity, and enjoyed it, a psychological basis is established for wanting to continue the pleasure.

Just as this happens to a proportion of women, in their marital and other relationships, so it also happens to some girls before puberty. A small proportion, in our society, of course: but there is evidence, in the 'victim' studies, that of those who

become involved in sex with adults, a substantial proportion play an active, positive role, even though most of the studies are based on cases brought before the courts, and are heavily biased towards including a high proportion of genuine child molestation as opposed to consensual child-adult sexual activity.

The participation of the child is not always entirely attributable to a strong sex drive on its part, but it is nonetheless interesting that Schultz, collating the results of various research, was able to point out:

'In past sexual research, young female victims were described as having a "collaborative" role in the offence in 7.8 per cent of 330 offences (Gagnon), as "non-objecting" in 40 per cent of 1,994 offences (Radzinowicz), as "encouraging" to the offender in from 66 per cent to 95 per cent of all sex offences (Gebhard), as fully "participating" in 60 per cent of 73 cases (Weiss) and as "seducers" in 21 per cent of 185 offences (Glueck).'

<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately some of these studies do not separate out younger children from older ones. The Gebhard one does, and there is also a breakdown by sex: his study considered 'children' of either sex, under twelve, and 'minors' aged 12-15. Offences which involved physical aggression by the adult, and cases of incest, were considered separately. The offenders concerned were all male. Regarding children under twelve, Gebhard found that 'according to record', 16.4 per cent of girls had encouraged the offender, and a further 8.2 per cent had been passive. 'According to offender', 48.4 per cent had been encouraging and 36.9 per cent passive. Among boys under twelve, according to the record, no less than 52.3 per cent had been encouraging, with 6.8 per cent passive. According to offender, these figures were 60.5 and 26.3 per cent respectively.

I realise that, where girls are concerned, there are those who will think it far more significant that, according to the record, 83.6 percent (100 per cent less 16.4 per cent) had *not* encouraged the offender, i.e. they were molested. I can only emphasize that it is not my intention to pretend that child molestation does not exist, nor to suggest that it is an unimportant problem: I simply want to establish that molestation does not account for *all* child-adult sexual relations *even* when the child is quite young and *even* when the study in question has an inbuilt methodological bias towards producing figures which make the proportion of molestations look artificially high.

The figures for 'encouragement' rise enormously in relation to minors of both sexes aged 12-15. According to record, 86 per cent of girls were encouraging, and 0.9 per cent passive; for boys the figures were 70.3 per cent and 11.0 per cent. The figures according to offender were of course higher still, at 89.5 per cent encouraging and 3.5 per cent passive for girls, and at 82.8 encouraging and 9.3 passive for boys.

While it appears that there *is* a distinction to be made between the levels of participation of younger compared with older children, it is also clear that the extent of participation by younger children, even according to 'the record' – which may be just as biased as what the offender has to say – is not minimal or insignificant. A judge, who has made a special study of the subject, has said as much. Judge David Reifen, of Tel Aviv, has said that'. . . sexual play, at pre-puberty and puberty age, particularly if not involving genuine sexual intercourse, is a source of attraction and satisfaction to many. For these reasons child victims of sexual offences often continue to participate and influence their friends to do likewise.'<sup>36</sup> Even a Home Office research report has recently given an important measure of official recognition to the fact that children over ten (this being the age of criminal responsibility: no attempt was made to assess consent in younger children) can and do consent in sexual acts with adults. The report refers to child 'partners' in such sexual acts, rather than 'victims'.<sup>37</sup>

In the latter part of this chapter I have had a lot to say not just about the fact that children *can* respond sexually, but also on the question of whether *many* of them feel strong sexual inclinations, especially towards adults. There are those for whom this question will be of overriding importance. They will suggest that if it cannot be shown that *most* young children have a burning and frustrated desire for sex with an adult, then there is no point in liberating children in order to make it a possibility. They would rather maintain the present emphasis in social and legal policy on 'protecting' children from the sometimes unwanted attentions of adults who undoubtedly have burning – and often frustrated – inclinations towards them.

What I hope I have shown is that children of all ages are capable of orgasm, and that in sexually free cultures they express themselves sexually. *Some* young children, a substantial minority of those involved in discovered sex offences against them (indeed, a majority in some categories), encourage the adult in question, despite the taboo nature of the act. While I agree that children who do not want to be involved should not be pressured into sex, I see no reason why their freedom to be uninvolved should not quite happily co-exist with the sexual liberation of others.

There are many aspects to the sexual freedom of children, including the freedom of access to their own bodies in masturbation, freedom to engage in sex with their peers, and freedom to have sex with adults. These freedoms are to a great extent bound up with each other. The kind of society which has a total taboo on child-adult sex is also likely to be anti-sexual in other ways, particularly in frowning on children's sexuality. Children's impressions of sexual prohibition in their early upbringing have a profound effect on their attitudes, and in my judgement the effect is a negative one for *all* children, not just for those who happen to be highly interested in sex with adults. Later chapters expand on this idea. First, however, it is necessary to examine some of the prevailing conceptions of what child-adult sex is all about, in particular the supposed dichotomy between two opposed parties – between 'the molester' and his 'victim'.

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## Ch 2 - Notes and References

1. Quoted by Lindy Burton in *Vulnerable Children*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1968, p.91. ^

2. There is the further problem that genital arousal may occur as an involuntary reflex, without conscious pleasure-seeking on behalf of the child: male children often have an erection at the moment of their birth, and a wide range of stimuli – such as the rhythmic movement of a train – can induce an unsought genital response, which may or may not be experienced as sufficiently pleasurable for the child to attempt to reproduce the feeling by self-stimulation. I believe it is meaningful to talk about a child's 'sexual behaviour' in relation to genital pleasure-seeking via masturbation, and that it is reasonable to infer from certain behaviour (e.g. rhythmic, repeated stimulation of the genitals) that such pleasure-seeking is in fact present. This pleasure-seeking usually has a social dimension, which is well developed in adulthood: generally speaking, there is a desire to be sexually involved with another person, and even solitary masturbation tends to be stimulated by fantasies of sex with someone, or by the attraction of another's body.

It may be felt that in talking about 'childhood sexuality', there is a danger of falsely imputing to children a set of clearly formed socio-sexual desires and expectations, when in fact these cannot exist prior to having gained some knowledge, through experience, that specific forms of sexual contact with other people (digital stimulation, penetration, etc.) are possible and could be pleasant. Freud himself falls



into the trap: in speaking of an infant boy's desire to sexually possess his mother, he positively invites a literal interpretation, as though the child were aware of the possibility of penetration and consciously desired it. On the other hand, it should be realised that from very early in life children can come to enjoy socio-sexual experiences, if they have access to them, and having had such access, they need no longer be strangers to many of the meanings that such experiences have for adults: in particular, just like adults, children who have experienced a pleasurable socio-sexual act are capable of anticipating pleasure in a future occurrence, and may fantasise it, or seek a repetition. Nor need such contacts be merely a matter of genital gratification. Children are aware right from the kisses and cuddles they receive in infancy that the body is the most potent of all media for the expression of affection, of love. <sup>^</sup>

3. A. Kinsey *et al.*, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*, Saunders, Philadelphia, 1948; *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female*, Saunders, Philadelphia, 1953. The Kinsey reports were the subject of a great deal of emotionally charged debate at the time of their publication, and much was written contesting the validity of the statistical data advanced in them. I myself place no absolute reliance on the data – it will be seen later in this chapter that I quote from a study by Ramsey, which gives higher, and I believe more valid, figures than Kinsey's for boys' pre-adolescent masturbation – but it is worth noting that in the long run the reports have earned themselves widespread acceptance as an important (though not definitive) source. <sup>^</sup>

4. Kinsey, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*, *op. cit.*, p. 177. <sup>^</sup>

5. B. Malinowski, *The Sexual Life of Savages in North West Melanesia*, Halcyon House, New York, 1929. <sup>^</sup>

6. *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female*, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-5. <sup>^</sup>

7. *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*, *op. cit.*, p. 178. <sup>^</sup>

8. *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female*, *op. cit.*, p. 116. <sup>^</sup>

9. *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*, *op. cit.*, p. 179. <sup>^</sup>

10. Clellan S. Ford and Frank A. Beach, *Patterns of Sexual Behaviour*, Harper & Row, New York, 1951, pp.201-2. <sup>^</sup>

11. B. Malinowski, *The Sexual Life of Savages in North West Melanesia*, Halcyon House, New York, 1929. <sup>^</sup>

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-9. <sup>^</sup>

13. Ford and Beach, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-4. <sup>^</sup>

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40. <sup>^</sup>

15. A detailed and humorously related account of several disaster-strewn attempts to shed his virginity (embarrassments and failures being caused simply by the sexual ignorance of either partner) is given by one man in. Money and P. Tucker, *Sexual Signatures*, Little Brown, Boston, 1975, pp. 210-13. <sup>^</sup>

16. C. M. Johnston and R.W. Deisher, 'Contemporary communal child rearing: a first analysis', *Paediatrics*, Vol.52, No.3, 1973, pp. 319-26. <sup>^</sup>

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 324-5. <sup>^</sup>

18. *Ibid.*, p. 326. <sup>^</sup>

19. Bermant and J.M. Davidson, *Biological Bases of Sexual Behaviour*, Harper &

Row, New York, 1974, Chapters 5 and 8. [^](#)

20. Kinsey, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*, op. cit., p. 195. [^](#)

21. A. Moll, *The Sexual Lift of the Child*, Macmillan, London, 1912, p. 134. Moll describes the case of a boy of seven who felt a passion for adult men, especially soldiers. [^](#)

22. L. Bender and A. Blau, 'The reaction of children to sexual relations with adults', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol.7, 1937, pp. 500-18. [^](#)

23. *Ibid.*, p.503. [^](#)

24. I believe Bender and Blau meant simply that he was introduced to anal intercourse. There is no suggestion, nor ought there to be, that this experience would determine his future sexual orientation. See Chapter 3. [^](#)

25. Bender and Blau, op. cit., pp. 509-10. [^](#)

26. J. Weiss *et al.*, 'A study of girl sex victims', *Psychiatric Quarterly*, Vol.29, 1955, pp. 1-27. [^](#)

27. *Ibid.*, p.7. [^](#)

28. Wilhelm Stekel, in his *Patterns of Psychosexual Infantilism*, Liveright, New York, 1952, objected to this term on the grounds that the word 'perverse' could not properly be used in connection with a normal attribute. He preferred the word 'panerotic', which certainly has a less pejorative ring to it. [^](#)

29. Lindy Burton, *Vulnerable Children*, op. cit. [^](#)

30. G.V. Ramsey, 'The sexual development of boys', *American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 56, 1943, pp. 217-33. [^](#)

31. Kinsey's own study yielded much lower figures, but these were based on interviews with adults recalling their childhood and, as Kinsey himself suggested, memories may have faltered. [^](#)

32. Paul Gebhard *et al.*, *Sex Offenders: An Analysis of Types*, Harper-Hoeber, New York, 1965. [^](#)

33. The Gerhard study was of male adults only. [^](#)

34. Gerhard *et al.*, op. cit., p. 299. [^](#)

35. Leroy Schultz, 'Psychotherapeutic and legal approaches to the sexually victimized child', *International Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, Vol. 1, No.4, 1972, pp. 115-28. [^](#)

36. Quoted in Burton, op. cit. Reifen's proposals for dealing with offences that come before the courts are considered in detail in Chapter 6. [^](#)

37. R. Walmsley and K. White, *Sexual Offences, Consent and Sentencing*, Home Office Research Study No. 54, HMSO, London, 1979, Chapter 2. [^](#)

## Chapter 3

# The 'Molester' and His 'Victim'

It is sometimes pointed out that behaviour which adults call 'sexual' may not have the same meaning for the child. The infant who plays with his genitals may be doing exactly that – playing – and even if this play is taken to orgasm, the 'nice feeling' involved may not be invested with the same significance it would have for an adult.<sup>1</sup> People are accordingly sceptical about the phenomenon of the 'seductive' child. Might not the 'sexual' behaviour of such a child be unwitting?

Take, for instance, the little girl who will happily smile at and chatter to a 'nice man', and will sit across his knee with her legs apart. If the man is susceptible to paedophilic feelings, he may be tempted to see this as 'seductive' behaviour, when the child in fact may be quite unaware of the way he is interpreting events – she may be exhibiting, in the traditional sense, all the 'innocence' of childhood (even though, quite independently, she may also be highly sexed and know how to give herself an orgasm).

The usual assumption is that this potential for misunderstanding is bound to be a bad thing, but this is not necessarily so. Typically, in the formation of a paedophilic attachment, as in those between adults, the actual behaviour of either party develops not precipitately, but step by step: each stage is 'negotiated' by hints and signals, verbal and non-verbal, by which each indicates to the other what is acceptable and what is not.

In our example, the man might start by saying what pretty knickers the girl was wearing, and he would be far more likely to proceed to the next stage of negotiation if she seemed pleased by the remark than if she coloured up and closed her legs. Despite 'being wrong' about her intentional sexual seductiveness, he might never-the-less be right in gradually discovering that the child is one who likes to be cuddled and who thinks it great fun to be tickled under her knickers.

In addition, it should be remembered that even though the child's 'sexual' behaviour may not have been sexually motivated, this does not mean that she is totally unaware of her power to attract, which she may well use deliberately to gain attention and affection. The various 'participant victim' studies reveal that children in this category are, typically, affection-seeking. In the bodily closeness of a caressing and touching relationship, it is exactly this sought-after affection that the paedophile provides.

Nevertheless, as I say, the potential for a mismatching of sexual 'meanings' is usually cited as an argument against paedophilia, and indeed against viewing children as sexual beings at all; there are those who feel that any admission of their sexuality is likely to give encouragement to those who might leap to wrong conclusions. That there are men – particularly men – in our society who are presumptuous in matters of sex is all too obvious: nearly every woman is familiar with having to run an uncomfortable gauntlet of male presumptions, from wolf-whistling and 'flashing' to bum smacking and, for an unfortunate few, rape. As feminists have pointed out, some of this behaviour may spring not just from false presumptions as to what is acceptable to women, but from utter indifference to what is acceptable, or even from outright hostility.

At any rate, the fact is that we do live in a sexist society. Men are encouraged by their social and sexual upbringing towards exactly the attitudes of arrogant, aggressive, flesh-consumerism of which they stand accused. What's more, in

accordance with what might be expected in such a society, it is a plain fact that some children are aggressively molested.

What I hope to show, however, is that there is much in consensual paedophilia, as opposed to child molesting, that presupposes a gentle, almost feminine type of sexual expression, rather than one which conforms to the masculine stereotype of dominance and aggression. Many people do not realise that there are consensual paedophilic acts, precisely because society makes no distinction between these acts and aggressively imposed ones. This absurdity is reflected in the legal phrase 'indecent assault', which covers not only cases of assault in the usual sense of that word, but acts which the child agreed to and perhaps, as is often the case, initiated.

The vast majority of sexual acts between children and adults are not aggressively imposed, any more than are those between adults, D. J. West had this to say about paedophiles:

'Far from being unrestrained sex maniacs their approaches to children are almost always affectionate and gentle, and the sex acts which occur, mostly mutual display and fondling, resemble the sexual behaviour that goes on between children.'<sup>2</sup>

In one of the best known medical texts on paedophilia, *Paedophilia and Exhibitionism: A Handbook* by J.W. Mohr, R.E. Turner and M.B. Jerry, some figures are given which put the question of forcible sex in perspective:

'In regard to forcible sexual intercourse with children, some incidental, but little statistical material is available. Revitch *et al.* (1962), reporting on paedophilic offences in the New Jersey State Diagnostic Center, noted that "these offences are comparatively infrequent although they have been recorded in the literature". This would suggest that they did not find such a case among the 836 offenders against children at the Center. Miriam Darwin in the survey of seventy-four child victims in the California study was unable to show a case in which violence was used.'

A separate paper by Mohr and Turner<sup>3</sup> attempts to prick the bubble of paranoia which the subject evokes:

'Occurrences of paedophilia – literally, love of children – arouse the strongest public sentiments, at least in our society. Despite half a century of Freudian indoctrination about infantile sexuality and despite changes of attitude concerning most other sexual deviations, abhorrence and fear of paedophilia have not decreased. Through parents and schools and other community groups children are constantly warned to look out for "The Stranger" and to distrust anybody they do not know. Unfortunately the picture presented usually does not fit the facts of most cases and therefore affords little protection to the child. The danger of creating paranoid and xenophobic (fear of strangers) attitudes can be more damaging to child-rearing in general than paedophilic occurrences.

'It would seem sensible to warn a child not to accept rides from strangers, but the facts are that strangers are rarely involved in paedophilic acts; usually those involved are relatives, neighbours or others in the known environment of the child.'

The extensive publicity given to sexual murders of children, though understandable, is responsible for a totally false stereotype of the paedophile in the

public imagination. It is often 'the picture of an unsuspecting child being attacked in a dark lane by an assailant who, but for some chance incident, would have proceeded to rape or even murder. Although repeated researches (see Radzinowicz, 1957) have shown with great consistency that sexual offenders tend to keep to one particular type of sexual behaviour, often of a very partial kind, and very rarely gravitate to more serious types, this fact is strongly resisted by even the informed public. The rare exceptions receive great publicity, and in a population of fifty million even a rare event occurs somewhere every month or so. Such stereotypes profoundly affect the attitude of parents.'<sup>4</sup>

In later chapters I consider more subtle aspects of the question of aggression – the point at which it merges, for instance, with undue persuasion based on the authority of the adult. Let us for the moment consider the type of sexual activity preferred by paedophiles. In the most comprehensive study so far made of male sex offenders, Paul Gebhard<sup>5</sup> produced figures for the proportions of various sexual techniques employed in the 'offences'. (It should always be borne in mind, as stated earlier, that these findings, like so many research data, are based on offences which have resulted in a conviction, and are thereby heavily biased towards relationships which gave rise to complaint by the child.)

He found that non-coital sexual activity, mostly manipulation of the genitals, accounted for no less than 94 per cent of offences against girls under twelve. In offences against boys under twelve, an even larger proportion, 97 per cent did not involve anal intercourse, most of the activity being manual-genital (45 per cent) and oral-genital (38 per cent). Gebhard listed separately those offences in which there had been aggression against girls, a smaller, but significantly different group; in these cases, where a degree of violence or intimidation had been used, coitus was attempted in 23 per cent of cases, and was actually completed in a further 23 per cent. Interestingly, there were so few examples of aggression against young boys that Gebhard felt it unnecessary to include them as a separate category.

Paedophiles are for the most part interested in older children. A survey among members of the Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE) showed that male paedophiles tend to be most attracted to boys aged 11 – 15, and to girls aged 8-11. This corresponds closely to findings by Mohr, Turner and Jerry and other researchers. Very few paedophiles are attracted to babies or infants, and although there is some interest (expressed as a minimum age of interest) in those aged five or six,<sup>6</sup> the preferred age appears to be considerably older.

For those who feel that consensual sex is a harmless and pleasant activity, the question of age is irrelevant but a study of the facts does give rise to at least one interesting point, spotted by Keith Hose, who prepared a survey of the membership of the Paedophile Information Exchange. He noticed a correlation between the distribution of age preference of paedophiles for boys, and a histogram prepared by Kinsey, showing the percentage of males involved in sex play at each pre-adolescent age. The distribution bore a close resemblance, so that it appears – if British boys are anything like those in the United States – that paedophiles are most attracted to boys at the age when they are most sexually active.

As Hose put it:

'It could be inferred that it is the interest in sexual activity in the child which initiates an attraction in the paedophile.'

The same could well be true for heterosexual male paedophiles: their interest is in slightly younger children – and the pre-adolescent sexual activity of girls tends to be concentrated, according to Kinsey, in a lower age range than pertains to boys.<sup>7</sup>

So far, I have related facts largely about the *overall* known pattern of sexual acts between adults and children. Within this pattern, there is a crucial distinction to be made between those adults who actually prefer children as sexual partners and those who do not. There is reason to believe that, characteristically, the aggressive, 'sexist' use of girls as sex objects is attributable very largely to men with a predominantly ordinary, adult heterosexual orientation. These offenders tend to have a high level of criminality in non-sexual areas. They are often drunk at the time of the offence and simply use the child as an available, though to them inferior, substitute for the adult partner they would prefer. By no means all of the non-aggressive offenders prefer children either: they include a lot of men under stress when their marriage has broken up, and drink plays a large part in their offences too – usually followed by a 'hangover' which includes intense feelings of guilt. <sup>8</sup>

I do not mean to suggest that those who have a sexual preference for children are thus automatically to be considered a better class of offender. There is no reason to suppose that anyone's sexual orientation *per se* has any intrinsic connection with her or his merit as a human being. But there is reason to suppose that many of those who prefer children want to relate well to them, in a way that does not apply to those for whom they are mere substitutes. Those who prefer children not surprisingly like to spend a lot of time in their company; they like to know them, and be friendly.

Just as 'straight' men go to considerable pains to make a good impression on their would-be sexual partners (even in our sexist society, rape is not the norm), so do many paedophiles. Finding that their sexual preference is for children, they also come to *like* and *love* them – an affectional response grows out of the erotic one. D.J. West has noted this. Writing of paedophiles he says:

'Their sincere fondness for the objects of their sexual desire sometimes leads them to quite striking acts of charity in efforts to further the child's happiness or future prospects.' <sup>9</sup>

This benevolent outlook finds confirmation in a recent study by K. Howells of a group of non-aggressive offenders against girls:

'I feel . . . that children are *likeable* to paedophiles in ways that are not purely physical; this would be consistent with the idea that the paedophilic offender may actually feel affection for his victim. Lest you feel it is self-evident that someone committing a sexual assault likes his victim, I would point out that in a previous study I found results which suggested that some rapists, for example, commit offences in states of heightened anger arousal and appear to be concerned to hurt rather than to achieve sexual gratification.' <sup>10</sup>

Which brings us to what exactly is meant when we talk of 'paedophilia' – for just as adults can misconstrue 'sexual' behaviour in children, so can non-paedophile adults misconstrue the 'sexual' intentions of paedophiles. The word itself has a medical ring to it, which is not surprising, as Krafft-Ebing coined the term 'paedophilia erotica' as part of a labelling process in which he put names to a whole range of sexual 'diseases'. For a variety of good reasons, many sexual radicals completely reject medically-derived means of categorisation, which since Krafft-Ebing's day have built up a picture of 'the homosexual' and 'the paedophile' as clinical entities: in so far as the *raison d'être* of the medical descriptions is to oppress sexual minorities (to say nothing of the crude distortion of reality that simple labels impose on complex subject matter), I agree they are to be rejected; but the descriptions are also capable of being used analytically from a positive standpoint. <sup>11</sup> <sup>11a</sup> <sup>11b</sup>

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* <sup>12</sup> defines paedophilia as 'sexual love directed towards a child'. It is interesting that the endlessly difficult word 'love' should find a niche in this definition. I am glad that it has. I find it more appealing, more related to my own sentiments than the more colourless alternative 'sexual attraction towards a child', and the inclusion of the word 'love' automatically excludes the possibility of 'paedophilia' being used in the context of 'sexual hate directed towards a child', i.e. sex based on hostility, such as that involved in the sadistic rape or murder of a child.

There is an even more appropriate definition to be found in the psychiatric literature, in which a paedophile is defined as a person who 'requires the *co-operation* of a child partner of the same or opposite sex in order to achieve sexual gratification' <sup>13</sup> (my italics). What is being described here is what David Swanson calls 'the classic paedophile', whose other predominant characteristic is that he has a consistent and often exclusive interest in children as sexual partners. <sup>14</sup>

What is meant by 'co-operation' here is that the paedophile is 'turned on' by situations in which the child is erotically active. As long ago as 1912 this was pointed out in an important and sometimes overlooked work by Moll, who wrote:

'handling the child's genitals plays the chief part, frequently because the offender can himself obtain sexual gratification only through inducing sexual excitement in the child and watching this excitement.' <sup>15</sup>

The significance of this point is, I hope, obvious. Children are far more likely to reach sexual excitement if they are relaxed and happy in the paedophile's company than if they are being intimidated. The paedophile is virtually bound to seek their confidence in order to win their co-operation. This being the case, in addition to the strong possibility that he actually likes children, he has another powerful reason for wanting to relate well to them. All in all, he will want to be liked by children, and is likely to regard them as what the sociologists call 'significant others' – ones who count. Charles McCaghy has taken up this point:

'In symbolic interactionist terms, some adults see children as "significant others" whose judgements and appreciation are crucial for the adult's self concepts. Such adults would not jeopardise their self-concepts by committing acts which would detract from the child's regard for them. We suggested, therefore, that among molesters who regard children as significant others, the offence would be of a nature not likely to alienate or harm the child.' <sup>16</sup>

McCaghy goes on in this study to develop this idea: that those who see children as 'significant others' would behave towards them both socially and sexually in a more acceptable way than would some others. He tested a hypothesis that they would in fact have more social involvement with children than other offenders against them. And indeed he did find that, 'As anticipated, no high interaction molester used any form of coercion, whereas over one third of the minimal interaction subjects did so.'

It is tempting to go on adding to a picture of 'the paedophile' (though there is no such single entity) by addressing myself to a whole variety of questions, both those which are popularly asked and those to which research has been addressed. Some such questions are interesting, <sup>17 17a 17b 17c 17d 17e 17f</sup> but the most distinctive feature of those that are asked most often is that they spring from fundamentally anti-sexual anxieties. So do questions about the 'victim', a classic example being the hoary old chestnut, 'Won't seduction by a man make a boy homosexual?' The radical answer is not to point out that copious research shows otherwise (which it does), but to say 'So what if it does? What's wrong with being gay?' Only when such an answer becomes

acceptable will we be well on the way to a sexually liberated society. Only when people stop asking the question will we have achieved it.

At the same time, in relation to this particular question, I feel such a *gauche* answer is not appropriate, for I know there are otherwise intelligent, liberally-minded people whose dread of the idea that their own children might become homosexual has the force of a nightmare. As with other nightmares, the fear itself is the worst thing, in fact the only problem, though not everyone can be expected to realise that.

Let me then offer balm to the sweating brow: the weight of evidence is overwhelmingly that paedophilic seduction does not 'make boys gay' (or girls, for that matter). Perhaps, in view of its prestige, I need only quote the evidence of the Wolfenden Report:

'It is a view widely held and one which found favour among our police and legal witnesses, that seduction in youth is the decisive factor in the production of homosexuality as a condition, and we are aware that this view has done much to alarm parents and teachers. We have found no convincing evidence in support of this contention. Our medical witnesses unanimously held that seduction has little effect in producing a settled pattern. . . of homosexual behaviour, and we have been given no grounds from other sources which contradict their judgement.'<sup>18</sup>

Gagnon and Simon have pointed out that psychosexual orientation and responses are not learned in specifically sexual situations anyway, but rather through non-sexual interactions in early childhood. By around the age of six, children have already developed ideas about what is 'male' and 'female' behaviour, and what is the 'right' behavioural pattern for them.'<sup>19</sup>

More general anxieties on behalf of 'the victim', particularly the question of whether she or he will suffer psychological damage as a result of the experiences in question, are at least partly derived from the imposition of the very term 'victim' onto all child-adult sex relations, irrespective of whether they are forceful or gentle, unacceptable or acceptable to the child. The ultimate absurdity in clinging to the false distinction between 'molester' and 'victim' is to be found in a term encountered earlier, that of the 'participant victim'. Those researchers who adopted this curious term presumably felt they had to make some concession to orthodox thinking: society could not all at once be expected to understand the idea of child-adult sex in which there was no victimisation.

Perhaps because 'men' are assumed to be the victimisers, I find that women are more apt to cling to the image of the child as a victim. Yet, ironically, it is two women researchers who have done much to dispel this myth.

Lauretta Bender was one of them. Her description of a group of sexually active children<sup>20</sup> was followed up sixteen years later by a further study of the same children,<sup>21</sup> which looked into the question of whether there had been any discernible psychological damage evidenced in failure to develop a satisfactory adult life, both sexually and generally. She found no problems which she felt could reasonably be attributed to the sexual experiences. Remember seven-year-old Virginia, who had sex with a janitor? The experience neither put her off sex for life, nor made a nymphomaniac of her. She became a nurse, married at twenty-one and, in the words of the study, 'became a happy wife and mother'. What Bender does not relate, unfortunately, is whether the sense of guilt she tried to instil in Virginia about her sexual activities, during her hospital 'treatment', had any lasting effect. Did the



rebuked child become a rebuking mother, anxious to make her own children guilty about their sexuality?

The psychological effects of sexual 'assault' on children have been researched on a scientifically rigorous basis (in a way which Bender's studies never pretended to be) by Lindy Burton.<sup>22</sup> Although Burton's study included cases which could properly be called 'assaults', she is at pains to emphasise the consensuality often present in others. She studied forty-one children who had been sexually assaulted and a control group of their age-mates. Six of the forty-one were boys; thirty-five were girls. At the time of the offence the majority were under ten years old and only four were in their teens. The offender was usually a neighbour or friend of the child's parents (15), or persons known to the child but unknown to the family (17). Most often they were workmen or tradespeople whom the child had formed a habit of visiting or helping. Generally, the incident took place in the friend's home, or place of employment, or in the child's own home.

Burton used two measures of personality adjustment with these children, one being the Bristol Social Adjustment Scale, which pinpoints the child's tendencies to emotional unsettledness, as recorded by a teacher at school. The other was the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), a standard personality test used by psychologists. This test involved the child in making up stories about a set of pictures. From the themes of these stories psychologists consider it possible to learn something of the child's fears, needs and emotions. All the children were seen twice, with a year's interval between testings. The first test took place on average two years after the assault.

As a result of these tests, Burton was able to detect distinct personality characteristics which set the 'assaulted' children apart from their age-mates:

'Perhaps the most significant single characteristic of sexually assaulted children is their tendency to seek affection. The characteristic was noted by teachers (who did not know of their sexual experience) on both year's testings. The most frequent comment regarding their behaviour was that they tended to sidle up to and hang around the teacher. In addition they were described as very anxious to bring objects to the teacher, always finding excuses for engaging him, very anxious to be in with the gang, trying to become the centre of attention, and tending to flashy dressing.'<sup>23</sup>

While she suggests the possibility that the affection-seeking may represent a need to cling to familiar adults following an unsettling experience, Burton also recognises a totally different alternative (which is supported, as she says, by other studies)<sup>24</sup> that children who need affection meet their sexual experiences in the course of their search for it. Burton even concedes that a further possibility cannot be ignored:

'The affection seeking behaviour observed in this study might also indicate an attempt on the part of the child to replace the adult with whom he had a sexual relationship. As many previous studies have suggested, children do not always view the sexual act as distasteful and many children may gain considerable comfort from thinking themselves loved and wanted by an adult. For this reason, the child's resentment of the figures of authority, observed in the classroom,<sup>25</sup> may stem from his dislike of all those who might possibly have condemned his relationship with his "friend".'

Burton's work was not designed to test the motive behind affection-seeking behaviour, however; so far as her study is concerned, the above comments are only speculations. More important is her overall conclusion, that

'The sexual assault does not appear to have an excessively unsettling effect on the child's personality development, as seen in his behaviour. One is forced to the conclusion therefore that subject children have suffered little lasting fear or anxiety as a result of their sexual experience.'

Interestingly enough, some studies have indicated <sup>26</sup> that those children who appear to make the quickest 'recovery' from sexual 'assault', are not the 'participant victims' but the 'accidental' ones: the minority who are molested in the true sense, in public parks, playgrounds and so on. Yet the paradox is easily explained. The 'accidental' victim is likely to receive a great deal of parental sympathy and support in relation to the incident. On the other hand, the child who is 'found out' having a relationship with an adult is likely to be made to feel guilty about it – especially by parents struggling to repress any unwelcome thoughts that their own inadequacies (especially in failing to give their child affection) could be responsible for the relationship developing in the first place. The issue is complicated slightly by the fact that some 'participant victims' come from homes which show no sensitivity at all to the prevailing sexual mores of society. Such homes are over-represented in Bender's studies, and perhaps in Burton's too, to a lesser degree, so we should not be too surprised at Burton's comment that 'As a group, these sexually assaulted children . . . showed no inordinate amount of guilt or anxiety following the affair. . .

The real disturbance may be much greater, however, in cases where the parents are very strong on 'morals', but not so good at being warm and loving towards their children.

Typically, the harm begins to make itself felt in the often hysterical initial reaction of the parents. Father Michael Ingram, a Roman Catholic priest and child counsellor, has described the process in all its misery, from the moment of parental discovery to the retribution exacted by the courts: <sup>27</sup>

'Take the case of an eleven-year-old boy whose parents overheard him tell his brother about a man who was "having sex" with him. There was a family scene, mother crying, father pacing up and down and vowing he would "kill the bastard". The police were called in. The boy was interrogated over and over again by both parents and police. The boy was taken to the police station where he was told to lower his trousers. A doctor examined his penis, retracting the foreskin. The boy was made to bend down while the doctor put a lubricated rubber sheath on his finger which he inserted into the boy's rectum. The man was charged, denied it, and the boy was examined by the magistrates. The man was remanded on bail, so in order to prevent the boy meeting him again, he was sent to stay with relatives in Ireland until the trial three months later.

'What seems to have happened was that the boy was rather deprived of affection from his parents who were cold and undemonstrative. He had often allowed the man to cuddle him, and this sometimes led to the man feeling him inside his trousers. If one can make a strong attempt to master the disgust this might evoke, and consider the possible damage done to the boy by being starved of

love at home, by enduring the anger, fearful interrogation, and most of all by submitting to the formal repetition by the doctor of the acts which were causing all the trouble, one can see that the offender was the last one from whom the boy needed protection. As a psychiatrist involved in the case put it, "If he hadn't been buggered by the man, he certainly had been by the doctor."<sup>28</sup>

Ingram continues:

"The offender in this case was sent to prison, where he pretended to be there for larceny. He was put in the ordinary wing. His secret was discovered and he was beaten up, suffering severe injuries. He lost his job, was cut off from his family and his voluntary social work. He had done a great deal for his local community, especially for the children, and all this was forgotten. At the age of twenty-six he was a ruined man because he showed too much love for a little boy.

'Nine years later the boy is now twenty, cold, repressed, afraid of sex, isolated and friendless, depending on anti-depressants to make his moods tolerable.'

Readers may remember for themselves the 1977 case of a woman teacher tried at Lewes Crown Court for an alleged case of sexual intercourse with an eleven-year-old boy pupil. She was acquitted, so we must presume that actual sex did not take place, notwithstanding the boy's evidence that it did. Nevertheless there was plainly a loving relationship between the two – love letters and endearments were exchanged, and the child showed every sign of experiencing this relationship as a positive thing.

All that very rapidly changed with the involvement of the law. The boy's father, as chance would have it, was a policeman. When he discovered the relationship, by accident, not by the boy's complaint, he felt that his son must be made to give evidence against the woman, in the public interest. As a result the boy had to go through the full routine of police questioning his father admitted grilling him as he would any other witness – and had to wait nine months or so for the case to come to trial. By which time he could well have got over the supposed horrors of the loving relationship. He might even have got over the initial questioning, but instead he had to suffer the whole affair being brought back under the spotlight. He had to stand up in the witness box, with a packed press gallery eager to record every detail, and – perhaps worst of all – had to face a necessarily intimidatory defence barrister whose task it was to make every effort to confuse him and make him out to be a liar.

Not surprisingly, the strain was too much for him. He broke down in tears more than once in the witness box, only to be called inexorably back to face his tormentors. And all this in the name of protecting the child! In the end the case was lost by the prosecution, and all that had been achieved was the public branding of the boy as a liar, and the embarrassment of an apparently kind and loving lady who was made to look a fool or worse.

With a kind of symbolic idiocy that completely sums up this asinine approach to child 'protection', the father declared after the verdict that his own course of action had been the right one and that 'I would make my boy go through it all again.' For what, one wonders?<sup>29</sup>

Not all those involved in the prosecution process are that dogmatic, thank goodness. In a letter to *The Times*,<sup>30</sup> a police surgeon of twenty-five years' standing echoed Ingram's feelings by pronouncing that legal proceedings in most paedophilic cases do the children more harm than good – and he was honest and courageous

enough to admit that the examinations of children he had been obliged to conduct over the years contributed much towards this harm.

Such enlightenment is rare, however, and the usual lot of paedophiles and their child lovers is not a happy one once the police become involved. PIE's own evidence cites the case of a young paedophile, himself a boy of only fifteen, who was beaten up every day of his remand at Risley, near Manchester. Some prisoners cut his back with sharpened combs and the boy attempted suicide.

A homosexual counselling agency heard the following story from one of its clients, 'Jack', in the 1960s. When he was about forty, Jack had a sexual relationship with a sixteen-year-old boy. The boy was arrested in connection with another relationship and was interrogated by the police. Under pressure, he divulged the names of other men, including Jack. Subsequently, the boy committed suicide. When the police arrested Jack he was told, 'Your young friend has killed himself: it's probably the best thing he could have done.' Jack, who loved the boy, attempted suicide himself soon after, and several times since.

Even in enlightened Holland, the police have been known to pressurise children into admitting their sexual involvement with an adult, though such incidents are now much less common than they used to be. Dr Brongersma writes:

'Only three years ago in our own country, a thirteen-year-old boy was questioned from nine o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon in a small barred cell in a police station in order to extract evidence from him. He stubbornly maintained that nothing had happened, until the examiner said, "Good. If you keep on lying we will have to turn your friend loose. But your father has told me that he will waylay the fellow and kill him. Then your friend will be dead and your father will get fifteen years in the clink for murder. And all because you persist in lying." Thereupon the young boy told everything, after which he went into a total psychological collapse.'<sup>31</sup>

The situation is a good deal worse in the United States. NBC journalist Robin Lloyd has reported<sup>32</sup> that the police there have been known to go to amazing lengths in order to get youngsters to 'confess' their sexual involvement with an adult: in one case such a confession was extracted by dangling a boy by his ankles over a cliff until he talked. In such a case there is no difficulty at all in identifying the child as a 'victim' – but not a victim of a sexual relationship with an adult.<sup>33 33a 33b</sup>

Strange, isn't it, that society professes a concern for the child and obsessively keeps her/him away from adult sexuality as an expression of this concern, yet when – for whatever reasons – sexual contacts are found to have occurred, the child's real interests fly out of the window. She or he may then be harangued by parents and the police, subjected to medical examination, dragged through the courts and debarred from seeing the adult friend in question. Some concern!

A challenge has been made in this chapter to the validity of two linked concepts: that of seeing the paedophile as necessarily a molester, or would-be molester, and that of the child as being always a victim. The question of the *physical*, as opposed to psychological, ways in which a child could become a victim is considered separately in Chapter 6, in relation to PIE's proposals on the age of consent.

[\[Skip to Chapter 4 - Paedophilia in Action\]](#)...[\[Back to Contents\]](#)

## Ch 3 - Notes and References

1. See especially many of the writings of John Gagnon and William Simon, referred to in the Bibliography. [^](#)

2. D.J. West, *Homosexuality Re-examined*, Duckworth, London, 1977. [^](#)
3. J.W. Mohr and R.E. Turner, 'Sexual Deviations, Part IV: Paedophilia', *Applied Therapeutics*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1967, pp.362-5. [^](#)
4. T.C.N. Gibbens and J. Prince, *Child Victims of Sex Offences*, Institute for the Study of Delinquency, London, 1963. [^](#)
5. Gebhard, *op. cit.*, p 819. [^](#)
6. F. Bernard, 'An enquiry among a group of paedophiles', *Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 11, No.3, 1975, pp. 242-55. [^](#)
7. See Kinsey, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female*, *op. cit.*, p. 110. [^](#)
8. See Gebhard, *op. cit.* [^](#)
9. West, *op. cit.*, p. 214. [^](#)
10. K. Howells, 'Some meanings of children for paedophiles', paper presented at the International Conference on Love and Attraction, Swansea, 1977. [^](#)
11. The term 'paedophilia erotica' is almost invariably shortened in medical usage to plain 'paedophilia'. The absence of the 'erotica' part leaves a word which might be thought to suggest a non-sexual fondness for children. The word has in fact been used in this sense, though rarely. Rosemary Gordon (in Kraemer *et al.*, *The Forbidden Love*, Sheldon Press, London, 1976) speaks of 'positive paedophilia' : feelings evidenced by the tenderness and gentleness many adult human and grown animals of other species exhibit towards the young, unaccompanied by sexual approaches (though not necessarily without some degree of sexual attraction). 'Paederasty', an older but not ancient word (first recorded literary usage in seventeenth century), is unequivocally sexual, by virtue of incorporating the Greek 'erastes', meaning (sexual) lover. It has been defined, pejoratively, as 'sodomy with a boy' (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*), and thus denotes a specific *act*, rather than a predilection or orientation. The word is less in use now than of old, particularly in the last century, when it was virtually a synonym of 'sodomy', as the 'boy' in question could be a youth or even a young man. The first part of both words comes from '*pais*', meaning 'boy', but only in the case of 'paedophilia' has this first part been generalised to include children of either sex. Also, a 'paedophile', unlike a 'paederast', may be a woman. It is usually taken that only an adult can be either a 'paedophile' or a 'paederast'. Neither term applies to children who engage in sexual acts together, although the sexual attraction of adolescents to children has been designated as 'paedophilia' and Lauretta Bender (see Chapter 2) has spoken of a boy who at the age of ten was 'taught paederasty' by a thirteen-year-old. There is no word in the English language to describe a child who is sexually attracted to adults. As children are capable of a wide range of erotic response, such a word would in fact be rather meaningless. Sometimes, the attraction of adults to adolescents, as opposed to (pre-pubertal) children, is referred to by the terms 'hebephilia' or 'ephebophilia'. [^](#)
12. Sixth edition, 1976. [^](#)
13. S. Lorand and H. I. Schneer, 'Sexual deviations', in A. M. Freedman *et al.* (eds), *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore 1975. [^](#)
14. D.W. Swanson, 'Who violates children sexually?' *Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality*, February 1971, pp.184-97. Some go further and suggest that the use of the word 'paedophile' could be confined to those for whom their love impulse towards children is of great importance. There is a school of thought in Holland which holds this position. Loes Rouweler-Wutz considered that 'Paedophilia is a human condition

in which the feelings of attraction towards children, including sexual feelings, are so important to the individual involved that they determine his whole life' (from a thesis, 'Paedophiles in contact or conflict with society', Nijmegen, 1976, quoted in a paper, 'The legal status of the paedophile', by Edward Brongersma, presented to the Psychiatric-Juridical Society, Amsterdam, 1977). <sup>^</sup>

15. A. Moll, op. cit., p.224. <sup>^</sup>

16. C.H. McCaghy, 'Child molesters: a study of their careers as deviants', in M.B. Clinard and R. Quinney (eds.), *Criminal Behaviour Systems*, Holt Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1967. <sup>^</sup>

17. I am often asked what proportion of the adult population is paedophilic and whether more are attracted to boys than to girls, or vice versa. The answer to either question involves definitional problems and the practical difficulty of obtaining accurate data. Is a woman a paedophile if she gets a 'buzz out of parenthood? What about those mothers who report genital arousal while breast-feeding? Or fathers who think they are conventionally heterosexual, but who find to their alarm (as sometimes happens) that cuddling a young son can bring on an erection? Do people have to be exclusively attracted to children, or self-defined as paedophilic, for the label to be appropriate? And what do we mean by a child? Do we take puberty as the upper edge of childhood, or is the word 'paedophilia' to embrace the love of pubescent youngsters as well? Finally, in view of all these ambiguities, does the labelling process itself give a false impression of separable categories of people, when in fact the differences between them may be less important than the similarities? The problem of obtaining reliable data is even more difficult. Adults can be asked about their sexual preferences by means of a confidential questionnaire. Or inferences can be drawn about the sexual tastes of those whose behaviour leads them to court appearances for paedophilic offences. Or we can be guided by the professional experience of the psychiatrists to whom paedophiles go for 'treatment'. None of these methods, or any others I have seen discussed, is at all satisfactory, for a variety of reasons. In particular, it cannot be over-emphasised that criminal statistics are misleading: a high percentage of those convicted of sexual offences involving children are not 'classic' paedophiles, i.e. they prefer an adult partner. In addition, only a small proportion of paedophiles have relationships which surface in the law courts. Of the practising paedophiles interviewed by Rossman, only 1 per cent had ever been arrested (Parker Rossman, *Sexual Experience Between Men and Boys*, p. 13). Dr Edward Brongersma has written, 'In a recently published French study, 129 men (average age 34 years) said they had had sexual contact with a total of 11,007 boys (an average of 85 different boys per man). The laws which make such contact criminal are thus in practice ineffective. This enormously high dark number shows that the law has degenerated to pure arbitrariness against a few unlucky individuals. According to the French study, only one in three thousand punishable acts comes to the knowledge of the police' (E. Brongersma, 'The legal status of the paedophile', paper presented to the Psychiatric-Juridical Society, Amsterdam, 1977). Reports from adults on sexual contacts made in their own childhood may give a reasonable guide to the extent of paedophilic activity, although they do not (because of the possibility of multiple contacts by any adult) give much idea as to the total number of paedophiles. In response to an inquiry conducted among students at Nijmegen Catholic University in Holland, 13 per cent of the boys and 18 per cent of the girls reported that, as children, they had had at least one sexual contact with an adult (reported in 'The unknown paedophile' by Edward Brongersma). Kinsey had data from 4,441 women, of whom 24 per cent reported that they had been approached while they were pre-adolescent by adult males who appeared to be making sexual

advances, or who had made sexual contacts with them. Half of these cases (.52 per cent) were of exhibitionism by the adult, and less than a quarter (22 percent) resulted in specifically genital contact with the child. At the University of California, 30 per cent of the male and 35 percent of the female students reported having had, as children, sexual relations with adults (J. Landis, 'Experience of 500 children with adult sexual deviation'). Parker Rossman (op. cit., p. 12) estimated that there are at least a million American men who since age 21 have been involved in one or more sex acts with young teen-age boys' and he added 'There are at least another half million males over age 21 in the United States who value sex play with boys and believe it should not be against the law, and who will on one or more occasions in the future be involved with teen-age boys in illegal sex acts.' He does not, however, state how these figures have been derived. The criminal statistics for England and Wales do not make any distinction between adult and child victims' for the offence of indecent assault, but the recent Home Office Research Unit study by R. Walmsley and K. White (*Sexual Offences, Consent and Sentencing*, Home Office Research Study No.54, HMSO, London, 1979, pp.30-32) found that in the year under study (1973) 88 per cent of male partners/ victims and about 70 per cent of female partners/victims in cases of indecent assault were under sixteen. In this year, 802 persons (8 of them female) were convicted of indecent assault on a male, and 3,006 (6 of them female) were convicted of indecent assault on a female. Also in 1973 (ibid., pp. 26-9), 640 males were convicted of unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged 13, 14 or 15, and 121 males were convicted of unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged under thirteen. 135 males were convicted of buggery with a boy under sixteen. <sup>^</sup>

18. *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution*, Cmnd. 247, HMSO, 1957. <sup>^</sup>

19. W. Simon and J.H. Gagnon, 'On psychosexual development', in D. Goslin (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research in Socialization*, Rand McNally, Chicago, 1969. Anyone still in doubt should consult the following works listed in the Bibliography: Landis; Tolsma; West; the Speijer Report; Rainer *et al.*; Money and Tucker. <sup>^</sup>

20. L. Bender and A. Blau, op. cit. <sup>^</sup>

21. L. Bender and A.L. Grugett, 'A follow-up report on children who had atypical sexual experience', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol.22, 1952, pp.825-37. <sup>^</sup>

22. L. Burton, *Vulnerable Children*, op. cit. <sup>^</sup>

23. L. Burton, 'The assaulted child', *New Society*, 20 May, 1965, pp. 17-19. <sup>^</sup>

24. See especially M. Ingram, 'A study of 92 cases of sexual contact between adult and child', *British Journal of Sexual Medicine*, Vol. 6, No.44, January 1979, p. 22f (Part 1), and Vol. 6, No.45, February 1979, p. 24f (Part 2). <sup>^</sup>

25. Presumably this Comment is intended to refer only to a *minority* who resent authority – such resentment would appear to be incompatible with the tendency to 'sidle up to' the teacher, noted above. <sup>^</sup>

26. Results in any case need to be interpreted with caution. A Californian study reported in Mohr *et al.*, op. cit., reported more disturbance among participant victims – but already 'disturbed' (possibly neglected) children may be more prone to seek out a relationship. <sup>^</sup>

27. Michael Ingram, 'FILTHY: Reaction to paedophilic acts', *Libertarian Education*, No.21, 1977, pp.4-5. <sup>^</sup>

28. I think Ingram's point is not so much that the doctor's, 'buggery' was awful as an act, but that in the circumstances it was necessarily carried out formally, with cold, clinical indifference to the boy's feelings. While anal intercourse can itself be experienced as pleasant, within a loving relationship, a doctor's examination is scarcely likely to be so. <sup>^</sup>

29. Reported in a front-page lead story, *News of the World*, 4 September, 1977. <sup>^</sup>

30. Letter from Dr A.P. McEldowney, *The Times*, 16 February, 1978. <sup>^</sup>

31. E. Brongersma, 'The legal status of the paedophile', paper presented to the Psychiatric Juridical Society, Amsterdam, 1977. <sup>^</sup>

32. Robin Lloyd, *Playland: A Study of Boy Prostitution*, Blond & Briggs, London, 1977 (originally published as *For Money or Love*, Vanguard Press, New York, 1976). <sup>^</sup>

33. At the Old Bailey, in 1979, a defendant, Roger Moody, was acquitted of a charge of attempted buggery on a ten-year-old boy, on the directions of the judge, after it emerged that improper police questioning of the boy had yielded an unsound statement by the youngster. A further charge of indecent assault on the same boy was thrown out by the jury after only a fifteen-minute retirement. Both charges related to one alleged incident when the boy was sleeping on an adjacent mattress to the man during a holiday. The most important single feature of the proceedings was the testimony of the young 'victim' in court that he had not made a complaint against the man, but merely accepted the allegations as a possibility, when put to him by the police eighteen months after the 'offence', and then without a parent being present, as required by the proper procedure for questioning children of that age. In other words – so the jury must have accepted – the police had got him to state that a crime with a maximum sentence of life imprisonment had been attempted, and that one carrying a maximum of ten years' prison had actually taken place, even though he eventually accepted in court that whatever he thought had touched him might have been a hand, and it might have been accidental, and it was as he was just waking up anyway. . Interestingly, Roger Moody had freely admitted to being a paedophile and that he had a great deal of affection for the boy. The fact that, in the full knowledge of this, both judge and jury were unhesitatingly in favour of acquittal, amounts to a massive indictment of police handling of the case. (Case reported in *Peace News*, 6 April, 1979.) <sup>^</sup>



## Chapter 4

# Paedophilia in Action

Having despatched some of the cruder myths about 'molesters' and 'victims', it should now be possible to consider some actual paedophile relationships without their further intrusion. I should explain that I feel on much stronger ground in describing and selecting anecdotes relating to those between men and boys than others. Nearly all of my paedophilic friends are boy lovers, and although I myself have a strong sexual attraction to little girls, as well as boys, the practice of heterosexual paedophiles is not a field in which I can claim more expert knowledge than non-paedophilic writers on the subject. The distinction is in fact of considerable importance in our culture: sex-role stereotyping is such that, even by the age of eight or nine, many girls have already taken on board the idea that their role in life is to please men, and the validity of any consent they may give is by the same token more questionable than that of boys, who are under no such compunction; in fact, their conditioning against being 'sissy' or 'poof' or 'queer' is so strong that it might be thought amazing that any of them become voluntarily involved. Yet they do, and this argues strongly in favour of paedophilic relationships having a powerful pull for them.

In the last chapter various 'victim' studies were mentioned. In this one I would like to introduce a different approach. Dr Frits Bernard, a Dutch psychologist who has written many papers and books on paedophilia, took the obvious, but surprisingly unexplored, step of investigating the stories of adults who had themselves been the younger partner in a paedophile relationship when they themselves were children. His paper describing the results of his work was presented at the British Psychological Society's ill-fated Conference on Love and Attraction at Swansea in 1977. A great deal of press attention was devoted to that conference, partly on account of my own ejection from it (see Chapter 12). All the papers on paedophilia and child sexuality – including that of Dr Bernard – were presented in secret session, the adult public apparently being deemed not mature enough to cope with the truth about the sex life of its own children.

However, I can now, as they say, 'reveal all'. And I believe the results justify the word 'revelation'. Dr Bernard's subjects, aged between twenty-two and seventy, were from all strata of the population of Holland; they had different social levels and professions and came from a number of the country's provinces. Each subject, in addition to completing standard personality tests, which had still to be subjected to statistical analysis at the time of writing (the project is continuing), were asked to write their life story, with particular reference to the part played by sex with an adult. Extracts from ten such biographies have been published, <sup>1</sup> most of them said to be characteristic of a wider group of subjects. The following is the story of a twenty-three-year-old man, now heterosexual, and his account is said by Dr Bernard to represent a widely held view among other subjects:

'I was about thirteen when I first had anything to do with paedophilia. I had never heard the word or even of homosexuality because my sexual education, as far as my parents were concerned, was very neglected. The man who brought me into touch with homosexuality and whom I even loved physically was, and still is, one of my dearest friends. I remember vaguely how he satisfied me for the first time and what a wonderful feeling it was. I was not bothered in the least by the idea of doing anything wrong; probably because I had

no idea what actually happened. A few months later he tried to explain things but it was still a year later after that before I understood properly.

'On the whole, I thought that the situation was a bit sad for him for he wouldn't be able to keep me as an intimate friend so, on second thoughts and perhaps a bit emotionally, I made it as much fun for him as possible. I never had the feeling that I was spoiling myself, and that never happened. I don't think it is really possible in this case.

'The only time I received a setback was when I told my fiancé what had happened then. For that matter, I have a fantastic relationship with her. We have very good sexual relations and there is no question of problems on my side.

'My opinion, in general terms, is as follows: Homosexuality must be exempt from the law and legally allowed, although I don't think it should be regarded as a new form of sexual indulgence as do some people. To me it remains a loving relationship between two people who need something else beyond sex. Otherwise one is in for an enormous moral headache (even in normal relationships). Paedophilia I find a more difficult question. I allow everyone love and happiness in all respects but I cannot approve of this. I experienced no trouble myself, but not all become acquainted with it in such an understanding manner.'

To me, what this particular story most clearly illustrates is the remarkable tendency people have to find things acceptable in particular which they reject in general. For here is a man who can find nothing to object to in the particular paedophilic relationship he has experienced; nevertheless, probably because at the back of his mind he feels there must be something wrong with paedophilia if only because society makes so much fuss about it, he has no hesitation in condemning the relationships of others, about which, so far as we can tell, he has no knowledge. It reminds me of the numerous acquaintances of mine who are inclined to say to me, 'We know you are all right, Tom. You wouldn't exploit kids. But what about those who are less scrupulous?' Strange, isn't it, how the people one knows are always the goodies, and those one does not know are always the baddies?

The next account was written by a man of twenty-five, whose relationship with an adult started at a much earlier age:

'When I was about eight years old I got to know a man in the street who thought that I played very nicely. He invited me out for a bicycle ride (on his luggage frame) and, later on, to visit his home. Although my parents had warned me not to do it, I just could not see the problem that they were talking about. I could not imagine that this gentleman could harm me. I got to know him really well at our first meeting at his house. We became friends and I was allowed to call him by his first name. So, gradually, we got to know each other even better and I came to realise that he was homosexual, which certainly didn't hit me like a bombshell but it was something that I wanted to know more about. He told me about sexuality, and other subjects such as bisexuality and heterosexuality came into the discussion, which were quite beyond my parents (for which I never blamed

them). The bond between us and our friendship became even stronger. From him I received love, which actually I had never known (that is not the way things are at present with my wife). But our friendship was, and still is, one that I could imagine with no one else. Later, when I was ten or eleven, we had sex with each other; something I always enjoyed. That lasted until I was eighteen, when I went steady with a girl. When I was engaged, I was able to tell my future wife with an easy mind about my youth. I myself was sufficiently prepared and conveyed this to her. She could appreciate the whole thing very well. We were very sure of each other and were married in 1968 and have, at the moment, an especially good marriage, an especially fine sexual relationship and an especially dear little daughter of ten months.'

The above case speaks entirely for itself. Now let's turn to a female subject, a woman now in middle age:

'Perhaps you cannot imagine this but, when I was twelve, I was very much in love with a man of fifty and he with me. I don't know who made the first move now but we stroked each other and experienced sexuality together. It relaxed me wonderfully.

'One day my parents found out and the police were called in. The examination was terrible; I denied and denied again. Then I gave in. My older friend was arrested. My parents, after my forced confession, made out a formal complaint. Nothing then could be of help any more. I have never been able to forget this. It wasn't fair. It could have been such a beautiful memory. I am now married and have four children. I would not object to their having sexual contacts with adults. I regard it as positive.'

Dr Bernard's comments at this point are worth noting.

'All the children from this material experienced sex with adults as positive (nice, fine, important). Only a single subject had a negative attitude to his youthful experiences (" . . . in my eyes, it was not a normal situation"). Basically, all the subjects sought affection, love and security, and not sex alone. Some defend paedophile relationships as such.

'Actually, there appeared to be no talk of traumatic influences; rather, the opposite was true. It is not the actions themselves, which are usually in the form of caressing or masturbation, that lead to conflicts and problems, but the attitude of society.

'Nowhere do they talk about fear of the adults' intentions, which is remarkable. In this setting the word does not come into the texts, even in a veiled form. Obviously, the paedophile's approach is well suited to the situation and he knows how to win a child's confidence. It strikes one how basically similar to each other these descriptions are; they are one by one so human and imaginable.'

One of Bernard's reports, which made its first appearance in the journal of the Netherlands League for Sexual Reform, does read significantly differently though: not because it is less human and imaginable, but because it is more sexually specific, almost to the point of reading like erotic fiction. As such, some readers may doubt its authenticity, but I would ask them to bear in mind that everything which is said is

quite consistent with the more prosaic, and therefore perhaps more credible, reports given by Bernard. This too, is an account by a woman:

'I had an experience with an adult man when I was hardly twelve years old but the circumstances were not such that I look back on them with horror. On the contrary, I have very fine memories of the first, though rather bizarre, acquaintance with sex, and what happened eight years ago has had no bad consequences. I have no trauma about it and have become neither oversexed nor frigid. All that happened was that I learned, at a very early age, how a man and girl can satisfy each other, and obtained practical sexual instruction by means of which I did not have to learn from a book what a naked man looks like, how he gets an erection, ejaculation, masturbation, and so on.

'In the circumstances that surrounded my case there was no question of rape. He was a darling, and as we say, "opportunity made the thief" and I instinctively made use of my art of seduction (although, naturally, I did not understand this until afterwards) which is decidedly a challenging attitude demonstrated by us women at an early age, especially when at that age, you spot that a man looks at you as though you were no longer a child.

'And that Uncle Herman did. He was in his early forties (though I couldn't say exactly) and not really an uncle but "my little brother" and I called him that because he often came to our house. Uncle Herman worked on the railway like my father and was terribly active, he did everything, played in a brass band, bred show pigeons and had an allotment garden in which we children could come to play or to help on free afternoons and in the holidays.

'Sometimes he had fits of being playful, or when he wanted to kiss me he liked to pull my pigtails or tickle me in the ribs or give me a big cuddle. Once I saw him looking down my blouse as I was stooping to pick strawberries, and that is quite a discovery for a rather slim lass of that age, especially when you, as I was then, are terribly proud of the little breasts already beginning to form.

'I well remember that I went red but carried on as if I hadn't noticed, but felt like undoing my blouse to let Uncle Herman see even better that I was a growing girl. First I didn't dare, but later about midday when we were hoeing I said that the heat was stifling (it was a very hot day) and, very bravely, took off my blouse so as to be just like Uncle Herman and looked very sportsmanlike showing my naked torso. I was, of course, too young for a bra.

'The way he looked at me standing there in my jeans! But, funnily enough, I wasn't shy any more. The hoeing was soon finished and we suddenly felt like a drink of lemonade, logically because the little drawing room in the summer house that Uncle Herman had built could not be seen from the other allotments.

'He was just different from other occasions and I remember that he was flattering me terribly; that I was so big and that he had no idea (as if I didn't know better) that I already had a bust, and whether

growing didn't hurt, and whether I knew they were not often so big to start with. . . . It was just small talk, but naturally I lapped it all up.

'And I didn't mind at all him squatting in front of me, when I was sitting on a tree stump, and feeling my small breasts and rubbing his fingers over my nipples. It was not nasty, dirty or repulsive because, well, because it was Uncle Herman. This is something that can never be explained, naturally, but can only be felt if you knew him as we children did. There was no question of a schoolgirl "crush".

'As always, one thing led to another, as far as I can remember it was hardly ten minutes before I was standing stark naked in front of him, but well inside the house, safely behind the curtains. And even that seemed to happen of its own accord. When I folded my arms behind my head, because I had discovered in the mirror at home that it made my breasts look bigger, Uncle Herman said that I would soon be getting hairs too under my armpits, and I proudly blurted that I had some "down below". This he would not believe (or pretended not to) because my armpits were still bare and, when I insisted, he of course dared me to prove it. When I began to take off my jeans he drew me further indoors, I knew that I had not planned to undress completely but, when I had taken my jeans down far enough to show him a few blonde hairs, I suddenly became very daring and stripped them off.

'Naturally I knew that my little naked body didn't look like anything, but then I felt almost like a film star, for Uncle Herman looked at me as if I were Sophia Loren. It was, of course, a funny feeling standing there naked, but not at all nasty, as it had been shortly before at the sports examination for basketball, when I had to take my knickers down. I was quite at ease with Uncle Herman and I remember vaguely that he said that he felt it was such a pity that he hadn't got such a nice daughter (Uncle Herman and Aunt Koosje had no children). In any case he was being paternal, but not for long, for when I sat on his knee he began to kiss me and to stroke my breasts, belly and thighs with his big hands. Very soon his fingers were busy between my legs.

'I experienced this as a tremendous sensation, not so much from what I felt, but from what he did. I think that I understood that he liked young girls and had grasped his chance and I willingly allowed him to do what he wanted. He was so dear to me and said such nice loving things. I look back on it now as an odd but fine first experience; in fact I liked it so much that, when I went home, I asked if I could come and "play Eva" (as he called it) again. Uncle Herman wanted that, too, and we arranged to go to the allotment on the following day after the evening meal. Uncle Herman often worked there, but now no work was going to be done.

'I wanted to pull off my dress at once but he pulled me towards him and began to talk to me terribly seriously and to say that we couldn't do it any more and that he could be put in prison for what he had already done; that my parents would never forgive him if they discovered what had happened and so on.

'But when I said that I enjoyed his seeing me naked and being stroked all over, we became sort of blood brothers in order to share our secret.

'Then he undressed me and laid me on the old battered sofa and kissed me all over. I found it was a wonderful sensation. Gradually this summer I was being completely initiated and "woken up", and soon Uncle Herman took off his clothes too and taught me how a girl can satisfy a man. He taught me all kinds of positions and the pleasures of licking and sucking but he kept himself completely in control (that I find a real achievement) and did not have actual sexual intercourse with me.

'He found it, sometimes, sufficient just to look at me, especially when I was doing naked gymnastics for him (I was and still am very supple); then I saw his member get stiff in his trousers. One day we did something really crazy and ran, stark naked except for our rubber boots, through the pouring rain, to pick berries. We had wonderful fun and there was nobody to see us and when, dripping wet, we took refuge indoors again, we dried each other and had sex.

'Once again I don't want to defend what Uncle Herman did and certainly don't want to praise paedophilia highly, but I spent just as fine a summer as he did. It came suddenly to an end when Daddy, who is a station master, was transferred again and perhaps that was a good thing.

'It certainly has done me no harm. It depends on what a paedophile does and how he does it, and if he really loves children (and that usually goes together) he will understand and he in sympathy with the child and thus know very well what he can and what he cannot do. In my case it could have gone too far, and Uncle Herman realised that well, for he was too much of a kind soul to wreck something irreparably for his own pleasure.'

Bernard's studies have a special validity in that they are addressed to the child in the relationship and if the child doesn't feel himself or herself to have been abused or exploited, even when he or she has become adult, it is difficult to suggest anyone whose views should override such a verdict. Sometimes, however, researchers, particularly those working with paedophiles in prison, have been inclined to read too much into the prisoners' own confession that they feel bad about what they did, that they feel they abused the child, that they feel they must be 'sick', that they want aversion therapy <sup>2</sup> 2a 2b and so on. What they fail to understand is the very simple point that a man facing a quite often long prison sentence will say almost anything to create a favourable impression with the Parole Board, or the after-care people, or anyone in authority who has it in their power to make life tougher or easier for them. I myself have spoken to a number of prisoners and ex-prisoners who readily tell me that they can see nothing wrong with an attraction to little boys or girls, as long as any relationship is based on consent – but that they wouldn't dream of saying the same thing to a prison psychiatrist.

Accordingly, I think it may help to look briefly at the unshackled views of a few free paedophiles. These are all people of my own acquaintance, all boy lovers, who may be untypical in that (now) they have all had access to liberated thinking about child-adult sex.

First of all, however, I have reconstructed, from an interview I had with him, the story of a man in his late thirties, whose liberation from guilt feelings is far from complete. Readers may judge for themselves how justified those feelings are:

'Jack, a former soldier, was a sexual late developer. He experienced his first orgasm at the age of eighteen. At last all the sexual jokes and innuendoes of his mess-mates, and before their appearance in his life those of school friends, began to have meaning to him. 'So this is what it is all about!' he thought.

'From the start, his inclinations were paedophilic. Boys, preferably little boys under ten or so, were his sole interest, but it was a long time before he actually involved himself in any sexual contact with them. Not surprisingly, in view of his own slow sexual awakening, he assumed that none of the boys young enough to excite him would have any sexual feelings at all. They would all be 'innocent'. The thought occupied him gloomily. He appeared fated to love without any possibility of mutual feeling. Any initiative taken by him could, in his own mind, only be predatory and sick, and the possibility that he might succumb to the temptation filled him with self-loathing. The alternative, the stoical acceptance of self-denial, was one which he tried hard to follow for a number of years, during which he studied theological and philosophical works in an attempt to come to some kind of understanding of his apparently hopeless destiny.

'Barrack life kept him away from children, and although his more exotic postings, particularly those in the Far East, brought opportunities to go with young boy 'hustlers', he never did. He was something of a loner. Clipped and terse in speech beyond the requirements of military tradition, an acid sarcasm was the nearest he could manage to humour, and as a teetotaller, he was ill at ease in the boozy camaraderie of the mess. Eventually, in his mid-twenties, he decided – dangerously perhaps – to see if he could make a go of it in the teaching profession. At least he would then be able to be near children, in a positive way, even though he reconciled himself to the thought that there would always be a soul-splitting tension between the 'legitimate' and the 'non-legitimate' aspects of his interest in them.

'Yet it was not the classroom which provided him with his first irresistible temptation. Civilian life also took him into lodgings, in a working-class household in which there were four children, including three girls and their brother Stephen, aged nine. The parents appeared not to have much time to spare for the children. Most of their time was spent either watching TV, or in the case of the father, doing odd jobs around the house. Jack was only too pleased to make up the deficiency, so far as Stephen was concerned, even though he was in Jack's words, just 'a standard-issue boy' of no more than ordinary prettiness or appeal.

'To start with, his response to Jack was fairly 'standard issue' too: one of casual indifference, which is arguably the norm encountered by paedophilic men interested in boys in our culture – until, that is, some personal spark on either side succeeds in breaking the ice. In

Jack's case, this came after he had been in the household some five or six weeks, when it began to be established that each evening he would put Stephen to bed and read him a bedtime story. Guiltily, on one such occasion, Jack let his hand slide, beyond 'acceptable' cuddling, under the boy's bedclothes and on to his penis. To his surprise it was stiff, and Stephen showed no disinclination to let him continue. The pattern soon came to be repeated every evening, and the little penis was invariably hard. Encouraged, Jack suggested that Stephen should play with his too, and this soon became part of their repertoire.

'So far, the initiatives had all been taken by Jack. But one morning the two of them were alone in the house, lying in, and Stephen came into Jack's bedroom for an extra session in bed. Not long after, at Stephen's suggestion, the parents allowed the boy to move into Jack's room, where they shared beds next to each other, and from that point on he would jump into Jack's bed every morning – 'Always erect,' Jack told me. 'Of all the many times I saw him naked, I can't recall one occasion when he didn't have a hard-on.'

The mere fact of Stephen's sexual responsiveness did little, however, to erase Jack's deeply ingrained sense of guilt about the entire relationship. Jack had had no contact with gay, or feminist, thinking. His values were entirely traditional, and he knew that his behaviour offended against them. Not only had he been greatly influenced by Christianity, in the Pauline tradition, but he hadn't the faintest idea that sex role stereotypes could be, or ought to be, challenged. To him, a boy was a boy was a boy. It was wrong for him, a man, to be treating the boy like a girl. He might grow up to be homosexual, and that would be dreadful. Jack believed – in the army tradition – in an unbending sense of rank, authority and hierarchy. Something within him said that paedophilic relationships could so easily subvert authority: a boy who, in bed, could clearly witness the sexual dependency of an adult – a supposedly strong, invulnerable authority figure – on a little child, would suddenly assume power and status in a relationship which it was not proper for him to have.

Factors such as these, especially concern for Stephen's sexual development, led Jack to quit the household without it ever occurring to him to feel guilty about abandoning Stephen. But a year or so later the relationship was resumed when, by pure coincidence, Jack became a teacher at Stephen's junior school. Not being in the same household, he didn't feel guilty about holding the boy 'captive' to his attentions in quite the same way.

This time Jack had no convenient 'safe' bed, but there were lots of expeditions out into the country in his car. Sometimes there were snatched sexual interludes, including mutual fellatio, in the car itself. The boy came to him for these sessions regularly. Little needed to be said. Such groundwork and 'courtship' as had once been needed were now entirely dispensed with, as each knew exactly what the other wanted. Now, no sooner were they together in private, than hands, penises and mouths would almost automatically busy themselves, and words would not be wasted, on either side. The silence was itself a token of furtiveness and guilt. But also of co-conspiracy. Sometimes, when the two were driving through town, the boy would duck down so as not to be seen by one of his classmates, or by another teacher: he was well aware of the need to avoid being seen in suspicious circumstances, and proved over a long period to be totally discreet.

Looking back, Jack now feels guilty about the relationship – which he finally let fade away when Stephen went to secondary school – in a quite different way to what



he felt at the time. His guilt now relates not so much to the sexual acts involved, but to the fact that the relationship was, from his point of view, only sexual. His 'standard-issue boy' had meant little to him on an emotional plane; he hadn't invested love in Stephen, and hadn't taken much of an interest in his personal development – other than the negative one about worrying whether he would become homosexual.

Stephen, on the other hand, had been deeply fond of Jack. There were many occasions on which he had begged him to go back to lodging with his family, and lots of little things showed how much he cared – for instance, he remembered Jack's birthday for a whole year, and surprised him by sending a present.

It is my belief that if any of Jack's multi-faceted guilt is to be considered valid, it is in relation to this lack of warmth for the boy. At the same time, I find it hard to doubt that Stephen was a genuinely 'consenting' child, and it may well be that despite Jack's shortcomings, he took more out of the relationship than Jack himself.

Ralph, the subject of my next account, could hardly be a more different character – cheerful, relaxed, non-authoritarian, especially in the norms prevailing in the English prep school where he taught. He is every inch a Cavalier, compared to Roundhead Jack, with youthful zest and an easy bonhomie that made him an instant favourite with youngsters. He wrote to me with a biographical account as follows:

'When I left university, I got a job as junior master at a boys' preparatory school in Kent. It was a fairly typical example – the other members of staff were all over fifty, with little enthusiasm for their subjects or their pupils, and the boys were mostly boarders, aged between seven and thirteen. School life was bounded by work and games; discipline was rigidly enforced; and corporal punishment was regularly administered both by the Headmaster and (unofficially) by some members of his staff. The school had a reasonably high academic standard, sending several boys on to Winchester each year: but educational methods were old fashioned, and life for the boys was stultifyingly boring.

'In this situation, it was not difficult to make friends with the boys I taught, and a lot of them used to visit me regularly in my room during their free time, to play records and talk. One of the most frequent visitors was a boy called Lance, who was eleven when I first met him. Lance was very much the 'schoolboy hero' type: good-looking, academically clever, a good singer and actor, and inevitably good at games – he was later captain of both the football and cricket teams at the school. He was popular with the other boys and the rest of the staff; but he and I became particularly close friends.

'A year later, we became lovers as well. It was on a wet spring afternoon. We were alone in my room, sitting on my bed to look at a book together, and suddenly, without anything being said, he lay back on the bed and I lay beside him and put my arms round him. Neither of us made the first move or gave any signal – it happened spontaneously, even unexpectedly. It's perhaps worth mentioning that in sexual relationships I have since had with other boys, the same thing has often happened: as though there is some unspoken need in them that subconsciously reaches out and connects with my need. The whole question of who seduces whom is thus largely irrelevant in many paedophile relationships.

'Lance and I were lovers for the next two years, and had sex together whenever we could be alone. Usually we met in the evening, in the period between the end of prep and the boys' bedtime. Sometimes, Lance would creep out of his dormitory late at night, and sleep in my bed until early morning, when he would go back to his own bed before anyone else woke up. Neither of us felt any guilt or shame about the relationship: we were both deeply happy. I was able to help Lance through the problems of growing up (and also through his parents' divorce when he was twelve); and in return he gave me a love and trust which I had not believed possible.

'At the beginning of his last term, Lance told me that during the holidays he had met a girl of his own age, and was in love with her. Of course, I was jealous, but I tried not to show it, and was happy for him. His sexual and emotional feelings were now chiefly directed towards his girl: but because he was a kind and gentle boy, and didn't want to hurt me, it didn't change our friendship. We had sex together less often – but didn't stop completely, as he was a boy who needed frequent sexual outlets. I realised that the sexual contact between us would gradually disappear, particularly as he was leaving the school at the end of that term, and I had also given in my notice; but we both believed that our friendship and affection for each other would continue.

'Unfortunately, our luck ran out half-way through the term. One of the other boys in Lance's dormitory noticed his occasional absences, followed him one night, and found out what was happening. With most of the boys we could have coped with the situation – but this boy had always been a problem, and was in fact removed to a special school the following term. He reported what he had found out to the duty master, who told the Headmaster. I was dismissed on the spot, and told to be out of the school by noon. Then the police were called.'

I am happy to say that following a suspended prison sentence, Ralph is now back on his feet again, though not in this country.

Keith, who teaches in a fashionable American private school, is of interest as he has been both the younger, and the older, partner in a paedophile relationship. He writes:

'I myself was loved by a man when he was twenty-six and I was thirteen. Having read that, many critics would immediately carp, 'Aha – he learned to be a pederast by the example of this older man.' Nothing could be further from the truth, for I can remember looking lasciviously at an age-mate's rear when I was a mere five years old; and I got caught looking at the other "parts" of a different age-mate, in a different city, when I was eight. What I did learn from this man, however, was that sex was fun and an emotional attachment made it all even better. I believe that he taught me, at least in my beginning stages, how to love another person. I was a pederast long before I met him!

'I have always been very active, sexually. When I wasn't playing doctor with friends, I was developing my fantasy life and wondering what it would be like to grow hair "down there". When I did mature,

at about age twelve and a half, it was like the world was beginning to make sense, to take on purpose and meaning. Other people were beginning to become very important to me, and in turn, they were noticing me as an individual person, no longer a "child" to be lumped together with all the other kids. My adolescence was a most invigorating experience; I found that I enjoyed the company of both girls and boys, and that my response to boys was tinged with excitement and a certain mysterious feeling which still, at thirty-four, evades description.

'I regard my meeting with Mr S., then aged twenty-six, as a critical turning point in my love-life. Until then, sex was fun, felt good and left me only moderately guilty. The guilt was probably a result of a very prudish rearing, which for a time had me believing that "if it was fun, it was bad." This was not the exclusive fault of my parents, but was rather my understanding of what everyone I knew was telling me. Fortunately, I suppose, specific sex acts were never discussed as such in my family and I soon realised that I was feeling guilty not because I was doing something wrong, but only because if I were to get caught, my parents would be disappointed. I had a persistent and pervasive feeling that what I was doing was right for me and I decided that my only responsibility was to keep my activities unknown to my parents, for they simply wouldn't understand.

'Mr S. co-operated in this subterfuge, to my delight, and once I approached him (yes – *I* approached him) with my thirteen-year-old impatience for intimacy, he told no one, responded positively to my shaky advances (didn't even laugh at me!) and simply embraced me, in every sense of the word, surrounding me with flexible yet steady security and self-assuredness. He fed my ego with compliments, opened up my knowledge of a gay society which I had no idea existed, and proved to me that I was not the only one in the world who was planning to make a career of the sexual activities which were "only a phase" in all my buddies.

'Here was a masculine adult man (happily married, even), who was interested in doing with me what I was already finding exciting with my boy-friends. And through this relationship a new dimension was added to my experience which had not occurred to me before tenderness, affection and love. It may well be that the tenderness, affection and love were actually more my contribution than his – it's difficult to say from this distance in time. But it doesn't really matter; the important thing is that he allowed and encouraged affection, which was two-way from the start, and it became an integral part of the relationship. This affection was, in its way, just as satisfying as the ecstatic orgasms that punctuated our days and nights together.

'I regard this man, this relationship as a turning point because I was never the same after knowing him for two years. I was more in tune with myself after that. . .

'While I was often unlucky in having affectionate, lasting relationships in high school, I realised as things progressed that the boys who were attracted to the girls were finding the same thing to be

true. I finished high school with a reasonably secure feeling that I was different from other eighteen-year-old males only in superficial ways. I was also secure in the knowledge that I could love other people, in fact I had loved others and received their love in return, beginning with Mr S. I was also enriched by the experience of trying and failing at love, and then trying again. I enjoyed numerous satisfying sexual relationships, some of which did last for quite a while, and I accepted the fact that many of my heterosexual classmates had gone through the same trials. That they had shared their intimacy with girls and I with boys didn't seem to make all that much difference, just like some of my friends had learned Spanish and I Latin. The end result was similar: we had learned the lesson of sharing ourselves.

'Another turning point came in the summer after high school graduation when I went to work for the local boys' club, the first of ten summers in such work. I had gone through the sex-because-it-feels-good phase (may I never outgrow the feeling!) and had experienced affection and love as a separate emotion which is often associated with sex but is not necessarily connected. I was now ready, though certainly not aware of it at the time, to share with younger people what I had learned and enjoyed so much – that sharing emotions and getting deeply involved now and then is not only possible before adulthood, but pleasurable and helpful to a person's development.

'I was never interested in enlisting anyone into homosexuality, perverting little boys or contributing to the delinquency of minors. I simply found that when an eleven- or twelve-year-old boy looked up at me, there was wonder in his eyes (I'll never forget the first time that happened!) and I felt like a father, big brother and equal friend all at once. I was a parent in the true sense of the word: I felt I could have an influence in the world by helping to make ready a growing person and prepare him to realise his potential more fully in later life. (The word "parent" in Latin means, "let them prepare, make ready, provide".)

'I had come full circle in person-to-person relationships and before long I realised that, like my heterosexual counterparts who gave expression to their parenting instincts by raising a family, I could do the same with the boys who, for whatever reason, responded to my presence with wonder in their eyes.

'It was, and still is, so very natural for me to respond to boys who see in me something special. Critics of my "style" say that my only interest is in recapturing youth, or reliving a fixation which I was never able to work through, or any number of other false motivations that society pins on pederasts when they don't know what it's really like. It really is quite a normal and natural feeling which is exciting not because it's forbidden, or because it's compulsive, but because any deep commitment to another person is exciting. Those who would criticise should first look at the feelings a parent has when his or her child begins to walk, performs well in school, says "I love you". It's exactly the same for pederasts. It is exhilarating and satisfying,

and every human being can have the same experience with whatever "turns you on".'

Keith's story, with its emphasis on commitment to a parental, or rather a mentor-like, role, is representative of a mainstream in contemporary paedophile sentiment (or, rather, more specifically, boy-love sentiment) which finds its inspiration in the idealised man-boy relationship of classical Greek culture.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, Paul, born in England, reports some experiences from his adopted country, the United States:

'I remember my boyhood in vivid detail from the age of four when my aunt was pushing me along the pavement in the push-chair and I pulled out my little willie to examine it. She told me to put it away "before it bites you". With that was sown the first seed of fear of my own body and the lesson that one's sexual parts (I didn't know they were sexual at the time, of course) were not to be looked at. After that, I had to play with my willie on my own, in secret. . .

'I was in my mid-twenties and undertaking flying lessons when I first met Jared. I don't remember the exact circumstances of how we met, but it was in late spring. I often used to fly over his house and wave the aeroplane's wings at him as he came running out to return the greeting with his arms. I would drive down and visit him often. His father was an osteopath who had a private pilot's licence and used to fly several years ago, and he welcomed me to their home. He invited me on a fishing trip with them in their camper. I took Jared flying one time, and as the weather warmed we had many trips in the car to the local convenience store to buy crushed-ice drinks. Jared enjoyed taking me for a ride over the field in the dune buggy that he was allowed to drive. His home was right beside a creek and we would frequently be found canoeing or swimming in it. He often found it convenient when practising the breast stroke to have me hold him up by placing a hand under him at the balance point, which just happened to be at the little lump between his legs. He wasn't the only one who was sexually aroused!

'After three months of getting together, we had become very close without, I think, realising it. One evening in his home he was lying on his tummy' on the sofa wearing only his pyjama bottoms, his chin cupped in his hands, watching TV. I was sitting beside him and started gently caressing his back. He was clearly enjoying it, so I continued the caressing down under his pants and over the cheeks of his soft, smooth bottom. This came to an end as someone approached the room from the kitchen.

'After four months it was time for me to move on to get a flying job elsewhere. To say goodbye to Jared was going to be a difficult task and I just had to see him alone. I wanted to have some kind of extra close, yes, even sexual, contact with him before saying farewell. I was lucky in being able to drive him to my motel room on the evening before my departure. He had ankle boots on, but I don't remember what else. What I do remember is that we talked and joked a lot and then I suddenly asked him if he would take his clothes off for me. He carried on talking as if he hadn't heard, then five minutes later he

said. "Do you want me to take my clothes off?" And he did. It rather surprised me since no boy had ever done it for me before, yet because we were so close in spirit, I wasn't really surprised at all. It seemed quite natural after all. He stripped completely then lay back on the bed. I ran my hand over his body very gently, including his very stiff little penis. I moved up his body and ended up lying over him, looking down into his sparkling eyes. As I smiled at him he grinned back with a wicked little grin, and blew into my face. I said, mockingly, "Don't do that. That's not nice!" Then he blew again. It dawned on me suddenly that he was trying to tell me something. I looked at his slightly pursed lips then whispered, "If you do that again . . . I'll kiss you!"

'I think you can guess that, of course, he did it again: and our lips came together in a kiss I shall never forget.'

Least of all is known about paedophilia between women and children, of either sex. I think I know why this is the case, but who better to explain the phenomenon than a woman? The following is an extract from a personal letter between two women, which the recipient submitted for publication in a feminist magazine:

'Women are brought up to marry and fulfil themselves through motherhood and loving their children: this is normal, pure and completely unsexual – so we are told. In fact, this is part of the whole sexist myth that women have no sexuality of their own (just like children), and that sex is something that is given to a woman by a man. Hence, lesbians either don't really exist, or if they do, they can't really do anything with one another, etc.

'In the same way that countless women grow up, are married and go through their whole lives without realising that the attraction they feel for other women is, in fact, sexual and that they are really gay, many women do not identify their feeling of love and attraction to children as sexual. Perhaps they don't really enjoy sex with men, but get enormous pleasure from cuddling, caressing and bathing children. They get satisfaction from this but don't see their natural spontaneous feelings as anything to do with paedophilia. A friend of mine, whose girlfriend had a baby, enjoyed a close loving relationship with the child and did see it as sexual – they had a lot of fun together.

<sup>4</sup> In Mexico, mothers and grandmothers often lick their babies' genitals to soothe them to sleep. The babies obviously like it. Is this a sexual assault? Should they all be arrested? It's well known that babies and small children need to be touched and held a lot, otherwise they suffer severe emotional problems that can continue throughout their lives. So when do we define a touch as sexual? And indeed should we make that distinction at all?' <sup>5</sup>

Some would define the sexuality or otherwise of a touch in terms of its effect on the toucher, i.e. if the touch is accompanied by specifically genital arousal in the toucher, *then* it is a sexual touch. So when the correspondent talks about the 'enormous pleasure' women get from cuddling and caressing children, it is a moot point whether this pleasure is genital. In terms both of semantic precision and of the clarity of thought which such precision implies, the distinction as to what is, and is not, *sexual* pleasure is important. On the other hand, we should not lose sight of the

fact that the effect on the child is the important thing in the last analysis. Does it really make any difference to the baby whether the adult who gives it delight by licking its genitals is definitely turned on sexually, or turned on from a more generalised sensuality, or even from the 'pure' non-sexual motive of deriving satisfaction from the pleasure given to the child? As the correspondent rightly says, should we bother to make the distinction at all?

Her comments go a long way to explaining why female paedophilia, like lesbianism, is largely invisible in our society. Women have a licence to be intimate with children, and their *motives* for doing so are invariably interpreted as non-sexual, in all but undeniably sexual situations, chiefly coitus. Thus occasionally a woman appears before the courts if she has allowed or encouraged boys to have intercourse with her.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, in the absence of coitus as a possibility, sexual acts between women and girls are rarely proceeded against. I imagine most people think they never happen and that women just do not want them – yet I personally know women who feel that a major part of their sexual response is towards little girls.

The following account of lesbian paedophilia appeared in *Body Politic*,<sup>7</sup> the Canadian gay magazine, and relates a story from the youngster's point of view. As will be seen, concern over the effects of a relationship need not be all one way.

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

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

'Meanwhile, Donna had maintained a regular correspondence with Sharon.

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

'By the following summer, Sharon and Donna had been able to contrive some way of spending time together. "I had just turned sixteen when I told her about Jean and me. In retrospect my big

confession seems sort of unreal. We had been out canoeing and had gone ashore on a small island. It sounds very romantic, doesn't it? I was a regular little Conspirator. Only it didn't turn out exactly the way I had planned. I was more or less saying to Sharon 'All right, if you feel the same way about me as I feel about you, don't be afraid. You aren't leading me astray. You aren't taking me anywhere I haven't already been.' Her reaction seemed mostly to be shock. I guess I wasn't the most tactful sixteen-year-old."

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

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

In many people's eyes, it would be inappropriate to say that Donna was a 'child' at the time of her association with Jean and Sharon. But what about Beth Kelly, now mature in years, and a radical lesbian feminist, who, as a 'precocious' eight-year-old, developed a relationship with a grown woman? She writes:

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

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

'I adored her; that's all there was to it. I had never been taught at home that heterosexual acts or other body functions were dirty or forbidden, and I'd been isolated enough from other children to manage to miss a lot of the usual sexist socialisation learned in play. It never occurred to me that it might be considered "unnatural" or "antisocial" to kiss or touch or hold the person I loved, and I don't



think that Addie was terribly concerned by such things either. I do know that I never felt pressured or forced by any sexual aspects of the love I felt for her. I think I can safely say, some twenty years later, that I was never exploited – physically emotionally, or intellectually – in the least.' <sup>8</sup>

As so often happens, this joyous liaison eventually foundered on the rocks of parental disapproval, when Beth's mother chanced upon her and Addie in bed together. But disapproval of paedophilia or, rather, disapproval of child sexuality, has a significance far beyond its disastrous impact on the lives of the relatively limited numbers of children and adults in paedophilic relationships. The impact of the sex-negative outlook has to be seen in a wider societal context in order to appreciate its full significance. In this context, to which attention will now be turned, we can see reasons why a climate in which children come to view all consensual sex positively and without guilt, including consensual paedophilia, may be necessary for the welfare of everyone.

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## Ch 4 - Notes and References

1. Frits Bernard, 'Paedophilia; the consequences for the child', paper presented at the International Conference on Love and Attraction, Swansea, 1977. <sup>^</sup>

2. *Aversion therapy* is one of a number of behavioural techniques developed in an attempt to change paedophiles' sexual orientation. The subject is exposed to stimuli he finds sexually arousing – usually child pornography – and at the same time he is given a painful electric shock, or sometimes an injection of apomorphine, which induces uncontrollable vomiting for up to an hour. Other aversive stimuli include valeric acid, an odiferous chemical, which is squirted up the nostrils, and auditory shocks – usually an unpleasant high-frequency buzzing noise administered through earphones. It is hoped that with sufficient repetition of the treatment the subject will cease to respond erotically to children. Apart from being extremely unpleasant, it seldom works.

Even more barbarous is '*chemical castration*'. The subject (invariably male) has a pellet of synthetic female hormone implanted under his skin to reduce the strength of his sexual drive. One side-effect of this treatment is that the subject may grow breasts of female proportions, which have to be surgically removed. Other serious side-effects include breast cancer and thrombosis. The treatment was used for over a decade on sex offenders in British prisons, but was discontinued following public discussion of the side-effects. In April 1979, after this discontinuance, a sex offender at the Old Bailey was offered, and accepted, the 'choice' of chemical castration as an alternative to a long prison sentence.

The ultimate form of control *psychosurgery*. The method used with sex offenders (there are other uses) is to burn out a part of the subject's brain – a small area of the hypothalamus – which is believed to mediate the offending sexual feelings. Psychosurgery has caused irreversible brain damage, and a significant number of people have died as a result of the operation. Recently, the successful treatment of homosexual paedophilia has been reported from West Germany. Personally, I find the implications of such mind control even more disturbing – and not only in the case of sex offenders – than some of the effects described above.<sup>^</sup>

3. In which interest has been rekindled for paedophiles in recent years by J.Z. Eglinton's *Greek Love*, Neville Spearman, London, 1971. A fine recent work of

scholarship in the field has been that of Sir Kenneth Dover, whose *Greek Homosexuality* appeared in 1978 (Duckworth, London). [^](#)

4. Freud was in no doubt that mothers have sexual feelings towards their children.

'A child's intercourse with anyone responsible for his care affords him an unending source of sexual excitation and satisfaction from his erotogenic zones. This is especially so since the person in charge of him, who, after all, is as a rule his mother, herself regards him with feelings that are derived from her own sexual life: she strokes him, kisses him, rocks him and quite clearly treats him as a substitute for a complete sexual object' (In 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol.7, Hogarth Press, London, 1953-74).

Dr Alayne Yates, a psychiatrist, tells us that mothers sometimes report serial orgasms brought about by the sexual pleasure they feel when breastfeeding their babies (A. Yates, *Sex Without Shame*, Temple Smith, London, 1979). [^](#)

5. *Sequel*, March 1978. [^](#)

6. Even then the law is at pains to assign a passive role to the female. At Caernarvon Crown Court in 1976 a woman aged thirty-five, who was alleged to have had intercourse with some boys aged twelve to fifteen, faced charges of indecent assault against them. The judge directed the jury to find her not guilty, saying that there is not and never has been an offence of a woman having sexual intercourse with a boy under sixteen. He told the jury that if they were 'to consider this particular case, the prosecution could not rely on the mere fact of intercourse with the boys as of itself constituting an indecent assault'. Reported in *The Daily Telegraph*, p.3, and the *Daily Mail*, p.3, 8 October, 1976. See also M. Rae *et al.*, *First Rights: A Guide to Legal Rights for Young People*, NCCL, London, 1979, p.60, and *Paedophilia: Some Questions and Answers*, PIE, London, 1978, Appendix on the Law. [^](#)

7. In an article by Christine Bearchell, *Body Politic*, June 1978. [^](#)

8. Beth Kelly, 'On woman/girl love, or lesbians do "do it"', *Gay Community News*, 3 March, 1979. [^](#)

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## Chapter 5

# Do Children NEED Sex?

Asked to comment on paedophilia and child sex, in the wake of the controversy generated by PIE, one or two 'experts' were prepared to admit that children could enjoy sex with adults. At the same time they were not prepared to concede its admissibility. Dr David Shaffer, consultant in child psychiatry at the Maudsley Hospital, London, provided a typical example in an interview with *Time Out*:<sup>1</sup>

'PIE are ignoring a child's other interests apart from pleasure. Is the function of childhood to have a good time, or to learn how to form trusting relationships and acquire skills that will be useful later on? Hedonism comes pretty low on the list, I would have thought.'

I hope Dr Shaffer does not believe it is the function of childhood to have a rotten time. It is not so long ago that exactly such a philosophy was openly practised, if not preached, in the English public schools, with their emphasis on discipline and denial as 'character-forming' agents. But if we give him the benefit of the doubt, and accept that he is trying to say something else, we can see in this modest little quote some vital assumptions in the present conventional wisdom which are desperately in need of challenge.

The chief of these is that pleasure in childhood, particularly sexual pleasure, is somehow inimical to forming 'trusting relationships' or to the acquisition of skills. But this is simply not so. Adults, whose sexual lives are less constrained than those of children, are able to form trusting relationships and acquire skills, and we do not consider that their ability to do so is diminished by the level of their sexual activity. Some people do, to be sure: the former Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Desai, has said that he makes a point of refraining from sex in order to preserve his 'bodily fluids' and thus, he believes, keep up his energy for other things. Much as this policy may suit Mr. Desai personally, we know that medical evidence does not support his theory. Why then do otherwise sophisticated people choose to rely on such quaint notions when the question of children's sexuality crops up?

There is no evidence that children are more incapacitated by sex than are adults. What it boils down to is simply a gut feeling that sex in childhood is wrong, or dangerous, and it doesn't matter what kind of 'argument' is pressed into service against it: the approach seems to be 'Never mind the argument, feel the conclusion.'

The fact is that children are no less likely to be able to learn maths or geography as a result of involvement in a sexual relationship. Indeed paedophiles, like parents, usually love to help 'their' children, either to do their homework, or to fix their bike, or in a thousand other ways. It makes them feel good to do so. It adds to their sense of worth. Above all, it is simply an expression of the love they feel.

It is tempting for me to write endlessly about love. If I were to write about love in paedophilic relationships, instead of merely sex, I am quite certain I would be able to tap a well of sympathy amongst otherwise hostile readers. I believe people would accept that there are those who are erotically attracted to youngsters who also feel affection and love for them. The trouble with such an approach is that it entirely misses the point. It fails to challenge the crucial underlying premise that love for kids is OK, but that sex with them is not, – that there is something about sexual intimacy which requires justification beyond the pleasure it brings to those involved in it. In this orthodoxy, one does not *express* love for a child by being erotic with her or him; one does not *make love* in a physical act. Quite the contrary. It may be suggested that

if the adult in question *really* loves the child, he will *refrain* from the sexual act. Quite often paedophiles themselves, reflecting the guilt that has been thrust upon them by their upbringing, echo this belief. Many a time I have heard it said, 'I love him too much to do anything like *that*.'

John Money, of the world-renowned Gender Identity Clinic at Johns Hopkins University, has neatly summarized the destructiveness of the 'love versus lust' dichotomy:

'A man who has been taught from infancy that sexual advances are an insult to women has little choice but to seek his sexual pleasure either with men or with women he feels are degraded enough to be insulted safely. What kind of relations with women can a man have if, like many Victorians, he screws at a whorehouse and then goes home to worship his wife? The dichotomy between love and lust mandates distortions of sexuality ....

'The difficulty of getting love and lust together again after they have been firmly severed in childhood is at the root of almost every problem of erotic relations between two people.' <sup>2</sup>

While I agree that no one should *impose* his sexuality on another, I see no reason for the disavowal of mutually pleasurable acts. Like Money, I see the positive harmfulness of doing so, for the failure in childhood to develop a positive attitude to sexual pleasure is responsible for untold misery. In this regard I refer not only to that minority of children who chance upon a paedophilic relationship, but to all children. The attitudes which make for the condemnation of mutually pleasurable child-adult sex are part of the anti-sexual culture with which all our children have to cope.

Freud recognized the importance of child sexuality not only to the child, but also to the adult it would eventually become. Indeed, it was his analytic insights into the psychosexual problems of adults which led him to deduce the sexual conflicts and traumas of the earliest years. Freud may have been wrong in much of his analysis of the latter, but on one matter there can be no doubt: millions upon millions of adults suffer mental and physical anguish as a result of problems which are either directly or indirectly sexual, a fact which largely accounts for the boom industry of psychoanalysis and sex therapy. Nor is this just a bourgeois fad, as some have maintained. Dear old Wilhelm Reich has the answer to that one, in an anecdote which for me impressively brings out the sheer *seriousness* of sexual misery:

'The neuroses of the working population are different only in that they lack the cultural refinement of the others. They are a crude, undisguised rebellion against the psychic massacre to which they are all subjected. The well-to-do citizen carries his neurosis with dignity, or he lives it out in one or another way. In the people of the working population it shows itself as the grotesque tragedy which it really is.

'[A] patient suffered from so-called nymphomania. She was never able to achieve satisfaction. So she slept with all available men, without gratification. Finally she masturbated with a knife handle, or even with the blade, until she bled from the vagina .... This patient, too, revealed the devastating role played by the poor, care-burdened worker's family with lots of children. In such families, the mothers have no time to bring up their children carefully. When the mother notices the child masturbating, well, she throws a knife at the child. The child associates the knife with the fear of punishment for sexual behaviour and the guilt feeling about it, does not dare to satisfy

herself, and later on, with unconscious guilt feelings, tries to achieve an orgasm with the same knife.' <sup>3</sup>

Freud, Reich, and many other figures in the psychoanalytic tradition down to the present day, have been adamant in ascribing an important place in the aetiology of the neuroses and 'perversions' to the development of the child's sexuality in infancy and childhood. The tradition may be entirely wrong, of course, for very few of its hypotheses have been empirically verified. Freud himself at first laid great emphasis on the 'traumatic' effect of sexual assault in infancy, but later came to believe that many of the supposed assaults were in fact fantasies based on a *desired* sexual activity. <sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, I cannot help feeling that some of Freud's observations on the relationship between sexual repression, guilt and neurosis are worth bearing in mind, even for those who are rightly sceptical about accepting the precise psychic mechanisms which he ascribes to the Oedipus complex, or to the development of the 'anal character' or whatever. But at its most simple, it goes something like this: in infancy and early childhood, children give free rein to their sexual feelings, until such time as they are thwarted by adult prohibitions; these prohibitions carry with them the threat of punishment for transgression, and in order to avoid this the sexual impulses are inhibited; this inhibition is accompanied by the child's development of the concept of the 'wrongness' of sexual expression – he not only refrains from the sexual activity but also, believing it to be bad, *represses* thoughts of indulging in it; this repression, if carried too far, causes psychic stress and eventually manifests itself in neurotic symptoms. Not everyone who experiences sexual prohibition in childhood becomes clinically neurotic, but the development of the idea of sexual 'badness', of guilt and shame, is very much the norm in our society, and the attitude of all adults to sex is coloured by it. Thus what Freud had to say about 'hysterics' is really only the experience of most people writ large:

'The character of hysterics shows a degree of *sexual repression* in excess of the normal quantity, an intensification of resistance against the sexual instinct (which we have already met in the form of shame, disgust and morality), and what seems like an instinctive aversion on their part to any intellectual consideration of sexual problems.' <sup>5</sup>

A more recent psychiatric contribution, by Dr Alayne Yates, <sup>6</sup> draws on empirical research, from Kinsey to Masters and Johnson, that was unavailable to Freud – to say nothing of her own experience as a mother of no less than thirteen children (seven of her own and six stepchildren). Dr Yates emphasizes Masters and Johnson's estimate that half of all marriages in the United States are troubled by sexual failures, difficulties or incompatibilities. She says:

'When a woman cannot reach orgasm the trouble is almost always clearly related to her lack of early sex experience. Although the young male commonly attains a climax efficiently, he is beset by other problems. He ruminates about the size of his penis, the persistence of his erection, or his ability to satisfy his mate. He experiences a pervasive sense of inadequacy which transforms the bed into an arena or occasionally, a dunce stool. His anxiety precipitates premature ejaculation, retarded ejaculation, and impotence. His problems also emanate from childhood, especially from sexually blurred and unenthusiastic parenthood.'

Dr Yates says children need to be given sexual confidence by their parents; sexual dysfunction is nearly always attributable to the failure of parents to take a positive

attitude to their child's capacity for sexual pleasure. Sometimes this failure has crippling effects even in childhood itself. Dr Yates cites many impressive case studies. I propose to relate one of these, about a six-year-old boy called David, because it shows how even good parents can, so to speak, traumatize their children by default – and incidentally, the references to David's school performance give a very different slant on 'the acquisition of skills' to that advanced by Dr Shaffer above:

'David was the youngest of five boys born to stable, intelligent parents who were both college graduates. Although the parents had moved away from a literal interpretation of the Bible, they attended church regularly and taught their children responsibility, patience, and good work habits. The older boys were successful and productive members of the community.

'David was a "late blessing", the youngest by ten years. He received more attention and had fewer responsibilities than his brothers. When he was three years old he enjoyed rubbing and pulling at his penis while sitting on the toilet. His mother observed this and hastened to zip his trousers up. After that she made certain he had a book or toy to occupy his time while on the lavatory. She was careful not to leave him there too long. About a year later David observed one dog mount another and ran to ask his father what they were doing. The father threw a stick and shouted so that the dogs ran off. By the age of five David's sex education consisted of his Sunday school teacher's comments on certain Bible stories. He knew that adults were upset if he opened doors without knocking, but the most he had ever witnessed was his mother in bra and panties.

'When he was six, his favourite older brother eloped with a girl of a different faith. David missed his brother. He sensed the family turmoil and his father's anger. He overheard his father say that this was "the worst thing that could ever happen". At the age of seven, David related a joke he had heard at school about a little boy who took a bath with his mother. The same tale that had evoked uproarious laughter from classmates was greeted by stony silence at home. His mother said it was not a nice joke and not to tell any more like that. Shortly before this incident, David had begun playing with his penis again, this time carefully concealed under the bed-covers at night. After the joke fiasco he stopped pleasuring and wondered if dirty thoughts had made him bad, like his favourite brother who had never returned home. Overwhelmed by feelings of guilt and worthlessness, David spent long hours alone and exhibited some puzzling behaviour. He neglected his chores and was reprimanded; he forgot to take a pencil to school until his teacher sent home a note. Although he had been an excellent student, the letters and syllables seemed hopelessly mixed and he began to fail in reading. Every type of remediation was ineffective. David's parents were frustrated, angry, and concerned.

'Finally, David was brought for psychiatric treatment. During the first months of therapy, he played listlessly and remained aloof. He filled a pail with sand and dumped it again and again. He worried that his hands were soiled, and often visited the bathroom. In the third month, he smiled spontaneously and began to use a variety of playthings – puppets, paints, plasticine, and dart guns. Now he enjoyed our sessions "a lot". One day we talked about how babies were born. David was silent and picked at his ear. Suddenly he asked if babies would die from "dirty things". Even with my assurance he refused to elaborate – instead he struck the long-nosed alligator

puppet again and again against the sink. In the next session David was sullen and distrustful. Once more he poured the sand from one vessel to the next. Silently I modelled a large red plasticine penis on a baby doll. He stared at it intently for several moments. Abruptly, he flew at the doll and smashed the penis with his fist. "I know what *that* is!" he screamed. In the weeks that followed, more organs were constructed and demolished. I asked if he ever wanted to do that to himself. There followed a torrent of words interspersed with tears. His penis was "dirty, rotten, evil, and it stinks." This was because he had played with himself even though he knew it was bad. He said, "If you did that God would hate you and kick you out of your house."

'David's parents were astonished. They had never punished David or told him that sex was evil. Fortunately, they understood, and reassured David that he was not bad and would not be sent away. His father gave him permission to masturbate by relating his own early pleasures and concerns. David again read fluently and remembered to take pencils to class.

'Because David had little positive information or experience, he grossly misinterpreted events. Ashamed and miserable, he attempted to deny all erotic feelings, engaging only in clean respectable activities. This was all too much for him and so he began to show the symptoms he did. If he had had reassurance, encouragement, and permission to engage in sex play, therapy would have been unnecessary.'

David was rescued from his sexual shame. Others are less fortunate, hence the need for sex therapy in later life. As Dr Yates points out, the highly effective sex therapy devised in recent years, following the pioneering work of Masters and Johnson, owes its success not to lengthy and expensive psychotherapy, but to introducing adults to very elementary, childish sex play, in which 'performance anxiety' is avoided and shame, with the therapist's encouragement, is gradually banished. 'Our more fortunate children,' says Dr Yates, 'are astutely completing the same tasks, and many more – in the garden shed, behind the bush, and up in the tree house.' And, one might add, in the company of paedophiles.

Those who escape the neurotic's aversion from sex are liable to fall foul of perversion – and by this I mean a sex life based on *hostility* to the sex object.<sup>7</sup> There is no shortage of such hostility:

'Murder that sexually excites, mutilation for excitement, rape, sadism with precise physical punishments such as whipping or cutting, enchaining and binding games, defecating or urinating on one's subject – all are on a lessening scale of conscious rage toward one's sex object, in which an essential purpose is for one to be superior to, harmful to, triumphant over another.'<sup>8</sup>

Thus Robert Stoller, who also believes that such phenomena as dirty phone calls, and even various forms of promiscuity are motivated by hostility. To me, his analysis seems plausible, at the very least, when he writes:

'Think of the Don Juan, that paradigm of promiscuity, who reveals his hatred of women so innocently and unwittingly to the audience he must gather to vouch for his performance: his interests are in seduction, not love, and in recounting for friends how many women he has had and how they degraded themselves in the needfulness of

the passion he induced. His excitement and gratification do not come from the sensual pleasures of the sexual act or the intimacy that he might have established with another person; in fact, he shows little interest in intercourse, his concentration being on overcoming the resistance of an apparently reluctant woman. Easy women do not attract him .... So, we ought not to generalize, when we see a promiscuous person, that he is simply a free soul, expressing the natural sexual exuberance inherent in the species ....' <sup>9</sup>

In resurrecting the rather passé and pejorative term 'perversion', as distinct from 'deviation' or 'variant', Stoller seeks to re-emphasize the role of morality and personal responsibility – of the concept of sin in sex – to which as a believer in free will he has a deep philosophical commitment. I would take issue with him on the value of 'sin' as a concept, but the important aspect of his contribution is that (a) he has clarified what it is about certain sexual expression – the underlying motive of hostility – which gives rise to justifiable alarm as to what a society of unbridled 'perversion' might be like, and (b) in concentrating on people's sexual *motives* he has made an invaluable distinction between the origin in early life of true perversions on the one hand, and non-hostile aberrations (into which category I would put my own paedophilic feelings) on the other. He writes:

'From Freud on, it has been said that precocious excitement contributes to perversion. I would agree, but only – as must usually be the case – when there has been too much stimulation and too little discharge or severe guilt. These will be sensed as traumatic and will need to be transformed via the magic of the perverse ritual into a successful venture. With much gratification and little guilt at too young an age, on the other hand, I think the result is not perversion but aberration, a holding on, into adult life to that deviant way of getting pleasure, which is not driven, as is perversion, by the need to harm an object.' <sup>10</sup>

Personally, I can see no harm in 'hanging on' to deviant behaviour which is not motivated by hostility. On the other hand, the absence of guilt, and the successful discharge of stimulation in 'precocious' sexual life, would on Stoller's admission dissipate the circumstances in which a hostile sex life originates.

One further word is called for on perversion, because I do not want it to be thought that I am trying to exonerate my own particular 'perversion' at the expense of those of others. Too often in the past others have done exactly this: those homosexual men who feel at home in a lifestyle of conventional dress and social behaviour have denounced the 'screaming queens' – the flamboyant, painted ones – who give them 'a bad name'; heterosexual transvestites likewise tend to 'put down' gays; gays, generally, protest that they are not child molesters, and denounce paedophilia. All the sexual minorities, in seeking the esteem of the majority, point the finger at others. It is tempting for us paedophiles to do the same. I think most of us – certainly the ones I know – behave towards children in a way which no reasonable interpretation could attribute to some dark, hostile motive; quite the reverse, in fact – benevolent feelings are pronounced. It is tempting therefore to gleefully rub one's hands and push off all the blame onto the *sadists*: for these, we can say (as Stoller does), are a minority who are truly perverted. They are hostile towards their sexual partners. They are sinful. At extremes they are rapacious and murderous.

Murder, and rape, and all non-consensual acts, can of course only be condemned in the strongest terms. At the same time, it should not be overlooked that those who feel



a 'perverted' desire to degrade and hurt their real, or fantasy, sexual object are usually *moral* people. They are not responsible for their sexual inclinations: only for the way in which they are discharged. This being the case, the sadist's convenient and mutually acceptable relationship with the masochist enables him to discharge his otherwise unacceptable desires in a morally acceptable way, which no one has any right to condemn. Let it not be said that I am trying to put down S/M enthusiasts: all *consensual* sexual activity is acceptable.

To return to the subject of body pleasure in early life, and the effects of its deprivation: James Prescott, an American neuropathologist, has gone so far as to suggest that sexual satisfaction early in life, and sensual – specifically, tactile – pleasuring in infancy, are a direct antidote to violence in adulthood.<sup>11</sup> His theory is based on correlations between levels of violence in forty-nine pre-literate cultures for which data were available, and certain variables reflecting physical affection – such as the extent in each of the cultures to which infants were cuddled, caressed and played with, and the permitted levels of pre-marital and extramarital sex.

The method of measuring levels of 'affection' or 'violence' in any particular culture will of course always be open to dispute, but it is worthwhile pointing out that the scales used by Prescott were developed independently, by anthropologists.<sup>12</sup> The results show that societies high in physical affection towards their infants are characterized by low levels of violence. Levels of adult physical violence were accurately predicted in thirty-six cultures (73 per cent).

Six societies, apparent exceptions, were characterized by both high infant affection and high violence. But in five of these cultures a high value was placed on virginity and pre-marital sexual repression was the rule. On the other hand, seven societies were characterized by both low infant physical affection and low adult physical violence. All of these were permissive towards early sexual behaviour – which tends to confirm the therapeutic value noted by some observers of the hugging and caressing of otherwise emotionally deprived children in paedophilic relationships.

Prescott's work throws an interesting light on the common assumption that sex and violence always go together, an inseparable double act, like Laurel and Hardy. Prescott points to laboratory experiments with animals which are consistent with his theory. 'A raging, violent animal,' he says, 'will abruptly calm down when electrodes stimulate the pleasure centres of the brain. Likewise, stimulating the violence centres of the brain can terminate the animal's sensual pleasure and peaceful behaviour.'

Less direct forms of stimulation, however, mediated by the senses, seem to produce an entirely different result, in which sexual arousal and aggressive feelings are linked positively, not negatively – as one rises, so the other tends to rise, and as one falls, so does the other. A biological basis for such a link has been suggested in a number of studies. Maclean, for instance,<sup>13</sup> found evidence that the neural systems for sexual and aggressive behaviour are in close proximity to each other within the limbic system of the brain, and they may partly overlap or be directly linked. In human males, a biological link has been found by Professor Michael Sheard, a psychiatrist at Yale University, between the presence of high levels of the male sex hormone testosterone and a tendency to violence.<sup>14</sup>

Also at Yale University, Andrew Barclay has conducted a series of experiments<sup>15</sup> which examined the aggressive and sexual fantasies of college students. He recorded fantasy imagery produced in stories written by the students after they had been deliberately made angry by being insulted and humiliated in various ways. In comparison with a control group who were not aggressively aroused, the students – both men and women – produced not only more aggressive imagery, as might be expected, but more sexual imagery too.

Predictably, studies such as these have been seized upon in a simplistic way and cited as evidence that a sexually free society (whether free for children or anyone else) would inevitably be bound up with rape, muggings, murder and all kinds of mayhem. A visit to the Trobriand Islands, or perhaps to one of the cultures described by Prescott, would quickly scotch that idea, but the sex/aggression link, if there is any, obviously deserves some comment. In this connection I feel there are three points worth making:

Firstly, such a link admittedly corresponds to what we know on a 'common-sense' level. Sexual competitiveness appears to be responsible for such familiar happenings as dance-floor brawls: most species engage in fighting or threatening behaviour to establish mating privileges and humans are no exception.

Secondly, the link also fits in with the hostile, perverted sexual feelings described by Stoller. (Incidentally, it would only need a small number of 'perverted' subjects in experiments like Barclay's for a considerable impact to be made on the overall strength of the correlation between sexual and aggressive feelings.)

Thirdly, having accepted the possibility of such a link, one cautionary word should be put in about the nature of 'aggression'. Aggressive imagery is not necessarily to be equated with hostile, sadistic or destructive impulses. The pop song *Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick* which became a big seller in the UK, illustrates the problem: its imagery was undoubtedly aggressive; yet it expressed a view (admittedly a *man's* view!) of what women all over the world invite their men to do: 'Hit me with your rhythm stick/Das ist gut, c'est fantastique.' <sup>16</sup> In other words, for 'hit me', read 'excite me', or 'sock it to me', but not 'hurt me'; pleasure is implied in the sought-for contact, not pain or humiliation. Violent imagery in this context is a healthy enough expression of enthusiastic passion, not of hostility or sadism.

None of the above factors does anything to suggest to me that a pro-sexual society will inevitably be a selfish, grabbing, violent one. Such a response presupposes that humans behave in society, where restraint is expected of them, in the same way as they do in laboratory experiments, where it is not. It also presupposes a deterministic role for biologic factors way in excess of that which is justified in the case of human beings; unlike other species, the behaviour patterns of humans are not completely coded in their genes: they are highly subject to social influences, particularly in relation to the early years of development, when the broad foundations of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour are learnt. At this stage there is the opportunity for children to learn a proper sense of restraint – a boy who learns not to fight over a coveted toy will later find it easier to control his primitive inclination to grab a coveted woman. Similarly, a child whose sexuality is encouraged by his parents, and who as a result comes to associate sexual feelings with warmth, affection and gentleness, can hardly help but grow up with sexual enthusiasm (not excluding the robust sort of enthusiasm encountered in *Rhythm Stick*) and a non-violent approach to sexual relations.

The sexual conservatives are also great believers in the social moulding of character, particularly within the family, but they feel they are realists in knowing the limitations of such influences: deep down, they believe that people are inevitably selfish and 'sinful' and the only way to deal with these tendencies is to stamp on them hard, from infancy onwards – to 'break the child's will' as it was starkly put in an even harsher era than our own.

What the conservatives never seem to do is to attempt an evaluation of their own approach: after all, there is no shortage of rape, murder and so on in many societies dominated by traditional, sexually repressive values. It is instructive in this connection to consider the attitudes of our own society's most crippled casualties: the

criminally insane. In Hans Eysenck's book *Sex and Personality*,<sup>17</sup> there appears a fascinating study of 186 patients at Broadmoor, Britain's leading institution for the criminally insane: 3 per cent of these were admitted under the Mental Health Act, Section 26, and the rest had convictions as follows:

- 16 per cent sex offences,
- 11 per cent arson,
- 26 per cent murder or manslaughter,
- 28 per cent attempted murder and wounding,
- 16 per cent other violent assault and property offences.

It might be expected that the sexual attitudes revealed among such a group would show something that the sexual conservatives would immediately recognize as drastically wrong, a failure to learn the traditional values. Not a bit of it. Rather it appears they learnt only too well:

'Broadmoor patients are on the whole much more inhibited sexually than are the "normal" group. Thus they are less easily excited sexually; conditions have to be just right; they think only rarely about sex; they consciously try to keep sex thoughts out of their mind; when they have strong sex feelings they cannot express them; they don't think about sex every day; they say that they do not get excited very easily; they look upon sex as being only for reproduction and not for pleasure; sex is not all that important to them; they are not excited by the thought of an illicit relationship; they can take sex or leave it alone. They draw sharp lines between what is right and what is not in sexual conduct; they find it disgusting to see animals having sexual intercourse; there are some things they would not do with anyone; they find the thought of a sex orgy disgusting; they don't think that sometimes a woman should be sexually aggressive; they prefer intercourse under bedcovers and in the dark; they do not feel like scratching and biting their sex partners; they object to four-letter swear words in mixed company; they find wife-swapping distasteful; and they find some forms of love-making disgusting. They hold rather conservative views on sexual matters: virginity is a girl's most valuable possession; seeing a person nude does not interest them; they would protect their children from contact with sex; they would not take a chance to watch people making love; they are against pornographic writing being freely published; they believe in a sexual censorship; they do not uphold the dual standard of morality; they think that sexual permissiveness undermines society; they do not consider sex play among young children harmless; and they think it right that the man should be dominant.'<sup>18</sup>

It is tempting at this point to simply say 'I rest my case,' and move on with a fine rhetorical flourish. And move on I must, but not without reminding readers that the case presented in this chapter is not exclusively a paedophilic one at all: it is just one small contribution to a manifesto for all of society – a manifesto to which thinking people everywhere, the overwhelming majority of whom are presumably not paedophiles, are increasingly beginning to contribute.

## Ch 5 - Notes and References

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## Chapter 6

# Towards More Sensible Laws

In the preceding chapters I have suggested that we have long been aware that children are sexual beings, but that society has been all too ready to ignore the fact, and to give too little thought to its enormous implications. It has been demonstrated beyond all doubt that children may be sexually attracted to adults, and I hope I have shown convincingly that there are adults who genuinely love children, and who are sometimes able to form positive erotic relationships with them, despite all the social prohibitions.

I have also shown that there are paedophiles – like myself – who have been torn between their conviction that they have love to give, and their fear that in any particular circumstance they may succeed in giving only offence. And even in the case of those for whom the barriers of doubt and guilt have posed fewer problems, so many relationships are crushed in tragedy when they come to be 'found out'.

In much of this volume I try to show that all the prohibitions, the doubts, the confusions, the tragedies, that accompany sexual behaviour in all its manifestations, are a product of our society. For the moment, however, I want to suggest immediate, pragmatic steps that can safely be taken in the United Kingdom as it is (and, with modifications, in other Western societies), not as I would wish it to be. I want to show that what we in PIE have to say is not just a lot of indulgent theory that would never work except in impossible conditions of an ideal society, but that we have our feet firmly on the ground.

It is now over four years since PIE formulated its proposals on the age of consent, in the form of legal recommendations made to the Home Office Criminal Law Revision Committee. At the time, the proposals were received in total silence by the press, although we understand that at least one cabinet minister was impressed.<sup>1</sup>

Before turning to these proposals, it will be helpful to put them in the context of other attempts to mitigate the more crudely harmful effects of the law on the sexually-involved child. Of these, an experiment in Israel could best fit in with society's traditional antagonism to paedophilia. In 1955 the state of Israel passed an act substituting a social-work-orientated handling of the child for the standard police investigations. The act provides for the appointment of youth examiners to investigate the facts of the crime, rather than the police. The youth examiner can also decide whether or not the offender is to be prosecuted, and he is empowered to refrain from going ahead in cases where he thinks there will be an adverse effect on the child.

The youth examiner normally sees the child in her own home, or in the examiner's office, in much more informal surroundings than would be the case in a police station, with a resultant easing of tensions for the child and her parents. The objective of the youth examiner in this first meeting is to create an aura of reassurance; to give confidence through establishing warm and helpful relationships; to elicit the facts of the sexual relationship, and to evaluate the extent to which the child had been affected by it. Then, the examiner has to decide whether the child can be exposed to the legal process, and whether the child may be permitted to testify.

Judge David Reifen of Tel Aviv reports<sup>2</sup> that during the first two years following the passage of the act only 10 per cent of the children under ten years of age and 35 per cent of children between ten and fourteen were permitted to give evidence in court. When a child is allowed to testify the youth examiner is in court to give the child support and reassurance.

In most cases in which the prosecution goes ahead, the youth examiner prohibits the child from testifying, and the examiner himself gives evidence in court in lieu of the child. This permits the examiner to introduce information taken and recorded by him in his interviews with the child. The examiner is also allowed to include any minutes or reports he may have prepared following such interviews. If the youth examiner presents evidence the court may request that he re-examine the child to obtain further information or to clarify specific areas, but the examiner has the right to refuse to do so if he feels further questioning could damage the child psychologically.

Since this procedure is an exception to the rule prohibiting hearsay evidence, the law provides that no person shall be convicted on the evidence of the youth examiner alone. There must be corroborative evidence.

The idea has a lot to commend it in terms of protection of the child, but it clearly does so at the drastic expense of the normal rights of accused persons. As the American De Francis Report<sup>3</sup> says:

'Briefly, without getting too technical, the plan violates basic rights – the right of the offender to face the accuser, the right to cross-examine, the right to exclude hearsay, and the right to equal protection of the law. The last point stresses the fact that under Israel's procedure sex offenders against children do not get the same legal protections provided for other persons accused of crime. These are all substantial rights which our judicial system is dedicated to support and protect.'

The De Francis Report itself was unequivocally, indeed downright hysterically, anti-paedophile, but it does at least have the value of recognizing that children need shielding from the harshness of police and court procedures.

The Report commended protective service programmes as operated by the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and other SPCCs. The pattern they employ, like the Israeli one, also replaces the police by protective agency staff in questioning the child 'victim'. By agreement with the police and county prosecutor, the protective agency receives the initial report of the sex 'crime' and conducts the investigation. With the agency's child-centred orientation, says De Francis, 'the impact on the child of the emotional stresses inherent in the investigatory process are softened by concern, by awareness and by sensitivity to the child's needs.'

The case may then be brought to court, in which case the protective agency worker 'prepares the child and family for the court experience.' This preparation is geared to bring conviction of the necessity for prosecuting the offender to protect the community. The child and family are supported in accepting their role and in gaining awareness of the positives of the situation.

The worker gives other and more tangible service to ease the anxieties of the child and his parents throughout the court proceedings. He will appear with the child and family at every court appearance and serve as *amicus curiae* – as a friend of the court and as the family's representative. He will oppose unwarranted defence motions for adjournments; he may seek to have the general public excluded from the courtroom; and he will work with the county prosecutor toward accepting a guilty plea from the offender. If a guilty plea is accepted, there will not be a trial and the child will be 'saved the ordeal of testifying in court.'

Much of the SPCC procedure is a great improvement on what we know in Britain. It represents at least an attempt to put the child's needs first. But the philosophy of the approach suffers from the same defects as 'protective' thinking in other spheres. Labour laws that were designed in the past to protect women from being exploited by

employment in heavy and arduous jobs, while they may have been well-intentioned, are also the expression of a society which seeks to perpetuate the notion of a 'weaker sex': a society which says a woman who wants to be a crane driver should be prevented from exercising the folly of her own choice, is also one which is unlikely to accept a woman as a company chairperson. It is a patronizing, unliberated society.<sup>4</sup>

The same goes for the way in which we treat children. I'm not saying that the law which stopped wretched little Victorian boys from being stuffed up sooty chimneys was a bad one. But it is bad if that same legislation, or laws passed with the intention of 'protecting', are used to prevent children from gaining a measure of economic independence, by doing a paper round, for instance, or serving petrol at a garage. In such cases society is serving not to prevent exploitation of the child, but to keep it in subjugation, to limit its horizons.

The notion of 'protection' by means of taking all decisions out of the hands of the party to be protected, and giving all responsibility to 'authorities' who are presumed to know best, is clearly evident in the SPCC procedure. In this case it is the social worker who is presumed to know best. And the social worker is clearly charged with the task of convincing the child and family 'of the necessity for prosecuting the offender to protect the community'. What if they are not convinced? What if the child was very fond of the adult and knew a damn sight better than any social worker that he was not a danger to the community? What if the parents knew it too? – for parents often do oppose prosecution.

It appears that this 'we know best' attitude is even allowed to influence the judicial proceedings when they are under way, in the SPCC scheme of things: evidently they do not feel they are overreaching themselves by moral blackmail of the accused, in persuading him to plead guilty so as to protect the child. Yet this kind of pressure is just as unfair, in terms of being contrary to the ordinary rules of natural justice, as the Israeli system described above. Incidentally, it should be realized that the person most sensitive to the harm done by police and court proceedings is often none other than the accused. I have known several people who have pleaded guilty when they might have escaped conviction, simply to save the child from the anguish of it all. One of them got a life sentence for his pains! Can it really be satisfactory to rely on a system which exploits the courage, the moral strength, the sheer goodness of the accused, in order to condemn him?

We like to think that the proposals we in PIE have worked out succeed in achieving the most important goals of both the Israeli and SPCC approaches, without their attendant weaknesses. The PIE proposals would:

- (a) maintain protection to the community by keeping the criminal law in use for those cases where it is clearly appropriate;
- (b) avoid the necessity for police or criminal court involvement in a great many cases;
- (c) make good use of the professional skills of social workers;
- (d) in an unpatronizing way, give the child a say in the proceedings;
- (e) avoid, in most cases where it is likely to be a factor, the possibility of moral blackmail against the accused.

These are big claims, especially as the core proposal – abolition of the age of consent – seems at first sight so radical that we might be thought quite mad to suppose it could be taken at all seriously. Yet it is worth noting that exactly such a proposal is being taken very seriously in one European country – Holland – and not just by 'radicals' either. In evidence to a Government commission (the Melai Commission) on the protection of children, due to report soon, the Netherlands Order of Attorneys has advocated the abolition of laws based on an age of consent concept

(although the Order of Attorneys felt that coitus, as opposed to other sexual activities, was unacceptable with a girl under twelve). The Protestant Union for Child Protection also declared itself against a fixed age and wants prosecution limited to cases of evident 'seduction' or compulsion; the Roman Catholic Youth Council has suggested that where a child is over twelve the question of whether there should be a prosecution should be determined by the wishes of the child.

The various Dutch proposals by no means fail in the protection of children. Nor does PIE's proposal overlook the problems inherent in the meaning of 'consent' where a child is concerned. The question of 'consent' in a philosophical sense is something to which I will return. What I can immediately establish is that PIE, no less than the sceptics and detractors, has been aware that there are huge grey areas between, say, the enthusiastic willingness of a toddler to play genital touching 'games', and the doubtful submission of a teenage girl to a boyfriend whom she does not want to disappoint. Children can be coerced, psychologically, or by veiled threats, just as adults can, into giving their consent; indeed, some feel that an adult, just by virtue of his size and maturity, carries so much authority in relation to a child that the latter may have insufficient chance to say 'no' to sexual suggestions, and his consent can never therefore be wholly valid.

Some of these points PIE would dispute, but all of them have been recognized as valid ones for concern, and the proposals were formed with a view to taking them into account. PIE's evidence, if acted upon, would by no means give adults *carte blanche* to have sex with children, and would allow it only in cases where the clearest consent has been given. The 'grey area' problem was to be solved, not by the blunt instrument of the criminal law, for this usually operates to the detriment of the child as well as the prosecuted adult, but by establishing a new framework within the civil law. This would determine, in cases of doubt, whether a child's consent to sexual activity could have been communicated to an older partner, and there were provisions for prohibiting the older partner from further sexual activity with the child.

Before turning to the proposals in detail, it is necessary to be clear about the principles that underlie them. Briefly, in common with the Sexual Law Reform Society, PIE believes that there should be a general freedom, upheld by the law, for individuals to engage in any sexual activities that they freely choose.

The only exceptions PIE believes are necessary arise from the need to avoid the infliction of involuntarily sought pain, anguish or physical damage upon participants; the giving of affront to third parties who have a complaint justifiable in the courts; and the avoidance of seduction or procurement of children through the use of intimidation, drugs, alcohol, etc. (The Sexual Law Reform Society proposed an age of consent for the protection of children.)

PIE also accepts, in common with the Sexual Law Reform society, that it should be an offence to indulge in any sexual activity or display where it could be observed by others and causes them annoyance.

In addition, PIE recognizes that the consent of a child, though potentially present, cannot always be communicated to an older person; the same may apply to the mentally subnormal, in relation to any sex partner. In such cases PIE proposed that it should be possible for the law to intervene to prevent the continuation of such sexual activity. (Personally, I feel that the mentally subnormal are as entitled to a sex life as anyone else and I believe they, like children, are 'protected' to the point of being stifled. But this is another issue.)

On the basis of these principles, PIE proposed that there should be no age of consent, and that the criminal law should concern itself only with sexual activities to which consent is not given; or which continue after prohibition by a civil court (see



below); or which otherwise offend against these principles. In relation to children and juveniles the question arises, even in the absence of the above factors, as to whether the younger partner's consent could have been communicated to the elder party. This would be determined by PIE's entirely new system, operating outside the ambit of the criminal law.

From this point on, I can do no better than quote the proposal verbatim: <sup>5</sup>

'The legal framework that we propose to operate outside the criminal law needs to take account of the extents to which children of different ages are able to communicate their consent to sexual activity. Whereas we believe that children of any age are capable of considering a sexual act pleasurable or not pleasurable, the extent to which this information, and therefore the consent, can be communicated to other persons varies.

'We propose a series of age groups where, under specified conditions, the provisions of the Children's Acts and other means could be applied. The lowest of these age groups would be 0-3. By the age of four the great majority of children are able to communicate verbally or in an equivalent way. Below the age of four it would be deemed by the law that children are unable to communicate their consent to sexual activity. Where sexual activity with a child of this age occurs it is assumed that consent or lack of it cannot be determined; therefore, providing there is no aspect of the sexual activity to which we intend the criminal law to apply, on receipt of a complaint to the local authority action should be sought by the administrators of the Children's Acts. The form of this action would be a prohibition similar to an injunction and imposed by the administrators of the Children's Acts. The prohibition would restrain the older partner from seeking out the child. If this is not possible, as in the case of a parent or guardian being the older partner, then the child could be brought into the care of the local authority. In the event of breaches of the prohibition, fines or terms of imprisonment could be applied.

'Whereas below the age of four it is assumed that consent cannot be communicated by most children, there will still be some above this age who cannot communicate their consent. The law should allow for this. In fixing ten as the age of criminal responsibility the law assumes not only that most children should be held responsible for their actions at this age but also that they can communicate their intent. There can be little doubt that the majority of children at the age of ten can communicate their consent or otherwise to a sexual act. We therefore suggest that doubt exists for only some children between the ages of four and nine.

'In the case of children between these ages, those closely concerned with the child will be the people most likely to be aware if consent could not be communicated.

'In the case of a child aged between four and nine no action should be taken to stop sexual relationships between it and an older partner except (a) on the complaint of a parent or guardian or a person responsible for the care or welfare of the child or (b) any other person

having reason to believe that the sexual activity was not consented to; or had resulted in clinically demonstrable mental or physical harm or suffering; or involved intimidation, drugs, alcohol, etc. to secure the seduction or procurement of the child ....

'On receipt of a complaint of a parent or guardian or a person responsible for the care or welfare of a child, and where no criminal sexual activities are involved, and where it has been shown that consent could not be communicated, the continuance of the relationship should be prohibited in the same way as a relationship with a child under four.

'Between ten and seventeen, where it is assumed that consent can be communicated except in the case of the mentally subnormal, restrictions on mutual and harmless relationships with adults should be minimal. The "moral danger" clause of the Children and Young Persons Act should be used sparingly. Stricter definition of this clause should be stated in law to avoid the harm done by citing mutual and harmless relationships between children, or between children and adults, as situations of "moral danger" ....

'The mere involvement of children of four and above in consensual sexual activity whether homosexual or heterosexual, whether with other children or with adults, would not be a sufficient justification, in our view, for activating the care and protection provisions of the Children and Young Persons Act.

'We believe that it would be intolerable if prohibition by the administrators of the Children's Acts could be sought concerning sexual relationships between children of similar ages. We therefore propose a series of three overlapping age groups where children within each group would not be subject to prohibition if they engage in sexual activity. These groups are 0 - 9; 7 - 13; 10 - 17. A child of eight, for example, would be free to engage in consensual sexual activity with other children aged between 0-13. In the case of sexual activity between children where the prohibition process would apply then the prohibition may be sought against either the older child or the guardian of the older child.

'We propose that the sexual relationships of mentally subnormal persons should be treated in a similar way to those of children aged from 4-9, so that each case should be considered on its merits. However we feel that in this case the next of kin or those concerned with the mental welfare of the subnormal person should additionally be free to ask the local authority to seek to have the sexual activity prohibited.

'We have proposed that the local authority should be responsible for seeking prohibition by the administrators of the Children's Acts of certain sexual activity. We believe that if the parent or guardian in the case of a child (or next of kin in the case of a mentally subnormal adult) was responsible for seeking prohibition the possible financial burden to be incurred may deter action. Also, it is important to have machinery which can be brought into action other than by the parent or guardian or next of kin, in cases where the latter are insufficiently

concerned with the welfare of the child or mentally subnormal person.

'The onus for bringing any proceedings lies with the local authority and any complaint made by the parent, guardian or others concerned with the care or welfare of the child, or the next of kin or those concerned with the mental welfare of the mentally subnormal person, should be brought before the administrators of the Children's Acts without delay.'

Stated in full, as they are above, these proposals may appear to be more complicated than they really are, especially by virtue of including no fewer than six brackets of age groups to which different provisions apply! At least the present heterosexual age of consent for girls, at sixteen, however arbitrary it may be, has the virtue of being simple and clear to everyone. The man who goes to bed with a fifteen-year-old girl knows he is playing with fire, and can have no excuses. Shouldn't any replacement law be at least as clear?

We like to think the PIE proposal is clear and simple. Put at its simplest, no one would have to worry about age provisions at all in their choice of a sexual partner; but they would have to have their partner's consent. And we believe that consent is the important factor, not age. It is also important that there would be a responsibility on the adult not to try and engage a child in any sexual activity likely to prove harmful: this would rule out inappropriate activity, such as intercourse with an apparently willing, but very young child.

Only 'the administrators of the Children's Acts' would need to concern themselves with our various age groups. In other words, the local authority children's departments, who deal with care orders, and the juvenile court magistrates who grant such orders. Just as the local authority may decide that a child needs to be taken into care, so could it decide that a sexual prohibition in relation to an older partner would be in his or her interests. Juvenile court magistrates could then uphold or reject their application according to their judgement of the facts. It is important to note that this would be a civil court hearing, not a criminal court one. Magistrates can sit in either capacity. So there would be no trial. No one to find innocent or guilty. Instead, the magistrates would be deciding whether or not to let a relationship continue.

How would they make such a decision? What evidence would they take? What principles would they adopt? It is important to get these matters absolutely clear, if only because there is already some evidence that our intentions have been misunderstood, and have been wrongly supposed to lack consistency with our aims.

It will be remembered that one of PIE's main concerns in formulating the proposals was that children should not be unnecessarily required to submit to cross-examination in the witness box. Yet here we are proposing a hearing before magistrates which must surely involve the taking of evidence from children. It has been suggested that for magistrates to prevent the continuance of a relationship, there would have to be proof that at some point sexual activity had in fact taken place; and if the elder partner chose to deny that, there would have to be a formal establishment of the facts deploying the normal rules of evidence, including fierce cross-examination of the child.

But this is not the case. Unlike a trial, the object of our proposed hearings is not to establish beyond reasonable doubt what occurrences may have taken place in the past. Instead its purpose is oriented towards the future: to assess what will henceforth be in the best interests of the child. Evidence from the history of the relationship would of course play an important part in making a sensible decision, but there is no reason for the entire decision to hang on this: the court would also have available to it the immediate evidence of the child, which could in these circumstances be quite safely

conveyed to the court in the Israeli manner, via a 'youth examiner' standing in for the child. In other words, the child would be able to convey to the court whether she or he would be happy to go on having a relationship with the older person in future. She or he would be able to tell the court quite clearly – regardless of whether sex had actually taken place in the history of the relationship – her or his attitude to having a sexual relationship, or even just a social relationship, with the older partner in future. If the younger partner appeared in the least bit afraid, or doubtful, about the continuance of a relationship, whether sexual or not, or did not appear to be able to communicate her or his feelings to adults, the court would be empowered to prohibit the relationship from continuing.

Prior to the court hearing, the 'youth examiner' would have been able to ask the child, in an informal setting, in the child's own home, to talk freely about any aspect of the relationship thought to be relevant – not least about whether the child simply liked the adult in question. The interview would not have to confine itself to the narrow question of particular sexual acts, though the child would be given ample opportunity by the 'youth examiner' to say if she or he found any such activity to be unpleasant, or if she or he had been cajoled, or bribed, into it. If the child claimed there had been sexual activity which she or he did not want, a criminal action could ensue.

It may be thought harsh for a prohibition against 'seeking out a child' to be granted against an adult merely because a child happened not to like him. But why not? Why should a child be pestered by an adult making a nuisance of himself. For a child to be given legal support in her or his reasonable wish to be left alone would be an important advance in children's rights. It is unlikely that any truly capricious complaint would be taken up, since, as will be remembered, PIE proposes that prohibitions should be sought via local authority action: totally insubstantial complaints would not be pursued by them.

Just to clarify a stage further the principles on which a prohibition would be granted or withheld, let's take an example. Supposing a boy's father sought a prohibition against a neighbour said to have been having anal intercourse with his twelve-year-old son. Deviously, this is widely regarded as an extreme form of sexual activity, especially in relation to a boy so young. The police would doubtless bring a criminal charge if there were the remotest indication that the boy had not been willing, and rightly, too. Supposing, then, that the boy, and the adult, admitted that such intercourse had taken place, and the boy stoutly stood by saying that he had liked it, and that he wanted to go on doing it. In line with the principles advanced above, no prohibition would be granted.

But let us be clear that such an outcome would be exceptional. <sup>6</sup> Even if PIE's proposals could be implemented in the present climate of society, it is probable that the 'youth examiner' would make every attempt to elicit any element of doubt in the boy's mind. He would have to be a very determined, self-knowing youngster indeed to resist the inevitable pressure on him to say that he wanted to give up the relationship. At the age of fifteen or sixteen such resistance might be more commonly found.

My guess is that even in relation to quite mild sexual activity, the refusal of a prohibition in relation to a child of less than thirteen or fourteen would be a rarity. On the other hand, children would be awarded protection which in law they do not have at the moment: in addition to being spared the ordeal of court testimony, a child could be spared the attentions of an adult who pestered her or him. At present, an adult who commits an indecent assault on a child may be fined, or given a short prison sentence, after which there is nothing to stop him from contacting the child in question again. A prohibition order would make such contact illegal.

Another question which appears to have caused some confusion, albeit in people who have written articles in the press without having bothered to read PIE's proposals, is whether PIE proposes an age of consent of nought, or of four years of age. Some newspapers have wrongly opted for the latter age, having failed to grasp that PIE's age groups in relation to sex between a child and an adult relate to the child's ability to communicate their consent, not to their ability to consent as such.

In the words of the PIE proposal:

'Whereas we believe that children of any age are capable of considering a sexual act pleasurable or not pleasurable, the extent to which this information, and therefore the consent, can be communicated to other persons varies.'

Thus PIE believes that a baby may well get a great deal of pleasure from having its genitals tickled. But if a prohibition were sought in relation to sexual activity involving a baby, the court could not be expected to determine whether a baby had enjoyed, and consented to, such an activity: the baby would lack the verbal skill to communicate its feelings to the 'youth examiner'. Nor would it be able to say whether it was happy for such activity to carry on in future. In such a case, in fact in relation to all cases of children under four years of age, a prohibition would thus be granted automatically.

Does this effectively mean an age of consent of four? Not quite. For it would be within the spirit of PIE's proposals, and an available option, for a citizen not to complain about a sexual relationship known to exist between an adult and a baby, providing that citizen had no reason to suppose the relationship was a non-consensual one. Even a police officer who knew of such a relationship would not be bound to seek a prohibition if he was satisfied that the baby was happy with it.

One might feel that this element of discretion operates at present in any case: since the abolition of the offence known as 'misprision of a felony', there has been no obligation on citizens to report criminal acts that they have heard about. The difference in this case is that the act in question would not be regarded as criminal, or as unlawful in any sense unless a complaint – and a substantiated complaint – were made about it.

There is of course another factor relating to the consent of children, especially very young children and babies, which is perhaps the major stumbling block for most people. This can be summed up in the phrase 'They don't know what they are doing,' or 'They don't know/understand what they are letting themselves in for/what the consequences will be.' This objection applies, and has to be countered, even if the infant or child did appear to give some sort of consent.

In the case of babies, however, it may be thought impossible for them to give any measure of consent. For although a baby may giggle and squeal with delight at having its genitals tickled, it is doubtful whether prior to that happening for the first time the baby would know that it would enjoy such a thing, or would be able to indicate to the adult that it would welcome the tickling. For the adult simply to go ahead and tickle on the assumption that the baby will be delighted may be thought presumptuous: one cannot do the sexual act first, and acquire the consent as one is going along.

While such a view has logic to it, in my view it fails to take any account of the likely circumstances in which such an act – tickling a baby's genitals – would take place. The 'offender' is most likely to be the child's parents, who from birth onwards have an intimate relationship with the infant, inevitably and necessarily, in terms of bathing, nappy-changing, breast-feeding, etc. In such circumstances it would be absurd to suggest that particular areas of the body should scrupulously be avoided by parental fingers. The 'impossibility-of-consent' viewpoint also fails to take into

account that in infancy the baby has had no social or cultural conditioning against sexual activity; experience tells us that they do in fact enjoy gentle, age-appropriate stimulation.

Questions of 'consent' are taken up more fully in later chapters. My purpose here is simply to explain the nature of PIE's proposals and to iron out the one or two ambiguities and misunderstandings that appear to have risen in relation to them.

One minor accusation is that the PIE proposals replace an admittedly arbitrary age of consent, sixteen, with a whole lot of other ages which are equally open to question. One might ask whether four really is an age at which children have acquired verbal skills. Would three, or five, have been more sensible? Is any one age ridiculous? And what about the age ten, which is the divide between another of our categories? We say we have selected the age of ten because it matches the recognized age of criminal responsibility. But what about if – as I believe is provided for in the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 – the age of criminal responsibility is raised to fourteen? Then there are our overlapping categories, within which children in defined age groups would be able to have sex freely with each other: the bands being 0-9, 7-13, 10-17. Where do we get these ages from? How do we justify their singular significance?

First of all it should be pointed out that the present age of consent is arbitrarily restrictive; by contrast PIE's proposals are philosophically permissive, across the whole age range.

Secondly, the present law is nothing like as tidy and simple as it may at first appear: sixteen is the heterosexual age of consent for girls. The homosexual age of consent for boys (or perhaps we should say men) is twenty-one. The ages of consent for homosexual activity between females, and for heterosexual activity in which the boy is the younger partner are much less clear. Unlike PIE's proposals, ages of consent have in the past been fixed less by reference to any clear philosophy than by dubiously researched notions of Parliamentarians as to when young girls' bodies become ripe.<sup>7</sup>

The third, and most important point, is that by considering the development of children, and their ability to communicate consent at a variety of stages, one is paying due regard to the fact that children do develop; that a one-year-old is very different to a fifteen-year-old is perfectly obvious, but the present law accords the fact virtually no significance.<sup>8</sup> PIE's proposals do. The more one can discriminate between different ages, without creating an administrative nightmare, the more sensitively one can take action appropriate to a child's age.

It would be wonderful if the law could also take into account a particular child's stage of development, rather than his chronological age, since any particular child may be several years in advance of, or behind, the 'norm' in his ability to communicate consent. To a certain extent, PIE's proposals achieve this very thing, in so far as they recognize a broad range of ages – from four to nine – at which children may or may not be able to communicate consent, depending on their stage of development. In other words PIE recognizes the problem of arbitrariness, and no great store is set in the proposals on any particular age advanced in them: only the overall principle of putting consent first, rather than age, is of any significance.

There remains only one point in the proposals which does not entirely speak for itself. This is a reference to the 'moral danger' clause of the Children and Young Persons Act. This clause provides that if a child is thought by a local authority, or the police, or the NSPCC, to be in 'moral danger', she or he can be taken before a juvenile court, which can make an order that she or he be placed in local authority care, to isolate her or him from the 'moral danger'. The word 'moral' can of course be defined

in a sexually restrictive sense, and in fact usually is. By calling for sparing use and 'stricter definition' of the clause, PIE is effectively suggesting that the word 'moral' should be defined in a way that would not automatically rule out sexual acts.

Some lawyers have been impressed by PIE's proposals. Others – notably Richard Southwell QC <sup>2</sup> – have had their doubts. Southwell felt that one could not have a system involving injunctions unless there was proof that sexual activity had already taken place. We see no necessity for this, but in view of the fact that proceedings are of a civil nature and could be held in camera – so that no adult's reputation need be at stake, much less his liberty – it would not be unfair to employ the Israeli 'youth examiner' system for the presentation of the child's evidence, if it were felt necessary to show reasonable grounds for believing that sex had taken place. In other words, the child would not, on any reading of the workability of the proposals, have to be cross-examined in court.

A far more important criticism lies in the fact that no clear distinction is made between different types of sexual activity. Whereas it may be felt harmless enough physically for a child to consent to masturbation with an adult, whether actively, passively, or both, or to oral sex (though there might be some argument about this), the same might not be felt in relation to coitus or anal intercourse.

No one in his right mind would suggest that a four- or five-year-old girl could validly consent to coitus with an adult, or a boy of the same age to passive anal intercourse. These activities would almost certainly involve excruciating pain and severe physical damage, to say nothing of lasting psychological trauma. A child who had not experienced intromission could not be expected to know these probable effects. In the circumstances, I would agree that any willingness on her or his behalf to accept attempted intromission would not constitute true consent, even if it did prove possible for the child to experience such sex as pleasurable.

This is probably the fear that most people have at the back of their minds when they think of little children not being old enough to know what they are doing. In a society in which children can learn about sex very early in life, without it being a dark, sinister mystery, where coitus between children themselves is an unremarkable occurrence – such as the communes described by Johnston and Deisher – I have no doubt that PIE's proposals would work as they stand, if indeed there was need for any law at all. For in such a society there would be no children beyond infancy who were too young to know what they were doing: a six-year-old who has already been penetrated by an eight- or nine-year-old would be well able to judge her or his own ability, or (more probably) lack of it, to enjoy penetration by an adult's penis.

We do not yet live in such a society. Maybe the only way to become one is to insist on changes in attitudes towards children, on much more advanced sex education and on sexual liberty among children, along with proposals such as those of PIE. Such would be a truly radical approach: a package deal for a better society. But for the moment there is an understandable fear which must be recognized, and I should say at once that, in so far as PIE's proposals appear to allow the penetration of very young children by adults, this was not intended: I believe such penetration would in practice be excluded by the clause making it a criminal offence for an adult to cause a child harm or suffering as a result of a sexual act. Unfortunately, the proposals are solely retrospective in nature: they are capable, after the event, of being used against an adult who has actually harmed a child, but they do little to steer him away from possibly harmful activities before the event. In the absence of a clear, guiding criterion, the adult might be tempted to persuade himself that an act would be harmless which would in fact not be.

Should there be an age of consent, then, geared specifically to a child receiving

(but not giving) penetration? On balance, I feel there is a need for this, <sup>10</sup> although in saying so I am departing from the PIE 'party line' that I have espoused for the last four years. What might such an age be, if it were to be based purely on the physical development of children in general to a stage when they were able to experience such activity as pleasurable rather than painful? (Emotional factors, knowledge of the world, etc., are dealt with elsewhere.)

We have seen that in other cultures custom allows children to receive penetrative sex by adults from as young as eight, and it seems improbable that such customs would persist if they proved to be physically damaging, <sup>11</sup> though it is still possible that they may be endured, rather than enjoyed, by some children. I do not want to be dogmatically precise about any particular age: it may even be that the appropriate minimum age for coitus is not the same as that for anal intercourse, but on the basis of the medical opinion I have sounded informally, making allowance for slower developing children, I feel that in both cases twelve would probably be about right.

Given that around 95 per cent of non-aggressive paedophilic sex with children under twelve is non-penetrative anyway, <sup>12</sup> I believe that such a restriction would be respected by paedophiles. I believe they would be able to understand the purpose of such a law, whereas the indiscriminate condemnation of even the most harmless, gentle and tender acts of loving which at present prevails is simply beyond their comprehension, and rightly so. In addition, as all sexual acts with the under-twelves are at present subject to the possibility of many years' imprisonment, it may well be that among the remaining 5 per cent some thinking along the lines of 'May as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb' will have played a part.

At all ages there is some physical danger associated with penetrative sex, especially for females, who may contract cervical cancer. While this disease is not unknown in virgins (about one in every 250 cases, on average, occurs in women who have never had coitus), <sup>13</sup> it should be realized – and pointed out to young people – that its development in the middle and later years of life is associated with a variety of factors, including starting coitus young. <sup>14</sup> There are those who see this as an 'age of consent' issue, although such a view rests on the doubtful assumption that any such legal age is a complete determinant of when youngsters start their sex lives: a recent survey suggests that around one in five youngsters (21 per cent) now have sexual intercourse below the age of consent. <sup>15</sup> What's more, because adults try to make juvenile sexuality go away by pretending it doesn't exist (school sex education lessons often say a lot about genes and Fallopian tubes, but offer no practical information on birth control or the symptoms and treatment of VD), young people are in practice exposed to sexual problems without having the faintest idea of how to deal with them. And they can be dealt with: the cure rate for cervical cancer, for instance, is 100 per cent, providing that it is detected early, and with modern methods of treatment the surgery required is minor rather than drastic.

The sensible – indeed the responsible – way to tackle the medical problems of sex is emphatically not to bury one's head in the sand. Where the sex life of adults is concerned, the point is slowly being taken. Hence the development of public health policies aimed at encouraging those suffering from sexual complaints to seek treatment. No one suggests that adults should be celibate in order to avoid the problems.

Why, then, should this be suggested in relation to young people? The trouble is that sexual diseases (and, to a lesser extent, pregnancy outside marriage) are regarded as especially terrible and degrading. As a result, a cloud of secrecy surrounds the subject, especially for the young, because their sexual activities are not regarded as legitimate: in these circumstances, the sexually afflicted are often too anxious or



ashamed to seek treatment, so that the problem inevitably becomes worse.

Instead of outlawing the sexual life of the young, it would make much more sense to extend public health policies to include them. There is no reason why check-ups for VD should not be included (on a confidential basis) in school medical examinations. Cervical smears among sexually active girls could also be undertaken in schools at very little cost above that of existing school medicals, <sup>16</sup> and this would be a golden opportunity to impress upon such youngsters the need to go for voluntary check-ups at regular intervals after leaving school. At present, there is a distinct social class bias in voluntary screenings among adults, in that the knowledge of the importance of such screenings is much greater in the middle classes and above than in the working class: a more active schools policy could play an important part in reducing this bias.

Folklore also has it that anal intercourse is dangerous, but this is not the case. The Wolfenden Committee had this to say:

'As regards the offence itself, the risk of physical injury to the passive partner, especially if young, has been mentioned to us as a justification for attaching a specially heavy penalty to buggery. Our evidence suggests that cases in which physical injury results from the act of buggery are very rare.' <sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the greatest physical problem of all in connection with sexuality is that of the unwanted baby, and in a sense this hasn't anything to do with paedophilia at all: male heterosexual paedophiles are predominantly attracted to girls in the later pre-pubertal age range, at a stage when they are not capable of conception. The thirteen- or fourteen-year-old-girl who has an unwanted pregnancy is far more likely to have become pregnant by a boy of the same age, or perhaps a year or two older, than by an adult. For boys, the issue obviously does not arise, though interestingly enough an adult woman was recently successful in filing a suit for the maintenance of her child against his twelve-year-old father. I don't know whether there was a stipulation that this should come from his pocket money, or whether the order was to apply only from when he came of age. Nevertheless, it is an example of the confused state of legal thinking: if a boy is old enough to be responsible for the consequences of his sexual actions in this way, how can he possibly be considered incapable of consent? The law (in this case German law, I believe), quite illogically, tries to have it both ways.

Arguably, the sexually free society that I am advocating would be one in which there would be more sexual expression between adolescents, as well as between adults and children, and that more unwanted pregnancies would thus occur. Given society's existing reluctance to teach children about birth control this might be true. There has to be a change of heart. <sup>18</sup> There must be teaching of birth control methods in schools and the ready availability of contraceptives (either free, or at a not-prohibitive rate) to youngsters. A start in the right direction has been made at Doncaster, where community physician Dr Robert Stalker has opened a family planning clinic for adolescents, where it is possible for girls as young as twelve to be given the contraceptive pill. <sup>19</sup>

The question of 'sexual exploitation', what the concept entails, and whether paedophilia is necessarily exploitative, will be explored fully in another chapter. What I hope readers will accept is that the nature of PIE's legal proposals does not lend support to the view that PIE as an organization sees no distinction between sexual liberation and sexual exploitation. Indeed, the principal author of the proposals, Keith Hose, had been largely inspired in his thinking by those radical elements within the gay and feminist movements who were most concerned with acting to eliminate 'sexism', 'manipulation', 'dominance', and 'exploitation', in both interpersonal and societal structures.

For him, one of the key elements in the proposals was that for the very first time they would give the child a say in her or his own sexual destiny. The effect would be liberating, not so much to the paedophile, but to the child. It would be the economically and socially weaker partner in the relationship, the child, whose views would constitute the clinching factor in whether a prohibition against an adult partner would be granted. Not the local authority. Nor the police. Nor any other complainant. And certainly not the paedophile. Not even the parents, for although I do accept that most parents are loving, are concerned, and that their views should be taken very seriously into account, it should never be forgotten that not all parents are all that they should be. The PIE proposals would not give *carte blanche* to any adult to exploit a child. The criminal law would still be in operation against obvious offences, and the child would be given every opportunity and encouragement to terminate an unsatisfactory and exploitative relationship.

Nor would it be a matter of 'big brother' knowing best. Neither authorities nor parents would be allowed to usurp the child's newly asserted right to control over her or his own body. The legislation would not be patronizing and 'protective', on the Israeli or De Francis models, but would be philosophically based in the notion that children have rights, including sexual rights. The background to this philosophical claim is discussed in the next chapter.

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## Ch 6 - Notes and References

1. See p. 210 [^](#) [NOTE: Use the following link to access the reference, then manually return to this footnote by searching for "See p. 210" (without quotes) LINK= [^](#)]
2. David Reifen, 'The child as victim of a sexual offence: a new method of investigation in Israel', *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*, Vol. 4, 1958, pp. 11-17. [^](#)
3. V. de Francis, *Protecting the Child Victim of Sex Crimes Committed by Adults*, American Humane Society Children's Division, Denver, Colorado, 1969. [^](#)
4. There is a role for protective legislation for men as well as children and women, particularly in the field of dangerous working conditions; but for the most part such laws do not need to address themselves to the age or sex of those who are to be protected, as much as to the implementation of training standards, provision of safe equipment, etc., appropriate to the work involved. [^](#)
5. *Evidence on the Law Relating to and Penalties for Certain Sexual Offences Involving Children*, for the Home Office Criminal Law Revision Committee, PIE, London, 1975. [^](#)
6. In any case, in present law the boy's parents would still have the power to stop their son from seeing the man. As the author of PIE's suggested legal system said to me in a private communication: 'We are at the contradictory point here between patchwork proposals and social revolution.' I deal with some 'revolutionary' implications in the next chapter. [^](#)
7. Alan Milner describes the genesis of the Indecency with Children Act 1960 in scathing terms in the *British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 2, 1962, pp. 282-91. [^](#)
8. The law does, however, provide a heavier maximum penalty for sexual intercourse with a girl under thirteen (life imprisonment), than for the same offence involving a girl between thirteen and sixteen (two years' imprisonment). [^](#)

9 Richard Southwell had occasion to read the proposals in connection with an enquiry commissioned by the Open University, relating to my employment with the University. ^

10. 'Penetration' could be defined very generally, to include the insertion not only of the penis into the anus or vagina, but also an adult's fingers, or any object, except for legitimate medical reasons. It could also include penetration of the mouth. ^

11. The Lepchas of Sikkim believe that sex is positively necessary for a girl's healthy development. Until she loses her virginity, the Lepchas aver, a girl will not begin to menstruate, nor will her breasts grow, except by the intervention of supernatural forces. Lepcha girls are betrothed from eight onwards (boys from twelve), and 'the period between betrothal and marriage is usually the time of greatest sexual adventure and promiscuity' (G. Gorer, *Himalayan Village, An Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim*, Michael Joseph, London, 1938, p. 317).

What is more, the girl's first experience of sex is usually with an adult:

'When they are not deflowered by their spouse (this sometimes happens) girls would seem to start their sexual life with unrelated men, often it would appear with visitors to their village. Among the Lepchas the difficulty of talking to women on such subjects was not, as more usually happens, the jealousy of the husbands, but the fact that almost every woman from eight to eighty interpreted any sort of special attention as an attempt at seduction, an attempt which – no matter what their youth or age – they had no intention of repelling' (Ibid., p. 327).

In these circumstances, it seems likely that most eight- or nine-year-old virgin girls would have a good idea of whether sex with a grown man was, or was not, likely to be painful or damaging: the Lepchas talk freely about sex; it would seem reasonable to expect that younger girls would hear from slightly older ones, who had had sexual experience with men, what it was like. Gorer's comment, above, which appears to indicate widespread enthusiasm for sex amongst females of all ages, including very young girls, suggests that sex between pre-pubertal girls and men is not experienced as deleterious by the girls themselves.

It is probable that gentleness is required in such intercourse, for the anatomy of the pre-pubertal vagina suggests a difficulty. Till about the age of puberty, the wall of the vaginal tube is made of thin, smooth, inelastic membrane, which could be overstretched or broken by a thrusting penis in intercourse. About the age of puberty, the smooth vaginal walls start changing into deep, accordion-like folds of membrane, so that intercourse momentarily opens out the folds, rather than stretching or tearing flat membrane. (See *A Brief Thesis on Rugae Vaginalis*, by Norman Casserley, available from Childhood Sensuality Circle, California.)

The development of the vaginal folds is accounted for by the hormonal changes of puberty. If the production of hormones is terminated in maturity, by surgical removal of the ovaries, the vagina will tend to revert to a less elastic state and, as at the menopause, there will be a 'drying up'; both these factors, but principally the latter, sometimes make intercourse unpleasant or painful for women who have experienced ovariectomy (see p. 237). [NOTE: p. 222 in this e-book version.]

It is a great pity that, for virgin females of *whatever age*, experience of intercourse for the first time is associated with pain rather than pleasure, on account of the unbroken hymen. This factor alone is probably responsible for a massive amount of anxiety, and fear of sexual experience, and this may colour attitudes to sexuality for life – it may especially, in retrospect, serve to bolster the feeling that 'children need to

be protected from sex' (when what is really meant is that they need to be protected from an unpleasant *introduction to coitus*, as opposed to other forms of sexual expression). In some societies, a routine, minor operation is carried out on all girls in infancy, to painlessly remove the barrier presented by the hymen, thus avoiding the later trauma of a crude 'defloration'. (See René Guyon, 'Chastity and virginity: the case against' in A. Ellis and A. Abarbanel, *The Encyclopaedia of Sexual Behaviour*, Hawthorn Books, New York, 1961.) The operation, comparable in a sense to circumcision in boys, would also have great psychological merit in that it would dispose of the 'maidenhead' as a symbol of 'chastity' or 'virtue'. In its absence, girls might well be able to enjoy their first intercourse not only physically – which alone would be an immeasurable benefit – but also without a sense of loss, or defilement. <sup>^</sup>

12. See Chapter 3 for figures from Gebhard, *op. cit.* <sup>^</sup>

13. Basil Stoll, *But Why Cancer, Sally?*, Heinemann, London, 1976, p. 14. <sup>^</sup>

14. 'Young', in this context, means the years immediately above the present age of consent, as well as those below it.

It should be realized that nearly all deaths from cervical cancer occur over the age of 25, and around 90 per cent occur in the over-40 bracket. Nevertheless, one of our 'quality' newspapers was not so long ago moved to reach for the headline, 'Big rise in death rate of girls under 20'/'Early sex' link with cancer', and to run a first paragraph beneath it which spoke about 'misuse of the contraceptive pill' being blamed for a death rate from cervical cancer among the under-20s which had 'nearly doubled in five years' (*The Guardian*, 15 March, 1978, p. 4).

The rise referred to was from 5 deaths among the under-20s in 1970 to 9 deaths in that category in 1976 (*The Guardian* report, I subsequently discovered, was based on figures published in *The Lancet*, 13 May, 1978, p. 1031). There was no steady rise from the lower figure to the higher one, year by year. As one might imagine with such small numbers, the exact figure readily 'doubles' or 'halves' itself from year to year, without revealing any important underlying trend at all. Indeed, according to figures supplied by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, for 1977 (the latest year for which figures were available at the time of writing) deaths among the under-25s – a category which takes in five more years than the *Lancet* figures, be it noted – numbered just 2 (exactly the same, incidentally, as a decade before, in 1967, and two decades before, in 1957), from which one might have expected to see headlines about cancer deaths among the young dropping by more than three quarters in a single year!

After talking to *The Guardian's* principal informant for this story, Dr Robert Yule, consultant pathologist at the Christie Hospital, Manchester, I eventually discovered that there was a point of real substance to be made in it: that barrier protectives, such as the male sheath, offer protection against cervical cancer which the contraceptive pill does not give. Unfortunately, the point was totally lost in the story by casting juvenile sexuality as the villain of the piece. <sup>^</sup>

15. C. Farrell, *My Mother Said ... the way young people learned about sex and birth control*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1978, p. 21. An American survey has indicated that 20 percent of thirteen- and fourteen-year-olds have had sexual intercourse, despite similar (and in some states, higher) age-of-consent laws to those in Britain. (This figure, taken from a recent US Congressional survey, was published in *Newsweek*, 7 May, 1979, p. 44.) <sup>^</sup>

16. A cost loading of around 25 per cent has been suggested to me. <sup>^</sup>

17. *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution*, op. cit., p. 32, para. 85. This is not to say there are no adverse effects. Minor lesions, as opposed to major injuries, do sometimes occur. Even adults may find the act is painful, through this response tends to diminish with experience, as the art of learning to control certain appropriate muscles is mastered, and as the anal sphincter becomes stretched (as it does) by repeated intercourse. (Information from experienced homosexual sources. See also Policy Advisory Committee on Sexual Offences, *Working Paper on the Age of Consent in Relation to Sexual Offences*, HMSO, London, 1979, Para. 61.)

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18. At the time of going to press, it is encouraging to see that such a change of heart may soon be a real possibility. The recent report of the National Council for One Parent Families *Pregnant at School* (NCOPF, London, 1979), recommended that from the first years at secondary school, pupils should be given 'specific and accurate' information about contraception. ^

19. I cannot believe that it is right that a girl of twelve or thirteen who does become pregnant should be obliged to become a mother. Distressing and unsatisfactory though it is, abortion is far less disastrous in such circumstances than an unwanted baby, and should be available free on demand to adolescent girls. Some will argue that the encouragement of juvenile sexuality will result in an increase in the necessity for abortions. Given the whole-hearted approach to birth control that I have suggested, this need not necessarily be true (it should also be related that there is a phenomenon known as 'adolescent sterility': the fertility rate is low amongst juveniles), but in a context in which an abortion can be easily obtained through reliable medical services, early in the pregnancy, without stigma or recrimination, a limited increase in the number of abortions would still be nothing like as horrific as what happens at present. The dark side of our sex-negative approach is that many pregnant girls find themselves, because of their guilt feelings and anxieties about parental and societal retribution, unable to talk to anyone about their pregnancy, or to do anything about it. The problem inevitably becomes an inescapable nightmare, growing, month by month, sometimes to the sorry, sordid outcome of a baby dumped by the desperate mother in a dustbin or rubbish chute. ^

[Skip to Chapter 7 - The Philosophy of Children's Rights]

## The Philosophy of Children's Rights

The key element in PIE's proposals on the age of consent, as we have seen, is the assertion that children should have some say in what they do with their own bodies. They should be free to decide, as a matter of right, whether or not they want a sexual relationship.

The idea that children can have rights in any matter, never mind the contentious area of sexuality, is a new one, and at this stage in history it is still considered incumbent on those who talk of 'children's rights' to provide some philosophical justification of their position.

The main reason that this should be so lies in the conventional wisdom that children are inexperienced and irrational beings; that they may not know the implications of any decisions they may make. They are likely to make choices which are against their own best interests. In these circumstances it appears to be absurd, and against the true interests of children, to give them meaningless freedoms, meaningless 'rights'.

This conventional wisdom begs the question of what is meant by 'children's rights', or rather its sting is against a particular conception of such rights – against a conception which is based on the autonomous decision-making power of the child. It is not directed against rights secured on the child's behalf by its parents or by the state, e.g. the 'right' to publicly-provided education.

This paternalistic conception of children's rights represents what is now entrenched, traditional thinking, at least in the Western democracies. It is to be seen most clearly set out in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which has its origin in a League of Nations declaration of 1924.

The UN Declaration, adopted by the General Assembly in 1959, is concerned almost entirely with the protection of children, not with the expression of their individual will. Thus in Principle 6 it is stated that 'The child, for the full and harmonious development of his personality, needs love and understanding. He shall, wherever possible, grow up *in the care and under the responsibility of his parents.*' (my italics). Also in Principle 7, on education, it is stated: 'The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with his parents'.<sup>1</sup>

The phrase 'best interests of the child' is one we shall be considering a lot during this chapter, for in it is embodied the assumption that the benevolent exercise of control of the child by its parents, or sometimes by the state, is incontestably the correct, indeed the only, way to secure the 'best interests of the child'.

As we shall see, this traditional view has been coming increasingly under challenge, particularly in the last decade, and especially in the United States, on the grounds that parents often do not act benevolently, and neither does the state, and that even when they are well intentioned they are often far less well-placed to assess 'the best interests of the child' than the child itself.

Perhaps the clearest way to approach what is philosophically a quite difficult subject, is to confine ourselves for the moment to a particular kind of rights – legal rights – and to examine the gap between the suppositions of traditional paternalistic thinking and the reality of how things work out in practice.

Hillary Rodham, of the United States Children's Defense Fund, has made such an examination of the rights of children under the law.<sup>2</sup> This analysis is based on

America, but much of what is said has a general significance for Britain and other Western countries too. For clarity's sake, Rodham begins by pointing out that attributing a right to a person may involve describing an existing relationship or prescribing the formation of a new one. The prescriptive aspect of rights represents a moral judgement about how particular interests should be ordered so that certain ones will be given priority over others. An existing legal right, by contrast, is a claim enforceable before the courts. Moral prescriptions and political demands for certain 'rights' are not enforceable in law – some would say they are needs, or interests, and not rights. Children, although their needs and interests may be greater than those of adults, have far fewer legal rights. Indeed the special needs and interests which distinguish them from adults have served as the basis for not granting them rights, and for entrusting the enforcement of the few rights they have to institutional decision-makers,

The legal status of 'infancy' or 'minority' (describing people up to eighteen years of age in England for most purposes, and up to twenty-one for some, e.g. consent to male homosexual acts) largely determines the rights of a child before the law, regardless of his actual age or circumstances. Justifications for this broad classification rely on the physical and intellectual differences between adults and children.

As Rodham points out, there is some sense to this rationale, except that the dividing point at twenty-one or eighteen is artificial and simplistic; it obscures the dramatic differences among children of different ages and the striking similarities between older children and adults. The capacities and the needs of a child of six months differ substantially from those of a child of six or sixteen years.

(PIE's proposals on the age of consent take full account of these differing capacities, in relation to the child's ability to express or withhold consent; at the same time they recognize as a constant factor that at all stages during infancy and childhood children need an opportunity for sexual expression – a view which is argued more fully in another chapter.)

Neither English nor American law has any tradition of thinking of children as having 'rights'. In eighteenth-century English common law children were chattels of the family and wards of the state; Blackstone<sup>3</sup> stressed the duties aired by these 'prized possessions' to their fathers and said little about rights. Older children now have some rights – such as the right to drive a motor vehicle – but these are very limited.

The law's concern with children has been largely confined to those occasions when the state may limit parental control in the interest of necessary protection or justifiable punishment of the child. The theory has been that in general the parents are the proper source of control of the child, and that the state should intervene only as a matter of last resort.

But the exact point at which this last resort comes into play is not closely defined. As Rodham says, 'The most striking characteristic of children's law is the large degree of discretion permitted decision-makers in enforcing community norms'.<sup>4</sup> When intervention occurs, bureaucratic discretion takes the place of family discretion. The statutes allowing for state intervention imply that the state's representative will know what is in the child's 'best interests'.

Inevitably, says Rodham, when there are fewer standards to guide the exercise of discretion, and few careful reviews of the judgements it produces, individuals will be treated capriciously, and sexual minorities in the community will be in danger of suffering from the prejudices and beliefs of the dominant section of the community.

Says Rodham:

'This is especially true in children's law where reservations against state intervention are most easily overcome in cases involving poor, non-white, and unconventional families. Children of these families are perceived as bearers of the sins and disabilities of their fathers, and as burdens which an "enlightened" society must bear. This attitude is especially prominent in regard to the labelling of certain behaviour as delinquent. In addition to acts which are criminal for adults (e.g. armed robbery), children may be accused of delinquency for misbehaviour that is not criminal for adults. The so-called status offences, incorrigibility, truancy, running away, sexual precociousness, represent a confused mixture of social control and preventive care that has resulted in the confinement of thousands of children for the crime of having trouble growing up.'<sup>5</sup>

Although Rodham's point is addressed to specifically American conditions, very much the same factors apply in Britain: the operation of the 'moral danger' clause of the Children and Young Person's Act is a good case in point.

However, one should not fall into the trap of assuming that the best way to control the arbitrary and capricious exercise of bureaucratic power is by strengthening the rights of parents. To do so is to make a false equation between the interests of the child and the interests of the parents. For what happens when, for one reason or another, neither the state nor the parents manage to get things right?

Far from being a rarity, this is a situation that appears to arise frequently, and with tragic results. One could give plenty of examples from the sexual sphere, but instances of another type may be better recognized and more persuasive: notably in the case of 'battered' children.

The classic case of Maria Colwell<sup>6</sup> illustrates the point perfectly. Seven-year-old Maria's stepfather, William Kepple, was found guilty of beating her to death, not long after a court had decided she must leave her foster home to live with him and her natural mother, Mrs. Pauline Kepple. Her natural father died when she was a baby. Maria had been taken into local authority care when she was six months old, after an NSPCC investigation had revealed neglect by her mother. In the years that followed she was fostered with relatives in what was by all accounts a good and loving home, until Mrs. Kepple exercised her parental 'right' to the return of the child, unopposed by the local authority social worker in charge of the case.

This was a clear case in which the parents' interests did not coincide with those of the child. The bureaucratic view, based on the dogma that every conceivable effort should be made to have the child brought up by its natural mother, was woefully doctrinaire and unsuited to the circumstances of the case.

If only the law had had available some mechanism by which Maria's own views could have been made known – she wanted to stay with her foster parents – the whole ghastly business need never have happened.

Fortunately, publicity surrounding the Colwell case, and others like it, contributed to the success of Dr David Owen's Parliamentary Bill which introduced provisions for children to be represented in court by advocates who would represent their interests separately from those of either the parents or the local authorities: a modest, but important step in the direction of saying that children – even very young children like Maria – can have a far better knowledge of what is in their own best interests than either the very mother who has given them suckle, or the highly educated social workers who may know a great deal of theory but who cannot always be *au fait* with practical realities in each case.



The same conclusions about the inadequacy of state and parental judgements, unaided by the independent view of the child, can be drawn with equal force and clarity from parent-versus-parent custody cases: the so-called 'tug-of-love' cases, in which children are allowed to become unrepresented pawns in a parental power game.

The extreme cases of parental cruelty, and the bureaucratic ineptitude of the state, throw into sharp focus the need of the child to have an independent voice; to have recognition of her or his existence as a separate person with natural rights before the law. The philosophical sense to which this claim makes its appeal is in one of human rights, rather than specifically of children's rights. It does no more or less than suggest that children should be considered as having needs and interests, requiring individual representation, just like any other person, old or young.

Even when we have made this claim, however, and made it successfully, it may be thought that we have not really said anything very radical. In practice, the legal choice now afforded to a present-day Maria Colwell is, 'By whom would you like to be dominated for the rest of your childhood?' Just because Maria is to be given a say in a matter which could decide whether she lives or dies, and decisions don't come bigger than that, does not mean that she can opt to leave school and go out to work, have boyfriends, drink whisky and vote Conservative, all at the tender age of seven. There is still a presumption, and in many cases a justifiable presumption, that in day-to-day aspects of life someone should be taking decisions on her behalf, 'bringing her up', telling her how to behave.

What we now need to do is to look at some of the broader, day-to-day issues in the life of the child; to see what is the effect, in particular instances, of the child being accorded rights or denied them; to see if, by this process, we can arrive at some philosophic conception of children's rights which makes sense across the board: some set of principles by which we can gauge whether particular right-claims have some validity or are just plain nutty. The grandest philosophical conceptions should of course have a degree of universality: they should aim to cover contingencies which may arise in any type of society at any time. That is a very large aim, and before we come to such an abstract consideration, we shall be looking at the place of the child in society.

In introducing the subject, I confined myself to a consideration of legal rights: more specifically, to the ways in which the law at present concerns itself with children. I said that by and large the law concerns itself very little with children, in issues of rights, on the presumption that parents – or, failing parents, the state – will intervene to look after 'the best interests of the child'. Ultimately, however, any right-claims, in order to be meaningful, must be backed institutionally in one way or another, with a final appeal to the law where such rights are otherwise denied. As Bernard Crick has said:

'Rights to have any meaning must adhere to particular institutions: the rights of Englishmen are indeed, necessarily more secure than the "Rights of Man".'<sup>2</sup>

PIE's own proposals in the field of children's sexual rights are, after all, legal proposals: we intend that they should be enforceable.

Nevertheless, it is worth turning to those polemicists, particularly those in America in the 1970s, who have been claiming a variety of children's rights not specifically as legal proposals, but as assertions of principles that ought to be socially recognized, with or without the support of law.

Richard Farson, author of *Birthrights*, published in the United States in 1974, is perhaps the most famous of them. John Holt, of *Escape From Childhood* renown, is

another, and both owe a debt to the French historian Philippe Ariés, whose book *Centuries of Childhood* was the first in the field with a coherent development of the idea that the whole concept of 'childhood' – of children as necessarily 'innocent' and incapable beings – is a relatively recent invention.

Farson reminds us:

'Before the seventeenth century, children were not thought of as innocent. Only then did innocence become the idea of childhood. It was at that time that children were no longer given indecent books to read and life began to be hidden from them. Previously, adults in the presence of children had talked and acted openly about sex and every other "adult" matter. There was considerable sexual precocity. Louis XIV was in his wife's bed at age fourteen. Girls often married at thirteen.'

(And one must bear in mind that the age of puberty was much higher then than now.)

He continues:

'It was common for an adult to play with a child's genitals [this is still practised in Moslem countries]. But in the seventeenth century children began to be seen as requiring protection and were separated from information about the private lives of adults. In medieval times children were unimportant but enjoyed, even coddled; from the seventeenth century on, children needed to be reformed. Today's parents and children still carry the burdens of that major historical change.' <sup>8</sup>

Farson rightly points to the power politics of religion coming to take the child's mind as a battlefield: religion as a factor in education had been a matter of earnest theorizing since Plato, but the stressing of the peculiar importance of the child's mind, especially the young child, because of his impressionability, was the preserve of the Jesuits of the Counter-Reformation. Hence their well-known saying: 'Give me a child for the first seven years, and you may do what you like with him afterwards.'

Ever since then, there has been until – almost the present day – an inclination by moralists and educators of all persuasions to 'mould' the development of the child according to some pre-conceived ideology, based on the view that a child's mind is an empty slate upon which anything can be written at will.

If it was felt that the child's mind was a blank, it was at least conceded that his heart, or soul, was another matter. Those who fought for the control of the child's mind, and through it for his heart and soul, at least began to take the child seriously as a person, even if it was only to mould and change him to a particular straight and narrow development.

Thus we have a curious, and paradoxical state of affairs in which two apparently mutually-exclusive views of the child develop hand in hand. One is that of the stern religionist who feels that as we are all 'conceived in sin', we are by nature sinful. We are imbued from the start with a devilish, lustful will, which has to be broken; hence the belief that children should be made from the earliest stages of life to feel tortured by guilt about masturbation: it had to be eliminated with the utmost ferocity. It was this doctrine which gave impetus from the eighteenth century onwards to all those stories about masturbation making one go blind or insane, and which meant that any discovered transgressions would be punished by the whip, or by locking up the child's genitalia in absurd and obscene chastity devices designed to prevent self-manipulation.

Yet this very restriction of the child, this ferocious insistence that all his sexual feelings be repressed, was – at the same time – used to reinforce the sentimental notion of childhood 'innocence': not only is the child forced to be unsexual, but he is then praised for the 'innocence' of his nature, which is totally unnatural to him.

Even to this day the moralists who are most keen to portray children as 'innocent' manage to hold this belief in spite of the fact of their known 'corruptibility': Mary Whitehouse, classically, is one of those who want to have it both ways, against all logic.

Farson's view of history, a la Ariés, is that a proper view of the child was held in former times and that we lost it. Others have found this 'golden age' idea rather simplistic, or at least insupportable in view of the grossness of child abuse in practically every era of history, including those eras before the ideas of 'innocence' and 'protection' took a hold.

Lloyd de Mause,<sup>2</sup> by contrast with Farson, almost goes so far as to say that for children life has always been bad, but that now, every day, in every way, it is getting better and better. His 'psychogenic' theory of history, based on Freudian analysis of the child-rearing practices of successive centuries, recognizes what he calls 'the intrusive mode' of the eighteenth century – the insistence on controlling the child's mind – but points out that with the advent of Freud, and indeed with behaviouristic learning/conditioning theory, there has been more emphasis on training, and the 'channelling of impulses', rather than a direct crushing of the child's will.

In the 'help mode' of the mid-twentieth century, he maintains, the central proposition is that the child knows better than its parents what it needs at each stage of life, and fully involves both parents in paying attention to those needs. There is no attempt, in this mode, to discipline, or to form 'good habits' in the child. Children are not struck. The parents see themselves as the servant of the child rather than the other way round.

For de Mause this 'help mode' represents an ideal approach to child-rearing. The parents who practise it are able to do so only because the human race has reached a high point of 'psychogenic' evolution: no longer do the majority of parents expect to be looked after in their old age by their children, as happened in the past; no longer do they use children as vehicles on which to project the contents of their own unconscious – a psychological process responsible for the whole doctrine of Original Sin, he claims.

The theories of de Mause have come in for some heavy criticism in terms of historical methodology, but those who do accept an evolutionary theory must at least ask themselves, What is the next evolutionary state to be? The de Mause 'help mode' is one which makes its chief appeal to the protective, paternal philosophy of childhood – but it does contain the encouraging admission that on some matters the child knows best, and that he should have room to develop without having parental desires and expectations imposed upon him.

For Farson, as we shall see, things are nothing like so cosily well developed at the moment: he feels that children are crying out to be liberated from the suffocating constrictions of the 'help mode' in so far as it exists. And he makes no bones about appealing to the merits of 'psychogenically backward' societies:

'The potentialities of children seem to be limited only by cultural expectations. In other cultures children are betrothed at birth and married at nine or ten; they became warriors and hunters as early as eight in the Sioux tribes; they give birth at the earliest possible ages, and go through the rites of passage at ten or twelve in some Nigerian villages.

'It is not uncommon in some cultures to see children of two or three actually spending a great deal of time fulfilling the responsibility of caring for younger children, or helping with daily chores.

'Among the Gusii of Kenya, the child is considered capable of training at two and is forced into obedience and the assumption of near adult responsibilities by the age of six or seven. Young Cheyenne Indian boys are given little bows and arrows as soon as they can walk.

'In pre-revolutionary Mexico peasant boys of six or seven were likely to be put to work looking after the oxen and carrying water. Among the Hausa of Nigeria, young girls of eight or nine are expected to carry food and water to the men in the fields. From the age of nine or ten Klamath Indian girls learn to gather and grind their staple diet, and to make mats, baskets and clothing.

'As soon as they can toddle, the children of the East African Chaga are at work looking after smaller babies, carrying water or firewood, helping to prepare food, cleaning animal quarters, sweeping the yard, cutting fodder, and thatching the house.' <sup>10</sup>

Cynics may be tempted to add that among the Anglo-Saxon tribe in primitive England it was not uncommon for little boys of seven or eight to be expected to sweep chimneys and work down mines. The 'virtuous' primitive practices reeled off so readily by Farson doubtless result in child abuse, as well as in a realization of a child's potential, but the idea that children do have a potential is one worth working on, despite the 'protective' idea that children cannot be involved in any sort of labour, and must be assumed to be incapable of everything until adulthood. Even in America, where the idea that children cannot be involved in any sort of labour has been developed to as high an extent as anywhere, people still look back on 'the good life', the life of the American dream, as one in which everybody had a part to play, including the young.

I refer, of course, to the world of the pioneer settler, much romanticized by Hollywood: the world in which a man and his knife carve out their living from the landscape by dint of sheer hard work, dependent on no one, but sober, God-fearing and wholesome. And at their side stands their young son (it had to be a son) who will eventually inherit the spread, but who for the meantime is always to be seen humping buckets around, milking cows, mending fences, even breaking horses: always wishing he were more grown up, but at the same time always being given some new opportunity to participate, in line with his growing strength and experience.

Modern society, as Farson points out, has lost all that. Children are kept at school, arbitrarily and artificially, whether they are particularly gifted at academic 'work' or not. They have no way of participating in the adult world and become alienated from it. A child whose father is an accountant cannot go into his father's office and start giving a hand with the books. He has to find his own way, through the medium of school and college, going through a long, long process by which he can reach the sophisticated skills needed to make a contribution to our present highly complex, specialized work system.

If he makes it, well and good – but in the most advanced societies, particularly in the United States, young people can spend an extended adolescence of non-paying college work, during which they are economically dependent on parental support, right into their mid-twenties or beyond. And if they don't make it, if they leave high school, or the comprehensive, at the earliest opportunity, they remain similarly

alienated by joining the dole queue, or going to a low-grade, low-income job in which their alienation from full adult status is similarly complete.

I've no need to dwell on such ideas: the strands of thought from Marx on 'alienation' to Illich on 'deschooling' need no comment from me except to say that conceptions of children's rights can be seen against a backcloth of social necessity to maintain a cohesive, healthy society, as well as of theoretical human rights.

The process of deciding that children are to be participants in their own destiny, rather than passive recipients of a destiny laid out for them, is one that could and should start at the earliest possible age, Farson believes. And if children are really to have a say in their own destiny, there has to be a genuine choice for children, for all children at all stages of their upbringing, as to how, and with whom, they are brought up. Children need to be able to choose their own parents, not just in cases of inadequacy so gross that even the state can recognize them, but in all cases.

Such an idea may seem far-fetched to a society in which the small, self-contained nuclear family is the norm, but it is to some degree a realistic possibility in various forms of communal upbringing.

Farson addresses his attentions to the merits of that-most-examined-of-all commune arrangement, the Israeli kibbutz. He points to a number of factors about the kibbutz which reduce parent-child conflict:

- ' 1) The child, supported by the kibbutz, is economically independent of his parents;
- 2) equality of the sexes eliminates the patriarchal family system;
- 3) the importance of the nurse allows the child to love someone other than his parents;
- 4) because nurses handle the primary discipline, the daily visits of parents and children can take place under ideal conditions;
- 5) jealousy and anger that have to be expressed in the family can be expressed in the kibbutz because the child can find more legitimate objects of aggression among peers; and
- 6) the collective framework shields the child from overprotective or domineering parents who might block his efforts to become independent.'<sup>11</sup>

Without going into Farson's value-judgements – his implied attack on 'patriarchy', for instance – I see the value of a list such as this not so much in terms of what it tells us about kibbutzim, as in the questions it raises on a fundamental level about the relationship between adult and child. Should children be economically independent of their parents? Isn't the parents' power to say 'no' to what in their judgement would be a frivolous and immature purchase by the child – say enough sweets to make him sick – an essential element in sensible training of the child? Do 'alternative' parents, such as kibbutz nurses, exercise essentially the same discipline?

What about the Rousseauvian idea that children learn best through responsibility: let them buy excessive sweets, let them be sick, let them make their own judgement whether they want to do that again? If the parents' control of the purse gives them an 'unreasonable' degree of power in holding back the child's approach towards independence, at what point, if any, can a child's 'right' to economic independence be asserted? Is it meaningful to assert a 'right' to financial rewards which are not earned, in view of the fact that in such circumstances he who does make economic provision (the parent-earner, or the communal earners of kibbutzim wealth) for the child would necessarily have to forgo the rights which would normally accrue to his own labour?

Such are a few of the questions on an economic level. In the spheres of affectional

dependency/independence, and of 'primary discipline' they are just as far-reaching. Underlying all these questions is a yet more fundamental range of questions about society's expectations of its children: about the implicit, or explicit, aims of child rearing and of education, about each generation's expectations for its children as they grow up, not only as individuals, but in terms of the future nature and achievements of society as a whole – though it is even an assumption to suppose that all societies have any expectations of their offspring: there are some happy-go-lucky peoples (or irresponsible, unimaginative ones?) who do not consciously impose values or goals of any sort, beyond what can be summarized in the slogan 'Do your own thing' (if by sheer chance, you happen to have developed one!).

The kibbutz provides an excellent example of the exact opposite, of a communal ethic built on a great sense of a united purpose, in which the group demands above all a loyalty to the aims of the group. In these circumstances the child's individual personality can be submerged in group activities. The Israeli sense of purpose lies in fairly crude, but clearly defined, nationalism. Other examples of such a strong communal purpose can be found in a variety of religious communes, in Plato's education of the 'guardians', and indeed in their ideological descendant, the English public school system (not, one would have thought, the most fruitful place at which to start the quest for children's rights!).

But we must be careful that in any such quest we do not put the cart before the horse: we must first, like Plato, look to the nature of 'the good', and of a 'just' social order, before we can proceed to the issue of whether the idea of children's rights is at all appropriate. It's too grandiose a task for this volume, but in passing I can recommend to any brave soul in search of Utopia, the book *Children of the Counterculture* by John Rothchild and Susan Wolf.<sup>12</sup> An examination of many weird, and some wonderful, Utopias – various American communes set up in the 'hippy' era of the late 1960s – it pays special attention to the impact of would-be Utopian lifestyles on the children growing up in them. Some of the more libertarian experiments have involved a total abdication of almost all the responsibilities accepted by parents in mainstream society. From the earliest ages, in some communes, children are allowed not only complete sexual freedom, but all sorts of much more alarming freedoms – such as the freedom to experiment with drugs like LSD, or to mess about with loaded guns; there is also freedom from any enforced commitment to formal education with the not-surprising result that the children are growing up illiterate.

The authors, themselves high-achieving, middle-class parents, admit to having ambitions for their own children, and make no bones about it. But at the same time they point out that the social 'education' of the counter-culture children was not nearly as disastrous as might be supposed. Despite their immensely dangerous surroundings, and their lack of formal education, or guidance of any sort, these children seemed to be growing up to be much more pleasant and self-reliant than conventional middle-class children. There appeared to be amongst them a sort of new breed of Noble Savage, like twelve-year-old Andy Peyote, whom the authors met when he was hitch-hiking, alone, on a Californian highway. The son of a famous commune pioneer from the New Mexico hills, young Peyote – courteous, clean, intelligent, competent in the practical business of looking after himself, and neither a deadbeat nor a rebel (there being no rules or rule enforcers to rebel against) – clearly struck a romantic chord in the hearts of Rothchild and Wolf. For here was a youngster who had been given an amazing degree of responsibility for his entire upbringing, and was demonstrably coping, even to the extent of going off on his own, or with friends his own age, for weeks on end, returning to his parents and other commune members from time to time, more in order to be sociable than because of any dependence on them.

Never having been a parent (to my deep regret), I've never had to worry about how I'd feel if my child were exposed to guns and drugs, with no guidance from an adult. But my three years in the teaching profession left their mark in terms of developing strong notions of what it was responsible or not responsible for me to let children do, and Peyote-type freedoms have never even begun to figure. I suspect this is something deeply embedded in my way of thinking, derived from way-back, and probably of neurotic origin, rather than resulting specifically from the role-expectations inherent in playing a part in the authoritarian state system of education.

I must admit it: letting children do what they want makes me nervous. I'm scared of anarchy. I used to like a reasonably orderly classroom, full of well-behaved children who put their hand up to ask questions one at a time, who paid attention to what I told them and didn't give too much trouble. Even now, if I'm chatting to children who don't know who I am, even if I'm being friendly and relaxed and informal, I tend to give the impression, despite myself, that I'm a schoolteacher. I don't boss children around, but just in small things – like suggesting that they put their lollipop wrappers in a waste bin – I automatically find myself modelling their behaviour.

This being the case, I find the romantic freedoms of the counter-culture completely hair-raising and devoutly to be avoided. On the other hand the freedom of A.S. Neill's *Summerhill* is a different matter. This is somehow freedom under control. It is middle-class. It remains within the Establishment. It is deeply serious. A.S. Neill's philosophy is a thought-out version of freedom for children, based on the idea that they can be brought to understand society and themselves by learning to 'govern' themselves, according to rules which adults encourage them to understand as 'sensible'.

This has appeal, for those of us who like to think out our position on children's rights and freedoms through connections with the Western liberal tradition. However, I cannot help but agree with the view of Paul Goodman, author of *Growing Up Absurd*, when he asserts <sup>13</sup> that Neill, in encouraging children to govern themselves, was to some extent falsely imposing adult ideas: one man one vote, the social contract, political democracy, can be taken much too seriously. As he puts it, children have respect for strength, skill and experience when settling their own disputes. The primal jungle is not to be denied.

Goodman sees the value of *Summerhill* in giving children's wildness a chance to express itself, instead of forcing children towards the rules of socialization. The process can almost be seen as conserving children as 'a natural resource or a natural wonder', in which the key words are 'spontaneity, fantasy, animality, creativity, innocence'. At the same time, such a view is dangerous in the sense that it can become stiflingly sentimental, a view of children as completely useless in a practical sense, like pet animals, as beings to be kept out of practical life, as ignorant and retarded.

As always, when one detects lunacy on the fringe of ideas, on the fringe of liberty for the child, or of the commune lifestyle that is non-achieving in conventional terms, one begins to look at the middle ground. What are the implications of children's rights for ordinary, suburban folk who want to avoid being arbitrary and dictatorial with their children, but are too caring to let them run wild?

Both Richard Farson and Dr Larry Constantine, author of '*Open Family*', have a lot of useful ideas. Farson, for instance, proposes that children should be given a genuine choice of home environments by a variety of means, including child exchange programmes between families.

But the significant thing about the ideas of both of them is that they advocate a fairly clearly defined set of expectations about the behaviour of children in relation to adults. Basically it consists in the abolition of double standards, so that what shall be

good for the goose will also be considered good for the gosling.

They see the family in terms of class structure. In traditional families the parents are the upper class, with special privileges, such as late bedtimes, sexual intercourse and so on. They wield economic power and authority in decision making, and use elitist rationale to justify their class advantage. Constantine points out:

'After all, we the upper class, are smarter, better educated, better equipped by temperament and experience to make tough decisions. The lower class is really happier, more care free; they really prefer to be subservient. Besides, we earned our place by working our way up through the ranks, and any way, it is the natural order of things. Finally, of course, we are stronger.' <sup>14</sup>

The way round this, in Constantine's 'Open Family', is not to pretend that differences in experience, etc., and their importance, do not exist, but to emphasize the importance of functions within the family, rather than the individuals who carry them out. Thus in any family there is a need for 'gentleness, assertiveness, tender caretaking, guiding, teaching, playfulness, responsibility, frivolity, task direction, nonsense, logic and many other things which can be learned and shared among all members'. But it doesn't always have to be the parents who are responsible: it is not uncommon, for instance, for the child to be the one who insists that Dad does up his car seat-belt, or who nags him not to smoke so much. And sometimes, after a hard day at the office, or wherever, in a healthy family Dad may cry on his child's shoulder, and receive solicitude from him. Lloyd de Mause would write off such behaviour in the adult as psychological weakness: falling prey to the Freudian notion of 'reversal'; but expressed within limits there is no reason why both parent and child should not enjoy and benefit from a certain amount of role reversal of this kind.

The important thing is that the function of parenting is carried out: that the children get it when they need it, and maybe that the parents get it too, to a lesser extent. The same applies to responsibility. A family should have responsibility as a function exercised within it, but this should not be seen as the exclusive role of any one of its members.

This leads on to the notion that rights within the family do not attach themselves to those with a particular role. When this is realized, the rationale for double standards of privileged and non-privileged behaviour begins to seem less secure. By way of a substitute for contrived, arbitrary standards, such as that Joy (Constantine's four-year-old daughter) will go to bed whenever her mother says so, it becomes possible to substitute a rights-based formulation. Does Joy have a right to decide on her own bedtime? Well, the way to test that is to ask whether by choosing her bedtime there are any dire consequences against her own best interests, or against the legitimate rights of her parents. Is it going to make her tired, irritable and generally a pain in the ass to herself and her parents next day? Coming back to 'best interests', who will ultimately interpret these? Assuming, as we have done on the basis of more extreme cases earlier on, the fallibility of parents, even given their goodwill, it is not good enough for the parents to lay down the law and leave it at that.

In the case of the correct bedtime for Joy what happened was that she was given the opportunity to stay up late. She did get irritable. She was a nuisance. But at least she realized it and was persuaded by her parents as to the source of the problem. Nevertheless, she still didn't go to bed at a sensible time. In the end she asked to be put to bed at a 'sensible' time even against her own protestations. Her parents agreed to this, making sure at the same time that a 'no hassle' clause was built into the agreement, i.e., having asked for regular bedtimes, she was not to make a fuss come the appointed hour. Her sister, just two years older, had no such need to be given a set



time, enforced by her parents. She was able to see the problem in going to bed late and duly packed herself off.

The moral of the story is not that children can always arrive at a solution in this way: if Joy had claimed she was old enough to ride her bike out on the roads, Dad couldn't reasonably take the risk of letting her find out her limitations. But it does show that a certain reluctance to use arbitrary authority can reveal that it may be appropriate, for instance, to accord a right to a six-year-old that a four-year-old is not really capable of using properly.

Few families, perhaps, have the sensitive negotiating skill of the Constantines in considering the appropriate rights of children. Arguably, the more generally a right is asserted – if one is talking about the bedtime rights of all children – the harder it is to say anything very definite, and the more one may be thrown back into saying that only the parents can decide.

At this point it is worth considering the whole issue in much greater philosophical depth, by wheeling on heavy artillery in the form of John Rawls' theory of justice <sup>15</sup>. To assert rights to fair treatment, as Rawls does, is to 'assert an obligation on the part of adults to acknowledge the just claims of children,' writes Victor Worsfold in the Harvard Educational Review. <sup>16</sup>

'A claim which is just in Rawls' scheme is one which is consistent with the procedural principles of justice on which society should be founded, principles which should extend to children as well as adults. In Rawls' theory, the exercise of children's rights may not always be left to the children themselves, *but children are presumed to be able to exercise their own rights unless all of society agrees that someone else should make decisions for them*' [my italics].

Rawls' system of justice requires that people

'... understand the need for, and are prepared to affirm, a characteristic set of principles for assigning basic rights and duties and for determining what they take to be the proper distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation'.

His goal is to permit each individual to act according to a personal conception of her or his own best interests, but not at the expense of others. Worsfold summarizes the approach thus:

'In order to achieve Rawls' just society, individuals engage in a mutual process of evolving principles of fair treatment for everyone, present and future. His central idea is that everyone in the society must participate in choosing these principles, and that the principles are to be selected in a hypothetical state or "original position", in which the individuals are ignorant of their own specific interests and circumstances in real life. All participants in society are self-interested in making their decisions. But ignorance of their station in life and of the particular configuration of their society guarantees for Rawls that the individuals will choose principles of justice impartially, with equality in mind, so that no one is made to serve as an instrument of the interests of others.

'The process would result in one system of justice arising, Rawls argues, with just two fundamental principles of justice: The first is that each person should have a personal liberty compatible with a like liberty for all others; no one should be any freer than anyone else

in society to pursue his or her own ends. The second is that societal inequalities are to be arranged such that all individuals must share whatever advantages and disadvantages the inequalities bring.

'In Rawls' theory, children are participants in the formation of the initial social contract to the extent they are capable. In order to participate fully in this process one must have attained "the age of reason". But there is no attempt to rigidly define this age, or to link it with a particular conception of rationality or a particular notion of prerequisite skills and understanding. Instead, Rawls seems to imply that as children's competencies develop, their participation should increase.

'Rawls points out that it is the capacity for accepting the principles of fairness which matters when deciding who is to count as a member of society. He writes that "a being that has this capacity, whether or not it is yet developed, is to receive the full protection of the principles of justice." Children are pre-eminently such beings, and therefore qualify as members of the society, with just claims to fair treatment. Clearly some individuals in society will be better at applying the principles of justice than others. Any advantage those people receive from the exercise of these principles, however, will be regulated by the second principle of justice: people are not to enjoy a special advantage as a result of natural ability or social status. The characteristic which defines the just individual is the *capacity* for a sense of justice rather than the immediate realisation of this capacity.

'But sceptics may not yet be satisfied. They may argue that if children cannot participate fully in generating the principles necessary for the just society, they should not be accorded rights. In the Rawlsian view, however, it is more reasonable to assume that children are competent to perform this initial task, at least in part, rather than risk the logical alternative to it; that they shall be denied the possibility of pursuing their own just ends. Rawls wants to take account of our intuitive sense that even quite young children often do know what they want, and are capable of weighing alternatives and of acting on the decisions they make – precisely the kind of deliberation required of those choosing the original principles.'

Worsfold goes on to make an interesting analogy. Just as children use adults to help them come to sensible decisions, so adults themselves submit to the advice of specialists – for instance their doctor, or lawyer. In such cases, authority is accorded to the specialist, conditional upon the way it affects attainment of the adults' goals, or the choice of wise goals. For children, the authority of adults depends on similar criteria.

He continues:

'Those selecting the principles of justice would probably consent to some form of paternalism. But they would be very reluctant to adopt any paternalism which did not protect them against abuses of authority by members of the older generation.

'Others are authorized and sometimes required to act on our behalf and to do what we would do for ourselves if we were rational, this authorization coming into effect only when we cannot look after

our own good. Paternalistic decisions are to be guided by the individual's own settled preferences and interests in so far as they are not irrational, or failing a knowledge of these, by the theory of primary goods. As we know less and less about a person, we act for him as we would act for ourselves from the standpoint of the original position. We try to get for him the things he presumably wants whatever else he wants. We must be able to argue that with the development or recovery of his rational powers the individual in question will accept our decision on his behalf and agree with us that we did the best thing for him.

'The conception of children's interests implicit here is already more adequate than that of the classical paternalist schemes explored earlier (Hobbes, Locke, Mill). For Rawls, children are entitled to rights of their own. Also, the interests of the children are not necessarily synonymous with those of parents or protectors.'

This is all very well, but we are still left with the old problem of what mechanism is available to children to question judgements made on their behalf. We are back again to the problem of how to determine 'the best interests of the child'.

Rawls anticipates this problem and addresses himself to it in three ways.

Firstly – and this is a major point:

'[H]e makes it clear that adults cannot claim after the fact that they have treated children fairly simply on the grounds that the children are finally persuaded of the correctness of their decision.'

Rawls gives an example of the dangers:

'... Imagine two persons in full possession of their reason and will who affirm different religious or philosophical beliefs; and suppose that there is some psychological process that will convert each to the other's view, despite the fact that the process is imposed on them against their wishes. In due course, let us suppose, both will come to accept conscientiously their new beliefs. We are still not permitted to submit them to this treatment.'

Secondly, Rawls states that 'paternalistic intervention must be justified by the evident failure or absence of reason and will.' In other words, in the case of children, he would shift from a presumption of incapability, which largely exists at present, to a presumption of capability. This is of major importance for children's rights, shifting the burden of proof to those who would make a denial of such rights.

Thirdly, Rawls suggests that paternalistic intervention must be guided by the principles of justice and what is known about the subject's more permanent aims and preferences, or by the account of primary goods'. At a minimum, therefore, children should be consulted about their aims and preferences.

The whole of our discussion so far has been concerned with rights which merit serious philosophical consideration in relation to the level of the child's rational powers. A child's sexual rights, I believe, are not in the same league at all. There is nothing about sexuality for which one needs a competent rationality. It is completely harmless, unlike many of the things children want to do and claim a right to do; theoretically, sexuality is one area in which there should be no finely balanced claims as to what is in 'the best interests of the child'.

It might be useful here to point out that we in PIE are not the only ones who think along broadly these lines. Richard Farson himself has some fairly radical things to say:

'Our strong taboo about adult-child sex has led to the application of the most severe penalties to even the most innocent acts of affection. The penalty is not appropriate to the crime and probably neither cures nor deters. We can and should decriminalize sexual relations between consenting people. Assault and kidnapping laws already on the books would cover the cases which involve force, abduction or abuse. The remaining cases are better dealt with by improved sex education, enlightened sexual attitudes, and an increased respect for children's rights.' <sup>17</sup>

About the right of children to have sex among themselves he is in no doubt, while his concern in relation to child-adult sex is simply based on the fact that there should be respect for the child's choice. This is a keyword in PIE's thinking too, but is very often overlooked in conventional, accepted means of relating to children, as he points out:

'What children really need is the option to refuse. The freedom not to engage in sexual activity is as important as any other aspect of sexual freedom. But children are raised in such a way that they cannot refuse adults. Parents have insisted that children accept all forms of affection from relatives and friends – being picked up, fondled, hugged, kissed, pinched, tickled, squeezed – leaving children with little experience in saying no. They also have little experience in trusting their own reactions to people and in resisting the promise of rewards. They are not informed about sexual matters, do not understand their own sexuality or that of others, and thus cannot cope effectively in this area. We keep children ignorant and then worry that they are vulnerable to sexual advances.' <sup>18</sup>

The *reductio ad absurdum* of this argument is that a mother would need to seek her baby's 'permission' in order to hug it, and it is not clear how this permission would be given or withheld. By extension, the same problem would apply to some extent into perhaps the third or fourth year of childhood. In so far as Farson's argument would introduce an unfortunate lack of spontaneity into child-adult relations, I would have my doubts about it. On the other hand, even babies can wail with anxiety or gurgle with delight, according to the way in which they are handled. Nevertheless, it is accepted, perhaps too automatically, that babies are there to be kissed, by everyone from doting maiden aunts to politicians campaigning for election, and no one is expected to ask themselves, as they should, what the baby may feel about it. As children grow older, they are more likely, arguably, to sense some feeling of assault on the part of those adults who make no reference to their own wishes when kissing them, lifting them up, and so on. I know I intensely disliked being kissed by my mother, but, equally, I was expected to put up with it (and still am, sometimes!).

Traditionally, boys find the affectionate attentions of their mother fairly hard to escape, right throughout childhood, but when they cease to be babies or toddlers they do not generally speaking have to put up with the unsolicited attentions of other females, and certainly not males: there is no social presumption whatever that it is automatically OK for a man to kiss a ten-year-old boy. Quite the reverse.

Assumptions regarding girls are rather different. At all ages it is taken for granted that it is acceptable for men, providing they are not complete strangers, to 'make a fuss of them', in an automatic, sexist assumption which foreshadows the way in which so many men treat women. Although this often stays at the level of hugging and kissing it may be that overtly sexual acts of men towards young girls – particularly

the avuncular cuddle that just happens to result in a hand straying into naughty places – can be passed off to the child as an ordinary way of expressing affection, and one which the child is not expected to refuse.

My own experience is largely confined to boys and the ways in which men relate to them, but it has been impressed upon me a lot by feminists that girls 'usually' undergo such experiences. In one case a friend said that when she was little she had been repeatedly touched underneath the knickers by a man who was a friend of the family, in the family home. Presumably the man was able to get very close to the sexual part of the act – by sitting the child on his knee, etc. – just on the strength of conventional behaviour towards children. When he went beyond this, however, the girl knew he was doing something 'wrong'. She had been brought up in a household where genital zones were clearly naughty, no-go areas, so she did not have doubts on that score. Nevertheless, she felt unable to do anything about it. Sex was something so dirty and nasty that her parents just didn't mention it. In a household in which even the word 'knickers' was too crude to talk about, it's hardly surprising she did not dare tell her parents what had happened: so she had instead to put up with repeated assaults.

In either case, whether the child is conned into thinking that it is socially acceptable for fingers to be put in knickers, or whether the subject is too dreadful to report to parents, Farson's point holds good: children are much better off in making their own, valid choices, if they know what adult sexuality is about, instead of being kept in ignorance of it, and if they are made aware by society as to what their choices are – including the choice to say no to sitting on Uncle John's lap.

Anyone who feels it may be rather naive to suppose that young children could ever confidently assert their rights against the authority of a grown man is completely mistaken: the major deterrent to men attracted to boys is not the threat of prison sentences or social disgrace, but the threat of being rebuffed by the boys themselves. In talking to boys I am personally always only too aware that if ever I were to take the initiative in making my sexual interest known to them, I would run the dread risk of being rejected as a 'poof' or a 'bender'. It's not the names that hurt: the sting, and it's a terrible one, lies in the child's contempt and rejection of oneself. His means of expression may not be all that eloquent or subtle, but its very directness makes it extremely powerful and crushing. No boy-lover that I know, and I know plenty, would try to brazen or bully his way past derision like that.

I'm not recommending that little girls should be equipped with a similarly nasty vocabulary. Nor do I feel that children should have it made clear to them that it is alright for uncle to kiss, but not alright for him to touch in genital places. The key lies in the child having an appreciation, through being told about sexual matters and being allowed to express her or himself sexually, of what she or he wants and does not want; it does not lie in an appeal to generalized conventions of social behaviour.

How the child chooses to express himself sexually will depend upon how his right to sexual knowledge is granted. Of course much will be independently determined by his own physiology – whether, at the age of eight, say, a particular child feels highly sexed, or marginally so, or perhaps not at all; but beyond this what he or she learns is all important.

As Farson says:

'One of the most pervasive and yet most disabling concepts in modern psychology is the belief that people need sex role identity. The concept of sexual identity has been so persuasively argued by Freud, Erikson, and many others that it is indeed difficult to question. We seem to be totally convinced that little boys need

fathers and little girls need mothers, or at least they need around them adults of the same sex with whom to identify. Without these models the child would not know who he or she is and would grow up unhealthy, confused, and afraid ....

'The fear is that children will not be able to live up to the stereotypes: that boys will be non-athletic, passive, delicate, impotent, or worst of all, homosexual; that girls will be roughneck, homely, assertive, and perhaps worst of all, lesbian.' <sup>19</sup>

Feminists have rightly pointed out that the stereotyped roles and behaviour of the young of either sex are reinforced by society in many ways, notably in children's books, in the expectation that boys will play with construction sets and girls with dolls, and so on. What isn't always pointed out is that this conditioning, which condemns women to limit their horizons to being homemakers, is part of a society which puts a high value – an excessive and neurotically high value – on normality across the board. It's part of a society which contemplates with horror, for instance, the idea of two lesbians bringing up a child together, for no better reason than that the child will grow up to be less subjected to the conventional role stereotypes than other children: not that the parents will be less loving or capable.

The insistence on normality is evident in existing sex education, and ought not to be. As Farson has it:

"The requirement that the sexuality of single people be ignored, that sex be taught as part of education for family life, limited to the heterosexual activities of a married couple and emphasizing its procreative functions has led to an even greater pressure to conform to the traditional role of self-fulfilment through the creation of a nuclear family.

'Few teachers understand how strong that pressure is and how easily and unconsciously they exert it. In many elementary schools, children who do not live in nuclear families are in the majority. Yet the amount of pressure to appear "normal" is so great, that when asked to draw their families, these children will actually fake a family with mother and father and several children. Teachers can communicate this worship of normalcy simply by asking what his or her father's name is. Many children who have no live-in father simply don't know. This assumption of the desirability and universality of nuclear family life dominates all sex education programmes and presents major barriers to the presentation of material on premarital sex (even the term loads the question), on homosexuality, and on the many variations of both child and adult sexuality.' <sup>20</sup>

Trying to look at this for a moment from a Rawlsian point of view, I would suggest that education of this sort is an infringement of children's rights. In the Rawlsian 'original position' we can safely suppose that those who are engaged in drawing up the principles of justice, any one of whom might, without knowing it, be, for instance, homosexual, or in some other minority group (perhaps the parent, or even the child, in a one-parent family), would not willingly create a system in which there was discrimination against social minorities, except those – such as thieves – who could be shown to infringe the rights of others. On the contrary, they would be uncomfortable in the absence of clear guarantees – one of which would be broad-minded, comprehensive reference in social and sex education to behaviour other than the mainstream – that the minority would be treated fairly.

Implicit in a society which recognizes a child's right to sexual expression, and to knowledge about matters sexual, is the right to know about how to cope with the genuine problems of sexuality – such as VD and unwanted pregnancy. Very often those parents who are the most vigorous in warning their children about the dangers of Strange Men (dangers which are largely unreal) are also the most insistent that they should be kept in ignorance about the real problems, and deprive them of the knowledge and equipment that would enable them to cope.

Children need full information about birth control and VD. Such information is of course useless without access to the necessary drugs and equipment. Along with fuller sex information, there should be ways of providing children with contraceptive and protective devices, possibly by supplying them through schools.

As Farson remarks,

'The situation is now truly absurd. Our insanity is evident when we give people information about birth control pills, but not the pills themselves. We teach boys how to protect themselves from venereal disease, but they cannot legally purchase the condoms necessary to provide such protection. It has been the policy in some institutions to give a girl birth control information only after she has become pregnant.' <sup>21</sup>

In this chapter I have tried to suggest a theoretical basis for children's rights, in particular their sexual rights. I have tried to point out that rights are dependent on the whole structure of the society in which they are asserted and fought for; that those needs and interests which come to be asserted as rights cannot necessarily be recognized and supported without changing the structure of society as well as its laws: how can a child have the right to choose his parents unless we introduce communal living, or child exchange programmes – unless, in other words, society recognizes the limitations for the child of the nuclear family, and tries to do something about them? I have tried to show that in making such challenges – in going overboard for 'free' communes, for instance, with their explicit abandonment of the achievement-orientated goals of 'civilized' society – we have to recognize the fundamental implications of change. I hope also to have indicated that people like Farson and Constantine pose some realistic alternatives for us to think about.

I have had nothing at all to say about many issues of children's rights which in Britain most readily arouse indignation on behalf of children: the issue of corporal punishment in schools, for instance – although PIE's own journal, *Childhood Rights*, has entered the lists on this issue with campaigning articles for the abolition of corporal punishment. The absence of such references does not mean that I care only about sex (though as I have indicated earlier sex affects practically everything in life, including, if sexuality is frustrated, the creation of attitudes of mind that make corporal punishment acceptable to society). What it does mean is that I have largely tried to talk about children's rights on a general basis – to erect principles for granting them which hold good no matter what the particular issue.

For this reason also, I have not gone painstakingly through the assertions one could make on behalf of parental rights, although in this regard it may be worth referring the reader to Constantine's analysis of alternative family structures. <sup>22</sup> In the next chapter, in any case, I'll be dealing with the realities of power in families and elsewhere, and for the moment I'd like to leave the reader with a Child's Sexual Bill of Rights, which has been formulated by the Childhood Sensuality Circle of America: <sup>23</sup>

*Whereas* a child's sexuality is just as much a part of his whole person from birth as the blood that flows in his veins, making his

sexual rights inherent and inalienable, and

*Whereas* the United Nations Organization proclaimed a Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, stating everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms encompassed in this Declaration without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religious opinion, national or social origin, birth or other status, and

*Whereas* a Declaration of the Rights of the Child was proclaimed by the UN in 1959, but no mention was made of the sexual needs and rights of children, and

*Whereas* a child not allowed to express all the instinctive desires nature endowed him with becomes an unhappy, frustrated, antisocial being and potential criminal, and

*Whereas* it is time the people of the United States and their lawmakers recognise these facts of life and act accordingly.

*Therefore*, the following inalienable rights are specifically set forth, to be implemented by appropriate legislation on a national and state level, and measures taken for the re-education of the citizenry in every part of the United States, this education to be available free to every citizen, whether school child or adult:

1. *Legal Protection* Every child shall be legally protected in his sexual rights regardless of age or status as a legal minor.

2. *Child's right to his own person* Every child has the right to privacy for his own personal thoughts, ideas, dreams, and exploration of his own body without any kind of adult interference, directly or indirectly expressed.

3. *Sex information* Every child has the right to accurate sex information and to be protected from sex misinformation as soon as he is able to understand this information in simple terms.

4. *Emotional growth* Each child has the right to grow mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually as a free, uncrippled happy person in security so he will be tolerant and appreciative of other individuals and their sexuality.

5. *Sensual pleasures* Each child has the right to fully enjoy the sensual pleasures he may feel without shame or guilt.

6. *Learning the art of love* All children have the right to learn the art of love beginning at any age he is able to understand, just as he is entitled to learn any other art or skill.

7. *Choice of a sex partner* Every child has the right to loving relationships, including sexual, with a parent, sibling, or other responsible adult or child, and shall be protected and aided in doing so by being provided with contraceptives and aids to prevent venereal disease.

8. *Protection from sexual suppression* Each child has the right to be protected from any form of sex suppression at home or in society so that in adulthood he will be capable of living his sex life according to his natural desires and not according to the dictates of tradition.

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## Ch 7 - Notes and References

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23. Published as a leaflet by Childhood Sensuality Circle, PO Box 5164, San Diego, California 92105, USA. [^](#)

## 'Consent' and 'Willingness'

It has been seen that there are philosophical grounds for according sexual rights to children, including not only the right to sex information, but also the freedom to engage in desired sexual activity, i.e. the right to say 'yes'. Does such a right impede what Farson properly acknowledged as equally fundamental, the right to say 'no'? Can children ever be considered capable of consent based on true freedom of choice?

Basic elements constituting freedom of choice arguably include:

- (i) a full knowledge of all the short- and long-term consequences to which participation in a sexual act could lead;
- (ii) a developed notion of which sexual activities (and partners) are exciting and desirable;
- (iii) control over the situation, so that withdrawal from it can be made at any point, if so wished.

These factors may prompt some approving nods as criteria for consent, if only because they appear to rule out most, if not all, children. Giving it a moment's more thought, however, a problem arises: even adults, in embarking on a sexual encounter or relationship, cannot be sure 'where it will all end'; nor do most people enter adulthood with a fixed idea as to the activities, and people, that might turn them on – the scope for experiment and discovery is a lifelong one. Only the third factor, that of control over the situation, appears to maintain its crucial importance when viewed in an adult context.

The usual mistake is to believe that sexual activity, especially for children, is so alarming and dangerous that participants need to have an absolute, total awareness of every conceivable ramification of taking part before they can be said to give valid consent. What there most definitely needs to be, is the child's willingness <sup>1</sup> to take part in the activity in question; whatever social or legal rules are operated, they must not be such as to allow unwilling children to be subjected to sexual acts. But there is no need whatever for a child to know 'the consequences' of engaging in harmless sex play, simply because it is exactly that: harmless.

Sex, especially the non-penetrative sex play to which child-adult activity is almost entirely confined in the case of younger children (i.e. those children of whom it can most readily be said that 'They don't know what they are doing'), is not in itself remotely dangerous – unlike playing in a busy road. Nor do children need firm ideas of what a particular new experience will be like, any more than do adults trying, say, '69' for the first time: the activity may prove more, or less, exciting than they suppose, but as it is completely harmless there is no reason why it cannot be safely explored.

It will of course be pointed out that children who enter a sexual relationship blissfully and innocently unaware of sexual shame and guilt, could be in for a rude awakening when a relationship is discovered. This leaves a question. Should we protect children from sex (to avoid the consequences of the guilt and social retribution arising from it) or, alternatively, should we make the reduction of guilt a priority? Knowing the hideous consequences of guilt, and the harmlessness of sex *per se*, I myself don't find it a particularly difficult question to answer.

In a nutshell, there is no reason why the same criteria of 'consent' that we would apply to a young adult signing on for a nine-year term in the Army, or for a lifelong commitment in marriage, should operate at all: such criteria, which hang on mature judgement, are not necessary for the protection of the child's best interests. Indeed,

they positively harm those interests by artificially restricting the child's development.

The question, then, is not whether children are mature enough to consent – the issues of 'maturity' and 'consent' (in the sense of willingness based on informed deliberation) together constitute a gigantic pair of red herrings<sup>2</sup> – but whether we can ensure that children are willing participants in a particular act. A child's control of sexual situations can be enhanced, as we saw in the last chapter, by the openness with which sexuality is treated in society as a whole. Far from needing to be mature before having a sex life, an unthwarted sexual development helps lead to full sexual maturity, as opposed to the mere attainment of adult years.

Nevertheless, it may be felt that children's lack of maturity renders them willing to involve themselves in acts which they might not want to take part in if their defences were better developed. A lack of ability to 'read' an adult's (possibly disguised) sexual wishes and intentions, and a failure to understand that their own (merely) friendly behaviour may be interpreted as intentionally seductive, could result in children allowing things to happen 'before they know where they are'. Eager friendliness with an adult could quickly turn to apprehension, and perhaps to passive compliance in sexual acts which were not desired. Such a situation would plainly be unsatisfactory, for although the child might theoretically be able to say 'no', she or he might (perhaps through sudden fear of the adult, as a result of his unexpected behaviour) find herself or himself in practice unable to do so.

In protecting the apprehensive child in such a case, is it necessary to overrule the willingness of other children, and to say that none can 'consent'? I believe not. It is by no means difficult for the adult in question to tell if he has the child's confidence, and he should be legally responsible for his actions: in the event of a child being unwilling, even passively so, and without having tried to deter the adult, the criminal law should be available, just as in the case of overt intimidation or violence. As at present, it need only be proved that the act took place: there need be no distressing courtroom wrangles, as tends to happen in adult rape cases, as to whether or not there had been consent. In most cases, however, as already explained, it would be in the best interests of the child to proceed by civil injunction, rather than through the criminal courts.

The possibility that adults may tend to 'engineer' the willingness of children, that they may 'manipulate' their consent, gives rise to a great deal of unease, and needs to be considered at some length. It might be suggested, for instance, that no matter how precocious a young child's sex education has been, there has to be a first time for all her/his experiences, and at this point the child is not in a position critically to evaluate whatever an adult partner says an experience will be like, or what it will lead to.

That this is the case is an incontrovertible fact. But the interpretation to be put upon it is an entirely different matter. In our culture, the words 'disadvantage', 'manipulation' and 'vulnerability' immediately spring to mind as concomitants of the younger partner's lack of experience; in the pro-sexual cultures examined earlier, ideas roughly corresponding to our words 'guidance', 'showing how', or 'initiation', represent the prevailing way of thinking.

A glance at the way in which we think about religion, and the religious education of children, may help to put our own culture's attitudinal response into a useful perspective. At an official level, it is agreed that a child's introduction to religion is extremely important. In Britain it is enshrined in the 1944 Education Act that all children in all schools shall begin the day with an act of worship – the only element in the curriculum which is insisted upon by statute. This being the case – religion being considered to be of vital importance – one might have expected that there would be an equal concern in Government, at least as great as that in relation to sex, that children

should not be subjected to 'manipulation' by ruthless adult salesmen offering every kind of creed; that these people should not be free to exploit the vulnerable minds of children. For if it is true that children are incapable of making judgements about sexual relationships, how much more adept are they likely to be at judging the rival claims of Protestant and Catholic, or Jehovah's Witnesses and the Exclusive Brethren? How can a child, who is so easily persuaded to believe in Father Christmas, be expected to make sense of it? Won't she or he accept, far too uncritically, the highly contestable notion that there is a god? Why not leave the child's mind in a state of unmolested innocence until an age is reached at which intellectually valid judgements can be made?

But no. Even though this is an important issue, adults are free to fill a child's mind with any prejudice or bigotry they like, without any danger of facing a sentence for corrupting a minor, assault on a child's mind, or anything else. Children are seen as fair game for the imposition of any religious belief or value system that the adult, particularly the parents, cares to impose. As Bertrand Russell has remarked,

'One of the few rights remaining to parents in the wage-earning class is that of having their children taught any brand of superstition that may be shared by a large number of parents in the same neighbourhood.'

Why does society tolerate this? Partly, there is a vague feeling that it is better for a child to have some religion than none at all – not least because most religions emphasize a restrictive sexual 'morality'! But it is instructive to note that very little is made of the dangers of manipulating a child's mind. The dangers are demonstrably far greater than any consequence of manipulating a child towards consensual sexual activity (one need only mention Northern Ireland to remind oneself of how religious bigotry reinforces antagonism between peoples) but, quite irrationally, society cares less about it. Religious manipulation is assumed to be good and is positively encouraged; sexual manipulation (or 'guidance', 'showing how', etc.) is assumed to be bad and is stamped upon with maximal force. I shall try to show that the latter assumption is misplaced.

Contrary to the conventional wisdom, not all child-adult sex is manipulative – at least, the manipulation is not always by the adult. But even if this were accepted, most people would be quick to pounce on any possibility that the child could be manipulated, or seduced, by an adult, and without necessarily thinking very deeply about it, they would automatically assume this to be against the child's best interests. In showing that 'it ain't necessarily so', reference must be made to examples of 'manipulative' situations. Incidentally, it should be borne in mind that the very word 'manipulation' has a pejorative ring, and is prejudicial. I am content to stick with it in so far as I recognize the possibility of an adult using his experience and skill to influence a child's behaviour – but it should not be assumed that this influence is bound to be exploitative or unfair.

In previous chapters, something has been said about the sexual stimulation of babies and toddlers by adults. Closely documented individual cases are rare, but it is interesting to note the attitude brought to them by those with a fundamentally anti-sexual bias.

The infancy of Louis XIII of France provides a good example. Heroard, physician to Henri IV, kept a diary, from which it appears the infant prince had a delightful introduction to sex play from the earliest age. Louis was not yet one year old:

'He laughed uproariously when his nanny waggled his cock with her fingers,' reports Heroard, which he goes on to describe as an amusing trick which the child soon copied. Calling a page on one

occasion, says the diarist, he 'pulled up his robe, showing him his cock.'

Notes Heroard:

'He was one year old. In high spirits he made everybody kiss his cock.' This amused them all.'

During his first three years, nobody saw any harm in touching his sexual parts. The Marquise de Verneuil 'often put her hand under his coat; he got his nanny to lay him on her bed where she played with him, putting her hand under his coat.'

Even more astonishing is this passage:

'He was undressed and Madame too [his sister], and they were placed naked in bed with the King, where they kissed and twittered and gave great amusement to the King. The King asked him: "Son, where is the Infanta's bundle?" [Louis was already engaged to the Infanta of Spain.] He showed it to him, saying: "There's no bone in it Papa." Then as it was slightly distended, he added: "There is now, there is sometimes."' "

The court was amused, in fact, to see his first erections:

'Waking up at eight o'clock, he called Mlle Bethouzay and said to her; "Zezai, my cock is like a drawbridge; see how it goes up and down." And he raised it and lowered it. <sup>3</sup>

In discussing Heroard's diary, Lloyd de Mause, the 'psycho-historian', behaves as though he simply cannot believe this evidence, and sets about trying to demolish it as the pathological fruit of Heroard's 'projective fantasies': the baby was not sexually active at all; it's just that Heroard liked to think he was; he and the other courtiers, by projecting their own sexual needs onto the child were thereby enabled to use him as a sexual plaything, against his wishes. Given that it is a matter of extreme rarity for paedophilic men to express any sexual interest in babies, and quite rare for them to be attracted to those of less than five or six years old, it is interesting that de Mause should so readily accept that a whole number of courtiers should be subject to identical 'projective fantasies'. If there were no objective basis at all for Louis's sexual behaviour, we would be forced to conclude the most amazing statistical freak in bringing together so many infantophile courtiers in France around the turn of the seventeenth century!

It is possible that Heroard himself may have been given to exaggeration. But what is clear to me is that de Mause is a good example of a person who would be unlikely to be swayed by any evidence in favour of child-adult sex. All he sees is the danger of manipulation, with no possible beneficial effect arising from it. In making such a judgement, he ignores a fact that thousands of nurses and parents have learnt: that tearful, screaming infants can easily be lulled into quiet, relaxed, contented ones by the simple expedient of rubbing their genitals: a sexually manipulative act by the adult if ever there was one – and with an ulterior motive to boot!

But on what basis could such an act be described as either wicked, or harmful, or a contravention of the child's rights? How could someone reasonably suggest that the adult should refrain from doing it because the child was mentally incapacitated from making an informed decision? Isn't the important thing in such circumstances the clear indication of pleasure on the child's behalf – the fact that it stops crying? In other words, the child is not being cheated out of his right to say 'no' if there is due regard for her or his responses to the sexual stimulation.

A baby could of course be stimulated to the extent of its being unpleasurable. Ways

in which one might guard against this possibility include a social taboo, plus legal sanctions, against any form of genital stimulation of infants. By a draconian anti-sexual emphasis of this sort, however, society would achieve (as it in fact does) a lasting repression of sexuality in children, and destructive feelings of sexual guilt lasting throughout life – exactly the vicious circle from which I am suggesting society should try to break free. Less heavy-handed measures might include support for extended, non-nuclear family arrangements, in which the infant's upbringing would be less monopolized by one person than at present, and thus less subject to the idiosyncratic needs and projections of any one person. Not that there is evidence in our society for the widespread sexual abuse of infants: the pathology of Heroard, if indeed he was subject to projective fantasies, is a great rarity.

Why, one might ask, should there be such a depth of doubt and concern as de Mause exhibits over a rare and exotic case, when other types of pathological fantasy are more harmful, but less stigmatized? The most obvious case is perhaps that of corporal punishment. There is no shortage of school teachers ready to beat out the fantasized 'badness' of their charges, largely for their own gratification. It is curious that this rates as such an unobjectionable activity in our society, especially among those who furiously oppose the sexual 'corruption' of children.

Young children above the age of infancy become susceptible to manipulation of a less direct kind, characterized by deception. When children acquire language, they can be told untruths, from the relatively (though not entirely) benign Father Christmas myth, to the pernicious threat of the 'bogyman', who comes to take away naughty children. Sexual myths usually fall into the pernicious category, alas, so that the whole area of sexuality becomes poisonously invested with mystery and darkness – and the perpetrators, far from being paedophiles, are usually ordinary parents who, because of their own sexual anxieties and conflicts, are inclined to deceive children with such classics of deception as the idea that babies are brought by the stork.

If the use of deception is a possibility for parents, it is of course a possibility for paedophiles too. A paedophile who concocts a non-sexual 'reason' for he and a small child to strip naked together, say, may succeed in arousing the child's sexual curiosity and excitement. This would quite clearly be manipulation, based on exploiting the ignorance of the child as to the adult's motives. Supposing, by contrast, the paedophile had been scrupulously non-manipulative. Supposing, instead of playing tricks, he had simply, and openly, invited the child to 'play' sexually. Both approaches would require for their success the child's willing involvement and participation at all stages. The fact that in the more manipulative case the participation is induced by sleight of hand is really less important than the fact that the child is relaxed and enjoying the situation. Indeed, the sleight of hand may be an effective means of enabling the situation to occur 'naturally', so far as the child is concerned, without any embarrassment or uncertainty on the adult's part.

If the child is being led, or manipulated, it is at least a benevolent manipulation, in the sense that it leads – so long as the child is willing – towards a pleasurable and harmless outcome. Parents constantly engage in benevolent manipulation of this sort, without fear of social condemnation: usually it is called not 'manipulation', but 'encouragement'. Very often, parents will presume to anticipate a child's long-term wishes by ignoring, or manipulating their way around, her or his immediate wishes. For instance, in teaching a child to swim. The child may at first be tearful and apprehensive of going into the water, or beyond a certain depth. By encouraging 'pull' forces, and cajoling 'push' forces, the parent persuades the child to have a go, to not be afraid, to do that which is not at first desired. The parent does this in the full knowledge that eventually the child will relax, learn to swim, and enjoy the water.

What the sensible parent does not do is to drag his protesting six-year-old

screaming towards the edge of the pool and throw him into the deep end. Interestingly enough, were he to do so, and providing the child was not allowed to drown, this would probably not qualify as a criminal offence, although for the child it could be as nasty an experience as rape. It is not an activity in which the intervention of law is thought to be necessary. There is no elaborate questioning of whether in any particular case the child actually consented to be introduced to the water, or was manipulated into consenting. It is presumed that the adult will be benevolently intentioned, and that all will work out well.

I am not suggesting that in sexual activity a child's wishes should be ignored, in the same way that a parent gets round his child's fear of the water. Given that many children in our culture grow up with a deep suspicion and fear of all things sexual, and given that there are deeply held views as to the 'sinfulness' of many sex acts, adults are morally obliged to accept the child's attitude towards sex. A parent does not accept his child's inalienable right to be afraid of water and of swimming. That would be silly. But the paedophile does have to respect the child's fear of sex. It is the child's right to take a negative attitude, whether because she/he is genuinely afraid of sex, or because she/he simply doesn't fancy, or like, the paedophile in question, or for some other reason.

As a boy-lover, I am aware that chatting to a twelve-year-old is a vastly different matter, on average, to doing the same thing with a boy half that age. The potential for manipulation, benevolent or otherwise, by a male adult at any rate, is enormously curtailed. By this age, practically every boy has learnt a great deal. He will be well aware of the prevailing sexual mores. No adult could con him into sexual activity by disguising his own motives. He would know too well what the grown-up was after. He would know that such people are usually looked down upon. He would know that they are described as 'queers' and 'benders', and that to go with them could result in social disgrace.

So how on earth does the adult ever manipulate his consent? The answer is, with difficulty. Those who succeed tend to be the less sensitive ones: those who can take a rebuff with a shrug of the shoulders and try their luck elsewhere. Others, and I think this goes for most of us, do not like being rebuffed. It mortifies us. Cripples us. Then it takes a bit of courage to even talk to a boy again for a while, much less to connive at his consent to a sexual act. The truth is that children of this age who become involved in homosexual acts with men do so because they want to: if they did not, they would have every opportunity to keep out of it.

To be sure, the adult may take initiatives. He may use devices to break the ice, to establish an atmosphere in which both sides know that the social and sexual barriers are down. But in order for such devices to be successful, the children have to want it to happen. One paedophile I know went to great lengths to set up a 'film show' for a fourteen-year-old boy with whom he hoped to become sexually intimate. The boy was turned on by the films, and openly masturbated himself while watching them. He would not, however, let the adult touch him. He politely explained that he wasn't interested in sex with men, and that was very much that.

Within the context of, say, a youth club, or a scout group, the paedophile working as a voluntary helper has the opportunity gradually to win the confidence and affection, and perhaps, ultimately, the erotic interest, of youngsters, over a period of months or even years. Relationships may be built up without any attempt by the adult to work deliberately towards them – in fact, paedophiles in such positions not infrequently avoid giving overt expression to their erotic interests (either because they accept society's view of the 'wrongness' of doing so, or from fear of discovery), and try to content themselves with the fact that although they are sexually alienated from the young, they are at least in some degree socially integrated with them.

There are others who use the opportunity afforded by such social integration to consciously and deliberately seek sexual encounters. Over a period, they may succeed in creating an atmosphere in the group in which sexuality generally is seen to be acceptable, in which the prevailing barriers of sexual inhibition and guilt are lowered. In such a context, the 'seduction' of an individual youngster is likely to be facilitated. It is possible to view the whole, long-term process as cunningly calculating, and therefore manipulative in a mischievous way, but only if one believes it proper that youngsters should feel sexual inhibition and guilt, and that they are being cheated out of these feelings.

In relation to adolescent boys engaged in homosexual activity with men, the Dutch Speijer Committee had some sensible things to say. This was an official Dutch committee set up to advise on the state of the law concerning homosexual relations with minors. The Committee paid special attention to the use of the word 'seduction' in a homosexual context. Essentially, they said, the manoeuvring, or manipulation, described above, could be looked upon as the initial stages of 'seduction': in the later stages, children themselves cannot help but take an active role in being seduced, or else the seduction is reduced to a meaningless failure.

The Speijer Committee started from a Dutch dictionary definition of 'seduction' as:

'to lead aside or away, figuratively speaking; to lead by persuasion or delusion to a specific evil, entice; (metaphorically) allure; beguile to do something wrong, to lead astray; (more especially) to induce to extramarital copulation with or without promises (particularly promises to marry).'

The word in Dutch, therefore, appears to correspond with its English counterpart in that it implies an ethically disapproving judgement. The Committee point out that this ethical loading depends on one's attitude to extramarital sexual activity, and go on to say that the word 'seduction' is used in the Report without any prejudice of this sort. 'It can often be replaced by less loaded terms such as initiation,' they say, 'or the making and establishing of contact by adults.'

The Committee note that what is so disparagingly called seduction is in fact a wholly natural and necessary function, which ought not to be so readily decried:

'A situation in which an attempt at seduction in this sense [i.e. the sense described above] occurs is common in a heterosexual as well as in a homosexual context. A seduction situation concerning a minor can be created by either the older or the younger person; often this situation is mutually constructed. A large proportion of human behaviour – and especially where the younger person is concerned, this includes their appearance, clothing and choice of their means of transport – involves the creation of seductive situations and is comparable with the decoy, showing off, and sexually impressing behaviour observed in the animal world.'<sup>4</sup>

Even more positively, the argument continues:

'It must be recognized that a society which seeks to eliminate all seductive situations as much as possible, will not encourage public moral welfare. On the contrary, it is desirable for young people of both sexes that they are able to meet and cope with such situations. A normal development requires broad possibilities of introduction, experiment, contact and initiation'

The Speijer Committee was addressing itself to the homosexual seduction of minors over the age of sixteen, rather than those in the years immediately prior to



puberty. But the argument put forward in relation to seduction, whether considered in a homosexual or a heterosexual context, might be advanced just as validly in relation to rather younger children.

It is hardly possible to conceive of an official committee in Great Britain solemnly declaring its support for any form of seduction, never mind the homosexual variety. But if we accept that homosexual behaviour is no more to be frowned on than heterosexual behaviour – this is an axiom of pro-sexuality – then the Speijer rationale suddenly begins to appear eminently sensible.

In the passages from The Speijer Report considered above, the focus was on boys. However, girls may in fact be thought more vulnerable to a man's wiles. The man's maturity, his authority, are relevant to a much greater extent than is the case with boys. No girl of thirteen or fourteen is likely to think of a man as a 'pervert' because of his interest in youngish girls. He may be dubbed a 'dirty old man' if there is particular reason to dislike him, but, basically, heterosexual attraction towards girls in their early teens is not regarded as abnormal: there are many men who also relate perfectly well to older women and who are attracted to this age group, but who do not find themselves drawn to much younger children of six or seven.

Girls in our culture are brought up on an unending diet of romantic magazines, films, pop lyrics: the attentions of an older man would be quite likely to make a girl fall over herself to be 'in love' with him. At the same time, she may have developed from other aspects of her culture quite a strong belief that sex before marriage is wrong. She may regard the loss of her virginity as cheapening, or she may vaguely feel she is 'not ready for it'. Given her romantic feelings, the adult, if he is unscrupulous, might try to persuade her that by giving her body to him, she can 'prove' that those feelings are the 'real thing'. He might belittle her views about chastity, and tell her that she cannot really know what life is all about until she has experienced the physical side of love. Such tactics may succeed in undermining her defences. She may later come to realize that sex is all he is after, and that he doesn't really 'love' her at all – if he had, he would have waited until she felt ready, and not have pressurized her against her better judgement.

What could easily be overlooked is that the entire scenario in which virginity is surrendered as a proof of love is in itself the product of a false equation in our romantic culture: that being 'in love' means committing oneself sexually, perhaps 'for ever and ever' to one person. Restrictions upon sexuality seem to encourage this outlook. If children were accustomed to having sex play among themselves and with adults, from infancy onwards, the mistakes of this naive romanticism could be avoided. By the age of thirteen, a girl would be far too well-versed in sexuality to 'surrender herself' for the first time out of love (whether misplaced or otherwise), and the development of emotional attachments would be unclouded by sexual confusion.

This analysis brings into sharp focus the validity or otherwise of a child's emotional life, given such factors as the distorted romanticism of present-day society. It also highlights the fact that emotional decisions may creep into a youngster's perception of what is sexually desirable or admissible. These themes will be taken up fully in the next chapter, in reviewing the broader issues of power in sexual relationships.

As a final exercise in perspective on the theme of manipulation, we may consider the advice given in a recent medical textbook <sup>5</sup> to those doctors called upon to examine children following a discovered sexual relationship with an adult:

'If the child refuses to be examined, a process of negotiation and bargaining sometimes results in acquiescence.'

(By offering a bag of sweeties, perhaps?)

'Sedation or deferral of the examination to another visit are other

alternatives, depending on the circumstances. Occasionally, none of these alternatives can be utilised successfully, these cases will require admission of the child to the hospital for examination under anaesthesia. <sup>6</sup>

So much for the consent of the child to an examination! In the same textbook, a contributor describes the paedophile's efforts

'to persuade his victim to co-operate and to acquiesce or consent to the sexual relationship, oftentimes by bribing or rewarding the child with attention, affection, approval, money, gifts, treats, and good times. But he may be dissuaded if the child actively refuses and resists because he does not resort to physical force. His aim is to gain sexual control of the child by developing a willing or consenting sexual relationship.'

The desire for a consensual relationship is thus represented as merely a cynical combination of manipulation and bribery by the adult, although it is conceded that

'At some level, he cares for the child and is emotionally involved with him or her.'

The point is that when the consent condition is fulfilled, the rules of the game are suddenly changed and consent is no longer of any account: the paedophile simply cannot win.

Hidden in this thinking are some deeply rooted beliefs concerning power relationships between adults and children: beliefs which find a degree of expression in the assertion above that there is an aim 'to gain sexual control of the child'. This issue, a key one, is taken up in the next chapter. But if we are going to make more than a pretence of taking children seriously, they must be enabled to say yes as well as no. Children have to have a choice, and should not be bound to either an anti-sexual approach (as usually taken by parents, religious leaders, etc.) or a pro-sexual approach (usually confined to peers and paedophiles).

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## Ch 8 - Notes and References

1. A Home Office research report has recently suggested that 'consent' need imply no more than simple 'willingness'. The report states:

'Consent is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "voluntary agreement to or acquiescence in what another proposes or desires. Consent to a course of action does not imply a mature understanding of the consequences of that course of action but merely a willingness that it should take place. In a democracy any law which proscribes consensual behaviour will need justification; if there are large numbers of such convictions for consensual behaviour, the law may need re-examination.'  
(R. Walmsley and K. White, *Sexual Offenses, Consent and Sentencing*, op. cit., p.5.) <sup>^</sup>

2. Much has been made of *puberty* as a landmark in life, and it is sometimes accorded a spurious significance in the age-of-consent debate, because of a supposed connection between its attainment and the attainment of intellectual and emotional maturity.

The journal *Gay Left* has given some prominence to this view, in the following words:

'An age of consent, in theory at least, would seem to be meaningless

only in the context of an entry into social and sexual maturity, which in turn suggests a relationship to puberty. The problem is that puberty is a process rather than a particular age, occurring roughly between the ages of eleven and fourteen, though individuals differ greatly in their physical and emotional development at this time. Together with the sexual development of the body it implies a growing awareness of the social world, particularly through greater contact with peers and older children as sources of education and experience.'

It is important to realize that this thinking embodies some confused ideas. In the first place, puberty is not a process, as is suggested: it means 'being functionally capable of procreation' (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*), neither more or less. This capability is one with which girls and boys find themselves virtually overnight, although development of the secondary sexual characteristics associated with it (the growth of pubic hair and so on) takes longer, and the period of acquisition is known as 'pubescence'. It is worth noting that precocious puberty has been known to occur as early as age five or six, in children who show no sign of greater intellectual or emotional maturity than their coevals. (See J. Money and P. Tucker, *Sexual Signatures*, op. cit.)

What *Gay Left* are getting at in their description of a 'growing awareness of the social world' and so on, is not puberty at all, but adolescence, which fits the thrill by definition:

ADOLESCENCE (Person) growing up, between childhood and manhood or womanhood' (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*).

This distinction is not a merely pedantic one. For whereas the word 'puberty' has the clear quality of a 'natural frontier' about it, with direct reference to physiological changes, the definition of 'adolescence' is irritatingly vague. It begs all the important questions about what characterizes childhood, as opposed to adulthood. In answering such questions, it might be useful to make reference to a young person's demonstrable ability to cope with certain intellectual and moral concepts, *a la* Piaget, but it is not necessary for arguments relating to paedophilia to become bogged down in the question of 'What is maturity?', and in ages or stages associated with maturity: most people in our culture reach their so-called maturity, whether at puberty or some other time, in a state of total mental muddle about sex.

This may, and often does, lead to emotional crises, and it is sometimes suggested that children below puberty would not have the emotional resources to cope with them. But such resources, to cope with such crises, are only necessary for those whose upbringing takes them into adolescence saddled with monumental sexual hang-ups. Adolescence is not *necessarily* a time of emotional crisis: in some cultures the years before marriage are sexually relaxed, and idyllically free from the emotional stresses that afflict our youngsters (See especially Y. Elfin's classic description of the Muria, in *The Muria and their Ghotul*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1947).

Children, by contrast – and the younger they are, the more this applies – are better equipped to relate sexually to adults with a spontaneous, unproblematic sense of pleasure in our culture, precisely because they are not mature: because they are less likely to have been damaged by society's prevailing anti-sexual mores. <sup>^</sup>

3. Extracts from Heroard's diary quoted in Philippe Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1962, pp. 98-9. <sup>^</sup>

4. *The Speijer Report* (Advice to the Netherlands Council of Health concerning homosexual relations with minors, 1969 (English translation, commissioned by the

Sexual Law Reform Society, p. 28). [^](#)

5. A. Burgess *et al.*, *Sexual Assault of Children and Adolescents*, D.C. Heath  
Lexington, Mass., 1978. [^](#)

6. *Ibid.*, p. 152. [^](#)

[\[Skip to Chapter 9 - Power and Equality\]](#)

## Power and Equality

Much disquiet about paedophilia derives from the fact that child-adult relationships are between unequal parties. Adults are almost invariably much bigger and stronger than children; by definition, they are older, and their vastly greater skills and knowledge, their status in society – including the relative power and independence afforded by their earning power – and their experience of human relationships, may appear to lend them so much authority in the eyes of children as to give them an 'unfair advantage'. This disparity of size and power must inevitably, it may be thought, create a potential for dominance and exploitation: a potential which some feminists have anxiously compared with the exploitation of women by men in our society.

Not all women see this power relationship as necessarily a problem though. Having researched paedophilia for a higher degree thesis, Jane Gale has written.

'Sexual acts between children are often considered exploratory and are consequently acceptable. Between child and adult the act is not considered exploratory, but rather a power relationship as the adult has a greater life experience and a greater propensity for evil and by his superior physical and mental strength may harm the child far more than another child could. It must be remembered that the adult, if he has a greater propensity for evil; also has a greater propensity for good. If a relationship should be deemed unacceptable because of the unequal distribution of power, then most heterosexual adult relationships are unacceptable. The greater life experience of the adult may be more beneficial to the child than a relationship with someone of his own age.'<sup>1</sup>

In her thesis, Jane Gale went so far as to advocate the abolition of Britain's laws against consensual child-adult sex.

Those who see only a negative potential in power discrepancies should bear in mind that there is a comparable discrepancy in the parent-child relationship – in which women, as mothers, may sometimes with justice be dubbed the oppressor. Every time a mother makes an 'ageist' assumption that her child isn't old enough to do something she or he wants to do (regardless of her or his actual development), that she or he needs 'protecting' from a new experience, when in reality she or he needs freeing, needs to spread her or his wings, the mother is being oppressive.

Similarly, the psychological need of many women to keep their children as children, rather than letting them develop, is often an oppressive fact during those children's later childhood and early adolescence, and it can in extreme forms go on well into adulthood. This type of oppression is common enough, but the sexual constriction of children in early childhood by their mothers is much more than common – it is all but universal in Western cultures.

In the Freudian formulation, little boys fear that their fathers will castrate them, but in fact it is generally mothers who take upon themselves the role of imposing sexual taboos. It is the mothers who tell their little boys (and girls) the places where they must not touch themselves, the parts they must not play with. And if the barriers against masturbation in infancy are gradually being broken down, mothers still reinforce prohibitions against guilt-free sex play with age-mates, to say nothing of the incest taboo and the prohibition of sex with adults. It is the mothers who must answer

for the 'complexes' which are the result, and which give our culture its characteristically guilt-ridden flavour. Father may appear superficially to be the stern law-giver in the family, but mother is the law-giver-in-chief to both girls and boys in the formative early stages, and her threatened capacity to withhold love is a far more potent weapon in fashioning what Freud called the 'super ego', or castrating conscience, than any sanction wielded by the father.

The fact that there are oppressive elements in motherhood does not of course tell us that motherhood should be done away with. The fact that a mother's relationship with her child is not an equal one does not mean that it is inherently untenable or undesirable; the child, the lesser party in terms of power in this relationship, stands to gain from the inequality: it could not be mothered by another baby who was its equal. Immature mothers are not the best ones.

The disparity in size and power between parent and child creates a potential for abuse: a mother could not batter a baby as big as herself. But, on the basis that parent-child relationships are generally positive (and, in addition, given that safeguards can be built in, such as according rights to children) we accept that inequality is simply in the nature of the thing. In itself, it is not an aspect on which we would focus our attention in determining whether a particular mother-child relationship was good or bad.

I would like to see paedophilic relationships looked at in a similar light, because I believe that the comparison with the parent-child relationship is in most cases more appropriate than that with adult sexual relationships. Another model, made much of in J.Z. Eglinton's *Greek Love*, is that of teacher-pupil – the mentor relationship. Why should these models, traditionally asexual as they are (in our culture), be appropriate? Essentially because, notwithstanding the sexual element of paedophilia, the affectual structure of a paedophilic relationship, so far as the child is concerned, is more like that between parent and child, or between teacher and pupil, than between lovers. Sometimes the child feels 'love' for the adult, in a romantic sense; more often, in the case of pre-adolescent children, the affection for the adult is not different in kind to that which it would feel for a parent. On the adult's side there may, of course, be romantic, essentially non-parental feelings, but in any discussion of the impact of the relationship on the child, it makes sense to take as one's model that which best fits the child's perceptions.

Despite the inappropriateness of trying to measure up paedophilia against an idealized model of 'equal lovers', the arguments relating to power and equality remain immensely important, and it is necessary to examine them in some depth.

Jill Richard, in an article for the *Radical Therapist*,<sup>2</sup> sums up the issues with admirable clarity, and begins by suggesting that

'Children can ... explore sex mutually without the ulterior motives of a woman trying to catch a man or a man trying to trap a woman. Although kids may learn the sexual power "games" that adults play, the patterns of sexual exploitation are not as well developed in children's relationships. Sex between children of similar ages is likely to be more equal than sex between adults.'

Despite going on to develop a fundamentally anti-paedophilic line, she continues:

'It is true that children are stifled by not being allowed to experience their full sexuality (whatever that may be). It is also true that just because some children are hurt by relationships with adults, these sexual relationships should not be denied to all children. That would be like eliminating cars because children sometimes get hit by

them.'

She even feels (rightly) that sex with children can have the virtue of being tension free:

'I agree that sex between adults and children could involve less tension than sex between adults. For adults this is true because children tend to be less inhibited about sex than adults.'

Beyond this point, Ms Richard and I part company, but in order to do justice to her view, it is necessary to quote her at some length:

'However, for kids, although the sex itself may not be any more tense than with other kids, if we look at it in terms of the relationship as a whole it is more complicated. Children are innocent in sex, not because they are unaware of their sexuality, but because they are unaware of the type of sexual (power) politics that occur in adult relationships.

'Because of their past relationships, adults entering any new relationship have lost the innocent belief that sex is a mere act. (Implications of sex include the complications of pregnancy, increased psychic and physical vulnerability, etc.) Adults have developed complicated defences and various power tactics (e.g. subtle manipulation, seductiveness, guilt-tripping or overt aggression). Children cannot see through these defences, nor clearly understand why they are needed. Thus children are left defenceless against adults' "premeditated" sex. In addition, children see adults, especially males, as authority figures. Children know that they must respect adults' desires or they will be punished. An adult and a child are not equals in size, economic independence, social experience, knowledge of interpersonal politics, sexual experience, nor the expectation that the other will respect their wishes. How can we expect an equal relationship to develop? If it does, I think it will be due to the benevolence of the adult, not the child's control of the situation. This then does not truly liberate the child (i.e. give him/her power), but rather reinforces his/her dependence on adults.'

Let's look at this more closely. First of all Jill Richard's point that 'children can ... explore sex mutually without the ulterior motives of a woman trying to catch a man or a man trying to trap a woman.' Quite what she means about a man trying to trap a woman it is difficult to say. Is she talking about marriage? Or about rape? About her emotional enslavement without him getting 'tied down', or what?

These distinctions are important, because if we are going to talk about the power politics of relationships, we have to know what the politics are – what they are designed to achieve. Otherwise, how can we see whose interests are in fact being achieved and whose are being trodden upon?

The phrase 'a woman trying to catch a man' is much more familiar. Traditionally, it means trying to catch a man in marriage; to inveigle him into committing himself into a life-long contract, to lure him into providing her with emotional and economic security. Jill Richard and other feminists would doubtless agree that the politics of 'catching your man' are self-defeating, leading the woman into self-imposed bondage, dependency and inferior status. The implications for the man of the woman's success in making her catch are also a matter of male regret: in winning a woman's love, in winning regular sex, he pays the heavy price (usually too heavy, he feels) of being

responsible or having commitments.

'*Responsibility*' and '*commitment*' are in fact distinctively key words of *adult* life and often relate to matters outside personal relationships: a manager may have 'a lot of responsibility'; a priest may have a 'great sense of commitment' to the Church. Children (and the elderly) have lower status because they do not have such important responsibilities and commitments, and are considered incapable of discharging them.

We have seen that children, especially older children and adolescents, are kept artificially without responsibilities which given a chance they *could* discharge. But the mistake is to assume that children in a child-adult sex relationship even *need* to have a capacity for commitment or responsibility. They do not *need* to be emotionally mature.

Faced with a woman who uses her personal-political art to get a man to sign on the dotted line of a life-long marriage contract, a man *does* need such maturity (and often hasn't got it). He needs to be able to make subtle judgements about whether he and she are going to be suited to each other even when, in years to come, they may find each other a little less physically compelling. Notoriously, when people are romantically in love they are *incapable* of making such decisions sensibly: they become blind to the fact that because they 'love' each other now, this happy state may not last indefinitely. As Denis de Rougement has eloquently argued, <sup>3</sup> marriages based on the ideal of romantic love are built on shaky foundations, and the mere fact that a couple are adult when they make their decision does not alter this. In essence, the decision to marry needs the same qualities, though to a much greater degree, that are required for decision-making in other aspects of adult life. Marriage is not so different from a hire-purchase contract. You don't sign unless you can keep up the payments. And you don't know your capacity for keeping up the payments unless you first have experience in handling money (or in marriage, the opposite sex) and your judgement is mature. Insufficiently mature judgement, it hardly needs saying, can land one with a great deal of misery and hardship.

To engage in an erotic act does not, as already noted, involve decisions of this order. The quality of predictive wisdom is not needed. All the child in such a relationship needs to think about – and she or he is capable of doing so – is whether the act is pleasurable. It is a myth that a pleasant experience will lead to a lifetime of consequences that the child doesn't know about. It is a myth that the enticements of an ensnaring adult will *commit* a child to the unknown, to some dark bourn from which she or he cannot return. There is no formal commitment (though there may be an emotional one): the adult doesn't ask the child to marry him. The younger partner, and the elder, remain free from obligations enforceable at law.

Not all sexual politics, or even most of them, are about marriage, it will be argued. But they do tend to revolve around the commitment implied in 'love' – the principal characteristics of which include 'psychic vulnerability' (a phrase coined by the radical feminist Shulamith Firestone and echoed by Jill Richard), of which the chief 'political' by-products are *jealousy* and *possessiveness*.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, it was the height of fashion to be a sexual revolutionary, a 'swinger', a wife or husband swapper, a group-sex, happy-go-lucky all-round fun-lover. The name of the game was to have sex without guilt. To enjoy the bodies of others, and let others enjoy one's own, without the essentially selfish aspect of trying to own the person inside the body, without trying to trap her or him into a 'heavy', committed relationship, which would serve only to shackle a partner in a physical and emotional chastity belt for much of the time. If only people would let their partners go when they wanted to, instead of expending a lot of emotional energy on keeping them away from rivals, then all would be OK. Everyone would have a lot



of sex fun. Everyone would be spontaneously warm and loving to everyone else, not exclusively to one closely-guarded body-and-soul mate.

The trouble is that in an adult context the issues are not nearly as simple as many people liked to pretend they were, or really thought they were. Some genuine, truly generous-hearted people, believed that the selfish aspects of possessive love could be broken if only people would *trust* each other: trust the stranger as much as the known quantity: trust the wife's newly acquired boyfriend to be as unpossessive as oneself, so that one would not be in danger of 'losing' her, only 'sharing' her. Some people managed to make it work. Others saw the pitfalls, the potential for betrayal, the double-dealing in sexual diplomacy. They saw the fact that smooth and cynical operators of the new freedom could get themselves a lot of sex all over the place and *still* keep one person as their special possession. Or else someone might genuinely take the theory to heart, only to get upset when a favoured partner's freedom began to result in him getting cut out of the action. And then, what about the need for stability and commitment in bringing up a family?

It may be that a degree of selfishness and jealousy is necessary or at least inevitable, in any adult sexual relationship. In other words, one cannot have sex *without* relationships and all the complications thereof. As Jill Richard put it:

'Because of their past relationships, adults entering any new relationship have lost the innocent belief that sex is a mere act.'

What doesn't seem to have occurred to Jill Richard is the very obvious point that children are *not* adults, and that the *type* of politics from which it may be impossible to escape in adulthood do not necessarily apply to children. The men in boy-man relationships know that most of the boys are not going to grow up gay: they are Ariel spirits, happy for the moment to give and receive affection and sex play, but soon they will fly away to girls and adulthood. One might as soon try to catch the wind as tie them down in a heavy, exclusive, jealous relationship. They'd be off and away before you could say 'sexual politics'.

What, one may ask, of the boys who *are* gay? Who themselves seek a lasting relationship with one man? Or what about the children who have been so starved of affection before meeting 'their' paedophile that the thought of leaving him is intolerable? What about the thirteen-year-old girl who falls desperately in love with an older man? Aren't they all vulnerable to the adult's sexual politics?

The question only has to be asked for one to sense a paradox in the answer: if a youngster, for whatever reason, feels a desperate need for a particular adult, yes that leaves them 'psychically vulnerable'; yes that leaves them open to emotional exploitation. It will lead them to desire or expect that they will obtain possession of the older loved one, that they will have a proprietorial claim over him. In this, they are open to disappointment if the adult's attitude turns out to be more casual than theirs. But the very fact that they feel the need – and it may be a very deep need – for such a relationship, prompts one to ask whose business it is to deprive them of any chance of it? The paradox is that if there is a danger of being emotionally bruised, there is also the hope of something much more positive: the hope of being loved, of being valued with a warmth that may never have played a part in that young person's life before.

Personally, I wouldn't like to be a parent responsible for coldly squashing such a young love. I wouldn't want to say to a thirteen-year-old daughter, 'What do you see in the old goat? He's only after one thing, and I'm not going to let you see him again!' That kind of peremptory, imperious parental authority is all too familiar. Wise counsel has its place, but truly wise counsel would admit that the child has rights: rights to an emotional life which admits the *possibility* of fulfilment in love, just as it necessarily

admits (for adults as much as for children) the possibility of failure.

It should also be realized that the danger of a child being emotionally bruised by a relationship with an adult is a possibility *even if sex never enters into it*. A friend of mine – we'll call him Bill – went for a long holiday in Malta. Bill is a very likeable and perfectly 'normal' heterosexual, whose main passion in life is angling. In the first week of Bill's stay on the island, a boy of nine or ten came to watch him fishing. Over the next six weeks or so the lad was his constant companion.

When the time came for Bill to return to England, the child wanted to go with him. When told this was impossible, he did everything in his power to persuade Bill to stay. There was a scene that was not merely tearful, but anguished – hysterical even – like those harrowing scenes we associate with a court that awards custody of a child to the 'wrong' parent.

Bill was astonished and appalled. He had no idea how much the boy had fallen for him. One does not know why he felt such a bond with Bill, or what deep need inside the boy Bill was at least partly fulfilling. What is clear is that the trauma of parting cannot be attributed to the effects of sexual seduction, or to any 'manipulation' by the adult. There had been none of either.

In juxtaposing two entirely different situations – the free-as-the-wind Ariel characters and those caught in love-dependency, it can be seen that *power*, in paedophilic as in other relationships, doesn't necessarily reside with the elder party. It depends on the circumstances, especially on which partner *needs* the other most. One might even propose, as a law of human nature, that *power in a relationship resides with the party that needs the relationship less*. If, for one party, the continuance of the relationship is a matter of indifference – if she/he can easily get affection, or sex, or whatever the partner can give him, from someone else, if the particular partner in question has no great charismatic pull on him – then it is *he* who holds all the aces in the power game, especially if the other partner is desperately keen.

If *both* parties feel they need the relationship a great deal, the power politics may well become very much more complex; one only needs to mention the scope this would imply for the use of a cunning diplomatic technique like *bluff* to appreciate this: a partner who is good at *hiding* his need for the other, at *affecting* indifference, may by so doing manage to get his own way disproportionately. Surprisingly, the successful deployment of this and other power-play techniques depends less on the age and sophistication of the partner who goes in for them than on individual personality. Quite young children can learn the major techniques of inter-personal power play: the average five-year-old can operate the diplomacy of Metternich on a mini-scale. He can 'divide and rule' his parents by playing one off against the other.

Let us look at the power principle at work in a paedophile relationship. I know of one case in some detail which illustrates a number of points particularly well, in relation to both the corrupt and benevolent use of power: with most of the corruption coming from the younger parties! The paedophile – we'll call him Peter – was a sensitive, well-meaning young teacher, given to much agonizing about the *overall* impact on a child that any paedophilic relationship might have: the effect not just on the child's sexual development, but on his capacity to grow up as a caring, considerate person. He was self-consciously didactic, a believer in moral education, not just in the classroom, but in all his dealings with children.

He was reluctant to become involved in erotic relations with his pupils, partly because he accepted the conventional ethics of being 'in a position of trust', but also because of an undercurrent of anxiety that his classroom authority would be undermined. Not that he was a heavily authoritarian figure, far from it. His pupils knew him as a kind and gentle man, and some took advantage of the fact that he was

'soft'. He didn't want to be both 'soft' *and* vulnerable to the emotional blackmail that any 'special friends' in the classroom could impose upon him.

But he did allow himself relationships outside school, on the odd occasions that luck brought children into his life. One of these was when he met two boys at a pub, of all places. He had been drinking outside in the pub garden during a warm summer's lunchtime in the school holidays. Two boys had been wrestling in the grass nearby and had noticed that he was looking at them in an interested way.

'Let's have a sip of your beer, mister,' one of them said.

The boys' parents weren't in evidence. Peter allowed them a gulp each and began chatting to them. Both boys, Robert, aged eleven, and Paul, ten, were lively urchins, with little to do in the long summer weeks. Both came from large families whose parents had taken to turning their respective tribes out of the house first thing in the morning with just enough pocket money for a packet of crisps for 'lunch', and orders not to come back until tea time.

When Peter said he was thinking about going over that afternoon to do some work on his cabin cruiser on the canal, he wasn't surprised that they begged to come along. Much of that long summer holiday was spent with the boys on the boat, and there were expeditions to the swimming baths, funfairs and anything else that took their fancy. When things went well, they went very well: given a task to do on the boat – painting for instance – they would work hard, unprompted, for a long time. They were occupied, and contented. Sometimes when Peter treated them they could be embarrassingly free with their affection – to the extent of kissing and hugging him in public.

Yet within a day or two of meeting them, Peter became cripplingly aware of how *conditional* their affection was – conditional on the amount of ice-cream, soft drinks or rides on the fair he was prepared to pay for. And as they were never satisfied before they'd stuffed or ridden themselves totally sick, there tended to be problems! He couldn't get over to them the idea that their incessant demands for more and more of everything were greedy and unreasonable. He had an idea of *why* they were so greedy: it was as though they couldn't believe their luck in finding a goose that laid such golden eggs, and they had to get as many eggs as they could while supplies lasted. There was a real sense, and Peter was under no illusions about it, in which the goose himself meant nothing. He was just a provider, an egg factory and not really a person at all. They couldn't understand, and didn't even *attempt* to understand, *why* he should want to spend his time or money on them.

Peter liked to think his own motives could not be reduced simply to the fact that he fancied them like fury – particularly Paul, a wiggly, skinny little eel of a boy, with glossy black hair and big brown eyes. But as the days slipped by, he couldn't deny in himself the feeling that his affection for the boys was becoming rather conditional too – they were ripping him off for all they were worth and he wasn't getting anything sexually, except their frustrating proximity. He felt himself being more cautious with his treats. Was it because he was anxious not to 'spoil' them? Or was there a hint of real meanness growing out of his resentment that 'nothing was happening'?

One day when he was out shopping with Paul, he asked the boy outright whether he had ever wondered why he had taken up with the two of them.

'Because you're a nice man, and you like us,' said Paul ingenuously.

'What if,' continued Peter hesitantly, 'what if I told you there's more to it than that. That even a nice man can sometimes like doing things that other people think are naughty'

'Like what?'

'Like playing with little boys' willies.'

Paul stopped in his tracks, and stared ahead of him. Big tears welled up immediately.

'What's the matter?' said Peter, knowing full well what was the matter.

'I thought you were a nice man,' sobbed Paul.

'Well, I hope I am,' Peter muttered unconvincingly, not feeling like a nice man at all. 'I'm sorry. I didn't think you'd mind. I won't mention it again. Honestly. Come on, dry your eyes. People will wonder what's the matter.'

Peter was ruefully forced to acknowledge to himself that there was more to at least one of the little rip-off merchants than he had supposed. He had made the mistake of reading more 'adult' cynicism into Paul's greediness than perhaps was there. He could see now why Paul had taken to calling him 'daddy'. It wasn't just an affectation designed to bolster his esteem and hence get more sweets and treats out of him. That would have been far too subtle for Paul. It was genuine. He really needed a new 'daddy'. And what had Peter done? Just butchered the child's naive faith in him, that's all. Just put one more wall between him and his ability to ever trust anyone. The thought made him hate himself in a way that he hadn't for a long time.

It was a feeling that didn't last as long as he supposed. The next day, Robert and Paul called at his house together, as usual, both as bubbly as ever. Before very long, the younger one said, 'Peter, you know what you were saying yesterday? Well, if we let you, how much would you give us?'

Peter couldn't resist. He knew it was outright corruption, but with the boys making the invitation it didn't seem very evil to him. In fact, the offer made him feel a good deal better about Paul's tears the day before: Paul may have been disillusioned, but at least he wasn't agonizing over it for too long. For pocket money, they let Peter masturbate them.

Robert always appeared to be indifferent, just lying back placidly, accepting whatever Peter did. The only reason Peter continued to 'have' him was to prevent any division between the boys on account of unequal treatment. The only time Robert was at all sexually aggressive was in the swimming baths, oddly enough, where he would squeeze Peter's penis underwater – probably, Peter thought, he felt *safe* in the water, in *control* of what would happen in such a public place. Paul was much the more responsive of the two in bed.

Despite being uninterested in Peter's penis – though on one occasion he and Robert together had asked to see him ejaculate – he was sensitive enough to Peter's touch, so that masturbation was accompanied by little verbal bursts like 'That's nice!', 'That feels good!' But if left alone with Peter for too long – while Robert was downstairs watching TV – he would begin to show signs of anxiety, as though deep down he didn't trust Peter, as though he was worried that Peter would want to do some ill-defined *something else*. Perhaps buggery was at the back of his mind, or perhaps he was just worried that Peter wouldn't let him go. Whatever it was, Peter felt unhappy about it.

Surprisingly though, there was one occasion when Paul's general distrust appeared to relent. It had been after some promise Peter had made. A relatively trivial thing: the promise of an ice-cream if they behaved themselves. Something like that. The deal was kept on both sides.

'You *never* tell lies, do you Peter?' he had said. 'When you say you'll do something, you always mean it.'

'I try to. Why? Isn't your dad like that?'

'No. You can never believe anything he says.'

By this time, notwithstanding the sexual element, Paul had again taken to calling Peter 'daddy' from time to time. And Peter began to wonder if he ought to *confine* himself to behaving like a daddy. He felt that the boys continued to think of the sexual thing as something very bad, and he knew that the passing of money for sex could be called 'corrupting'. But the important thing to him was not that money changed hands for the activity, or that the boys were doing something they did not want to do – after all, they persisted in suggesting 'going upstairs', even though it wasn't difficult to wheedle 30 pence or so out of him in a variety of other ways. The important thing was that *they* were able to use Peter's 'little weakness' to corrupt the relationship in their own way, for it didn't take them long to realize that this weakness gave them enormous *power*.

Peter consistently found he could not control the boys as a parent would have been able to. As we have seen in our consideration of children's rights, this isn't always a bad thing. But sometimes it is. Sometimes it is quite clearly in the *best interests* of the children for them to be handled firmly, and in Peter's mind there was absolutely no doubt that these particular boys needed firm handling, in the sense that they needed to trust and respect an adult's appraisal of their behaviour. They needed an adult whom they would take seriously when he said that having too many goodies would 'spoil' them. They needed someone who, from a position of moral authority, could be angry at them if they shouted gratuitous abuse at an old lady in the street (Robert and Paul were like that!).

Peter not only lacked the official status of a parent. His 'weakness' was such that the boys found it hard to see in him a source of moral guidance. On one occasion they demanded (not for sex) more money than he thought it right to give them. Their response was to march out of the house in a huff and hold a 'demonstration' in the front garden, hurling obscenities at the house, and shouting 'Peter is a bender' for the benefit of all the neighbours. Inside the house, Peter was reduced to complete panic. He could either collapse in the face of their demands, risking an endless repetition of blackmail, or else risk neighbours tipping off the police. To go outside and chase them off or give them a clip around the ear would only have escalated the problem.

It is a situation that must have often been faced by paedophiles. Most will have opted to give way. Peter did not. Amazingly, he went into the garden and told the boys that he had no intention of being blackmailed, that he took an extremely serious view of the matter, and that they'd damn well better come to their senses or he would phone up the police and tell them the full story: and what would their fathers have to say when they found out about *that*? The boys didn't know if he was bluffing. At first they taunted him with the fact that he wouldn't dare, because he would go to prison.

But Peter *wasn't* bluffing. He honestly felt that to let them continue to get away with extortion like that would be a disaster for *them*, and he was prepared to face prison rather than let that happen. At last the boys could see he meant business. They came inside, calmed themselves down, and accepted that Peter had won back some authority with them, albeit by the skin of his teeth.

After this trauma, he decided that he would still be friendly with the boys, still let them come round to his house – but there would be no more sex. Not because there was anything wrong with the sex *per se*, but because he felt the boys could only accept his disinterested concern for them if it was *in fact* disinterested, or if *it was seen* to be disinterested. These children needed a parent-figure, he told himself, and a lover just would not do. For a whole year or so he continued to see a great deal of both of them. They would come round to see him in the evenings, with nothing much

to do except make a nuisance of themselves when he was trying to mark a set of exercise books or prepare his next day's lessons. He would allow himself to be interrupted, and try to get them interested in something constructive. He saw himself as trying to civilize them: to teach them manners, and an awareness of other people's feelings.

He didn't succeed. A classic example of his failure came one day the following summer, when they were out in his car, on the way to a pleasure park. He stopped the car and wound down the window to ask a local boy, roughly coeval with Robert and Paul, whether they were going in the right direction. The lad told them, pleasantly, carefully and, as it turned out, accurately.

No sooner had Peter thanked him and started to drive off, than his not-so noble savages in the back opened their window and called after him, 'Fuck off, you wanker!' To Peter it was like a stab in the heart. He couldn't believe that they should want to be so nasty. He stopped the car and made them go back to apologize, but it was really no good. The whole afternoon was soured for him. He no longer wanted to be with the boys at all. He could neither change them, nor accept them as they were. He had to accept that he simply didn't *like* them, and that no matter what he did or said there would always be incidents like this which would tear him to pieces. With a heavy heart, at the end of that afternoon, he told them he didn't want to see them again.

It didn't stop them coming. Again and again and again they'd be at his front door not long after he got back from school. They still needed *somebody*, but Peter just didn't have it in him to help.

A sad tale. Had the relationship resulted in a complaint against Peter under PIE's proposed law, an injunction would certainly have been granted against its continuance – the element of 'pocket money prostitution' would have seen to that. The story exemplifies a number of problems which objectors to paedophilia might have lurking at the back of their minds, not least that of monetary corruption. But if we look specifically at what happened in terms of the balance of power within the relationship, we can see that the shallow denunciations of the adult's supposedly automatic power simply do not hold water.

Right from the outset, Peter demonstrated to the boys that he was a 'soft touch' – right from the time when he let them take a sip of his beer and bought them each a can of Coca-Cola. He had taken them on a number of trips on his boat and elsewhere before there was any suggestion of sexuality, but by that time the relationship was already dependent on the boys being given material things. They *needed*, or at least *wanted*, the goodies Peter's money could buy, and theoretically Peter had it in his power to provide or not provide, as the whim took him. Theoretically, he was in charge.

He in fact used this power to buy sexual favours. He *needed* the boys' bodies. And in letting Robert and Paul know how important this was to him, the balance of power tipped in their direction. Instead of begging for money and favours, they could now be *demanding*, backed up by threats of blackmail.

In any case, there had been other, self-imposed limits to the exercise of Peter's power. He could not deny them some of the treats their parents would not, or could not, give them. At the same time he could not give them too much for fear of 'spoiling' them. Benevolent considerations like these do not always play a part, but when they do there is every reason to recognize them. In any case, they played such a large part that Peter decided to obliterate, or completely disregard, his own sexual desires in what strikes me as an entirely altruistic way: he did so in order to win back power in the relationship – power which he needed to have, in the best interests of the children.

Peter's story neatly illustrates two points in relation to power: firstly, a paedophile

can endeavour to exercise power for good, just as a parent can; secondly, the 'politics' of a relationship do not necessarily revolve around the sexual element within it. For Peter, the key issue in these politics turned out to be whether he could make nice boys out of them. For the boys, the key element was the laying of golden eggs, with sex as only a very minor means of securing them. It is true that the boys abused their power by attempting blackmail.

A nastier adult than Peter might have abused his too, though it is not to be automatically assumed that the adult necessarily has any power, and if he has, it will rarely be as crude a power as that of blackmail. More often it is likely to be in the form of an emotional dominance, which is in itself dependent for its existence on the younger party getting something very important out of the relationship.

Having examined some of the realities of 'power' and 'authority', it is possible to return to Jill Richard's analysis with a fresh eye. When she says that 'children see adults, especially males, as authority figures. Children know that they must respect adults' desires or they will be punished', let's just imagine how ironic those words would seem to Peter! Had he been an authority figure, he might actually have been able to do some good! Of course children *generally* regard adults in the way that Richard suggests. That is why boys like Robert and Paul by the age of ten or eleven knew perfectly well (having learnt it from the adult authority of their parents, plus other reinforcing agents in our culture) that sex is supposed to be for men and women: when an adult is known to be a 'poof' or a 'bender' his authority rapidly evaporates.

As Parker Rossman has pointed out, sexual acts between children and adults, by their very nature, bring the participant children to see themselves in an entirely new, more potent, more important, relationship to adults than the one they are used to. Discussing oral sex in which boys are fellated by men, Rossman comments that there is 'the titillation of seeing a man take a submissive role, which is psychologically exciting to many boys who have grown up always having to submit to these giants.'<sup>4</sup>

Richard also neglects the fact that children are used to power politics from infancy onwards, as we remarked earlier, in relation to 'divide and rule'. The little girl denied something by Mummy goes running to Daddy, without of course letting on what *she* has said. Then she smugly comes back to announce: 'Daddy says I can ....' The only reason for suggesting that children cannot handle politics of this sort in the *sexual* field is that in some way this particular field is more fraught with *danger*. But why? What is the danger? Richard talks about the 'complications of pregnancy, increased psychic and physical vulnerability'. In point of fact pre-pubertal children do *not* run the risk of pregnancy, nor, as we have seen, are they at risk psychologically as a result of the gentle, non-penetrative activities which account for nearly all paedophilic sex.

Yet there remains one aspect of 'political negotiation' within paedophilic relationships which expresses a tension between the mismatched needs of some partners, and its presence is plainly not ideal. I am thinking of those cases in which one partner has a much greater degree of sexual interest than the other, but in which the partner with little sexual interest is nonetheless deeply attached to the other. Some such relationships may involve a highly-sexed child and an adult who is largely, or completely, sexually indifferent to him. More alarming, from the traditional, anti-paedophilic, point of view, is the obverse side of the coin: cases in which the child is sexually indifferent (but nonetheless badly needs the adult) and in which the adult is highly sexually motivated.

Father Michael Ingram wrote about such cases in his study of participating victims in man-boy relationships. Not untypical were cases in which 'the boys were described by the men as seeking affection. They would nestle up to them, want to be cuddled by them, sit on their knees, etc. The boys would obviously enjoy being kissed and loved,

and it would seem that on the whole they accepted the sexual activity passively for the sake of the love they were receiving from the man.' <sup>5</sup>

The idea of children putting up with being masturbated, or with some other form of sexual behaviour, in order to win cuddles and affection, will strike many as horrific. It is probably what they have in mind when they think of children being exploited: their need for affection being turned into a bargaining counter for sex, rather than that affection being given freely by a parent or other 'responsible' adult.

Feminists may well see such relationships as parallel with the past subjugation of women: with the fact that they were expected to put up with varying degrees of unsatisfactory sex, including marital rape, in turn for economic security and respectability. The child's dependency on the adult for *affection* is much less cold-blooded than this: in order to *meet* the child's need for affection, the man has to have affection to give. He cannot be callously indifferent to the child. In effect, it is up to the children themselves whether they want to leave the whole deal alone, or whether they think they might be able to negotiate a 'no-sex', or 'very-limited-sex' clause in their relationship.

It is Ingram's view that children take from these relationships what they want to take. I think he is right. What is more, I would suggest that there are few adult relationships in which the sexual needs of the partners are so perfectly matched that there are no elements that one or both partners simply put up with – with more contentment or less, depending on the overall quality of the relationship.

The real problem for the children who allow sex play in order to get cuddles is not a sexual one at all. Their problem is getting the affection they so desperately need, and which has characteristically been denied them by unloving and neglectful parents. It should not be overlooked that for these children the paedophile, despite his limitations, represents a solution, not a problem. The paedophile succeeds, in their estimation, where their parents have failed.

What if, as a final thought, such a relationship became the subject of a complaint under the PIE injunction system? How ought a court to react? In my view, the principle underlying the court's decision should be exactly the same as in other cases: the child should be asked his own feelings. As we are talking about children who apparently do not want the sexual element in the relationships, it is not difficult to conclude that the court should impose an injunction against the continuance of such activity. At the same time, the court ought to consider – if the child wanted it – whether there was merit in letting the paedophile continue to have access to the child, letting there continue to be kissing and cuddling, for as long as the child wanted. In order to avoid impossible temptations, it might be possible to stipulate that future meetings be in the presence of a third party.

Such an arrangement may or may not be practicable, dependent upon such factors as whether a court felt a particular paedophile was capable of honouring the agreement. At the very least, a court hearing on such a basis would help establish a child's needs and would encourage officialdom to seek out some positive solution to meet the needs of the child.

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## Ch 9 - Notes and References

1. Jane Gale, 'Paedophilia', MA thesis for the University of Kent, 1978. [^](#)
2. Jill Richard, 'Children's sexuality', *Radical Therapist*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1976, p. 7. [^](#)
3. Denis de Rougement, *Love in the Western World*, Anchor, New York, 1957. [^](#)



4. Rossman, op. cit., p. 150. [^](#)

5. Michael Ingram, 'The participating victim: a study of sexual offences against pre-pubertal boys', paper presented at the International Conference on Love and Attraction, Swansea, 1977. [^](#)

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## Children in Erotica and Pornography

Child pornography and child prostitution are matters which provoke an even greater sense of outrage, if that is possible, than child-adult sexual relations as such, and with some good reason.

Whereas a paedophilic relationship may depend for its existence simply on sexual and emotional ties between the child and adult involved, both pornography and prostitution appear to have their primary *raison d'être* in the pursuit of money. Sometimes the child makes money on his own account, sometimes it finds its way into the hands of parents, almost always porn producers are motivated by profit. Either way, people feel that the performance of sexual acts for money, rather than for sexual pleasure alone, or as part of a loving relationship, is bound to be degrading and exploitative.

I don't think this is universally true. As NBC journalist Robin Lloyd has pointed out, boys who gravitate towards hustling frequently enjoy it. He cites a prominent counsellor of young gays in Los Angeles:

'Now it might be that even if we had the intake centres where we could rehabilitate the boy, he would say to us: "Go to hell, man. I like peddling my ass."<sup>1</sup>

Richi McDougall, a former boy hustler himself, endorsed this viewpoint at a recent conference on man-boy love held in Boston, Massachusetts:

'For most youth, it's the only way to get exposed, the only way to get sex with men ... I knew I was a homosexual at nine years old, I knew what I wanted, but the only way I knew how to get it was to go to the theatre and ask for money. Maybe that's hustling, but it was very fulfilling – it served its purpose.'<sup>2</sup>

Such a boy may have been degraded and exploited in some people's eyes, but not, apparently, in his own: an important point if you share the view that children have a right to their own opinions and one which gives proper emphasis to the at least partly subjective nature of such notions as 'degradation' and 'exploitation'.

What really matters is that the involvement of money can result in children submitting to sex acts with which they are unhappy, or being forced into them by parents and others who want to cash in. Exploitation of this sort is essentially a problem associated with poverty, such as that in Victorian England and many parts of the Third World today. The answer accordingly lies more in the elimination of poverty than in law enforcement. But it should also be realized that prostitution is to a great extent rooted in sexual restriction, not in sexual freedom: as Engels said, the price paid by Victorian society for its official code of strict monogamy was that prostitution flourished alongside it. By the same token, a sexually free society has less need of prostitution: given the choice, people generally seek relationships in which they are wanted for themselves, not for their money.

But it is the child pornography issue, rather than child prostitution, which has been the focus of recent attention, in both Britain and the United States. Naturally, the media, ever interested in the most lurid and negative aspects of sexuality, always assume the worst, and are aided and abetted by campaigners such as Dr Judianne Densen-Gerber in the United States, and Mrs Mary Whitehouse in Britain.

A front-page lead story in the *Chicago Tribune* of 15 May, 1977 is not untypical.

Under the headline 'CHILD PORNOGRAPHY: SICKNESS FOR SALE, appears the following adjective-littered introduction to a story which covered over four column feet, and was itself just the first part of a four part series:

'The smiling, no-longer innocent faces of little children look up from the pages of more than 260 pornographic magazines sold in America – children engaged in almost every known sexual perversion.

'The book racks in America's smut shops contain volumes that advise child molesters how to pick up children from school playgrounds; tell parents how to have incest with their children; and describe the joys of sexual gratification that comes from beating the young.

'For sale also are horror movies such as Hollywood never conceived. The horror is in the celluloid portrayal of children from three to about fifteen years – participating in a variety of sexual perversions with adults and each other.'

Predictably, Dr Densen-Gerber is quoted, saying of the children involved:

'They are destroyed by these experiences. They are emotionally and spiritually murdered.'

We are not told why the children are smiling in the pornographic pictures, and the possibility that some of the children involved may have been relaxed and enjoying themselves is not explored. Nor are we told that references to the 'sexual gratification that comes from beating the young' appear from time to time in magazines of the *Forum* type in not nearly so sinister a context as might be supposed from the *Tribune's* reference: in the context, for instance, of a 'problem' letter to the Editor from a reader who finds he has sadistic inclinations and wants to avoid giving them free rein rather than the other way about.

It is in any case more than a little ironic that the anti-pornographers should be the ones to express anxiety on this score: the more God-fearing among them usually make no bones about beating the fear of God into their own children, and commend the use of corporal punishment in schools. Nor should we forget Stoller's point, that those who feel sexual gratification from beating are merely re-enacting past traumas – which tend to result from such factors as parents beating children caught in sexual transgressions.

The value-loading of so many of the words and phrases deployed in the *Tribune* report, and others of its kind, is so blatant that only in a subject which provokes such intense irrationality as sex would it be possible to get away with it. 'No longer innocent faces', for instance. Would the *Tribune* have us believe that children are non-sexual beings until 'corrupted'? What do they mean by innocence, except enforced ignorance of sex? And what about the references to 'smut shops' and 'perversion' – both of which represent ideas so uncompromisingly anti-sexual that they preclude any serious thought about the topic.

Dr Densen-Gerber caps everything else for sheer idiocy by her reference to 'spiritual murder', a phrase so totally emotional in content that when we try to find meaning beyond the emotion we are left with nothing: a literally incorporeal nothing. For how can one conduct an inquest on a spirit? What does she mean by 'spirit'? If Dr Densen-Gerber were talking about psychological damage, which could be discerned in such factors as emotional upset, or the inability in later years to be able to enjoy an adult sex life, then all well and good. But too often the media allow campaigners like Densen-Gerber to get away with nonsense like talk of 'spiritual murder'.

Reports such as this one appeared in newspapers throughout the United States in 1977, so that an unstoppable head of steam was built up for political action, and an anti child pornography measure was duly legislated. The political knock-on effect was felt in Britain soon after, perhaps (regrettably) given some impetus in August and September of that year by the intensive publicity given to PIE and paedophilia generally. The *Daily Mirror* had the dubious distinction of being first in the field with the British brand of hysteria, and effectively their decision to publish opened the floodgates. From then on the entire national press jumped on the bandwagon, particularly in the opening months of 1978, when Conservative MP Cyril Townsend launched a Private Member's Bill on the subject.

What everyone overlooked in the outrage of the moment, so far as legislation appropriate to the United Kingdom was concerned, was that

- (a) there was already in existence a sufficient body of law to deal with child pornography, if it were felt to be necessary; and
- (b) there was no evidence to suggest – not a scrap – that so-called 'hard core' child porn was being produced in Great Britain.

The Home Office knew this. Hence their allegedly 'complacent' attitude. Faced with the massive numerical strength of Mary Whitehouse's campaign in support of the Bill (over a million signatures were raised in a petition presented to Parliament), however, the Government found themselves obliged to cooperate with the Bill's passage through Parliament. It was eventually passed unopposed, with virtually no discussion of its contents in the House of Commons.

So what are the issues that so require elaborate and extended contemplation? Isn't the evil of child pornography totally self-evident? What I shall try to indicate in what follows is that I share the widespread concern that children are in fact being exploited in the making of child pornography in several countries (though certainly not on any scale in Great Britain), and I shall suggest a way in which this can be avoided without falling prey to the pitfalls of censorship (not on grounds of *sexual* content, at any rate) and obeisance to the anti-sexual lobby. Note that I say children may be exploited in the making of pornography, not that the making of pornography is itself necessarily evil or exploitative. There is, I believe, a vast difference between these two positions, which I shall try to demonstrate.

First of all, we need another word. 'Pornography', like 'fornication', is a term heavily laden with overtones of shame and degradation. There may indeed be a place for such a word, if we want to talk about depictions or descriptions of sex which is itself in some way shameful or degrading (such as the rape scene from the film *Straw Dogs*, or sexist representations which cast women as the mere playthings of men), but we need a positive word as well, to describe the joyous or beautiful representation of the human body and happy sexual acts – and we have such a word: 'erotica'.

The question of when a representation is degrading and when it is beautiful is of course massively subjective; but we cannot possibly move towards a society with a healthily guilt-free attitude towards sex if we continue to insist on defining all representations of sexuality as degrading rather than beautiful. Nor should the depiction of nude children, or children engaging in pleasurable sexual acts, necessarily call for the use of the word 'pornography' rather than 'erotica'. We have already discussed the devastating consequences of taking a negative attitude to the sexual development of children: joyous erotica featuring children can be beneficial in contributing to a more positive, healthy attitude.

Having made this distinction, the words 'soft core' and 'hard core' become redundant. These terms are used by the police, and others whose job it is to distinguish not between 'erotica' and 'pornography', not between good and bad

representations of sex, but between degrees of badness – usually between what is legally permissible (just about) and what is not. This distinction – between, for instance, showing a non-erect penis (soft core) and an erect one (hard core) – is a dimension of concern only for those who feel there is something intrinsically 'worse' about overtly depicted eroticism than, say, mere nudity, i.e. for those who start with a shame-faced attitude to sex.

In considering the merits of erotica, we need to separate out a few of the chief objections to it, and to child erotica in particular. For the purposes of this discussion there are two main categories of objections:

(a) those that concern themselves with the effects, if any, on the consumer (Is the person who buys erotica going to be 'depraved and corrupted'? Is it more likely that after seeing it he will commit sex offences?); and

(b) those that concern themselves with the effects on the producers, particularly with those who actually take part in the sex acts depicted.

Traditionally, arguments against erotica have been directed towards the effect on the consumer. Only recently, with the discovery of child erotica, has emphasis shifted to the production side. As it happens, the change of emphasis is justified: undoubtedly the strongest arguments against child erotica relate to the effects on the children involved in its production. However, it is worth bearing in mind that for the most part those who in the past have been most vocal against erotica – Lord Longford is a good example – found themselves up against all sorts of evidential difficulties in trying to work out a clear case for clamping down on erotica, purely on the basis of arguments related to the consumer; one senses that many of the 'antis' were all but leaping around with glee to find that the involvement of children had given them a new angle, a new set of arguments.

There is still plenty of life in consumer-based arguments, despite the fact that trying to prove whether a book, or magazine, or whatever, tends to 'deprave and corrupt' has become a long-running legal farce. Trial after trial of books since the passing of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 in Britain has shown that it cannot be easily established, at least to a jury's satisfaction, what effect erotic literature is likely to have on people, in any 'moral' sense.

Even if it could be established that 'obscene' material tended to undermine existing standards of sexual morality (which in my view would be a beneficial thing, not a bad one), one would not be left with much of an argument against erotica. After all, there is a widespread acceptance of the idea that it is not the business of the law to enforce moral standards. An individual's morals are his own concern, not the concern of the state.

A more serious argument for the intervention of the law would exist if it could be shown that exposure to sexual material tended to increase the consumer's likelihood to commit sex crimes. Scientific approaches to the effects of erotica have been addressed both specifically to this question and to other defined behavioural effects (including measurable changes in social and moral *attitudes*). Much of the work has been poor in quality, including a number of the studies undertaken for the massive and much-vaunted American Presidential Commission Report of 1970.

One recent addition to the canon, Eysenck and Nias's *Sex, Violence and the Media* makes a more valuable contribution. This work has done much to clarify the issues, by making sensible distinctions regarding the type of erotica in question and the disposition of the viewer. Unlike the American Commission, which adopted a 'permissive' approach on the basis that they could find no proof for any dangerous effects of erotica, Eysenck and Nias adopted the firm conclusion that both violent

representations and certain types of pornography (here I use the word advisedly) do have deleterious effects.

But they also agree that what they call good pornography (erotica) is harmless and can even be used profitably in therapy. My experience disposes me to agree with their main conclusion, regardless of the fact that Eysenck and Nias have been hailed in some quarters as intellectual saviours of the censorship lobby.

Having said this, I should point out that in the one country – Denmark – where the level of sex crimes has been minutely analysed since the abolition of all censorship, there has been an actual fall in some reported sex offences, including 'child molesting'.<sup>3</sup> It is only fair to add that the figures are hotly disputed on a number of grounds, but on any interpretation of the evidence to date it is hard to believe that the Danes are being turned into a nation of sex maniacs.

On what basis, then, do Eysenck and Nias make a distinction between 'good' and 'bad' pornography? The answer is, essentially, on the same basis as I distinguish between 'pornography' and 'erotica': material is only bad if it is degrading, if it encourages hostility to the object of sexual attention.

They cite *Fanny Hill* as their 'good' example:

'*Fanny Hill* is perhaps as erotic a book as one could wish to read; it contains detailed descriptions of sexual intercourse in a great variety of positions, pre- and extra-marital sex, promiscuity and "unnatural" sexual behaviours. Yet the tone is one of enjoyment, women are not degraded by the men they consort with, and there is no violence to destroy this sense of good humour and enjoyment.'

If the book were to be filmed, they say,

'We know of no evidence that such a presentation would do harm, and indeed there is evidence ... that the effect on attitudes towards the other sex might be positive.'

By contrast, many commercially available films are not of this wholesome type:

'Even when they do not overtly depict scenes of violence and degradation of women at the hands of men, such as rape, beatings and subordination, the tone is consistently anti-feminist, with women only serving to act as sexual slaves to men, being made use of, and ultimately being deprived of their right to a sexual climax – in the majority of such films, the portrayal ends with the men spraying their semen over the faces and breasts of the women .... The intention would seem to be simply to degrade women, and it is noteworthy that in many cases of rape the men involved either act in the same manner, or else urinate all over the women involved ....'

They conclude:

'The amount of overt sex in such films may not differ in any way from that shown in our hypothetical *Fanny Hill* film; what is important in marking the difference is the context, which is pro-love, pro-sex, and pro-women, in the one case, but anti-women, anti-love, and even anti-sex (in the sense of gentle, pleasant, co-operative sex) in the other.'<sup>4</sup>

As I see it, providing one accepts the premise that children's sexuality is not in itself to be discouraged, exactly the same conclusions are applicable to child erotica and pornography: gentle, pleasant, cooperative depictions of children in sex

encourage a gentle, pleasant, cooperative attitude in the viewer. Nasty depictions would encourage the opposite response, especially among those whose personality, for whatever reason, disposes them to a 'nasty' approach to sexual expression.

One consumer-based argument against sexual depictions, which ultimately has implications for children who take part in them, is that they create a demand for ever 'stronger' material. It is claimed that those who start out by masturbating to 'soft' material inevitably find after a while that their response to it diminishes, and in the search for a more effective 'kick' they gravitate towards something more potent.

An article in *The Guardian*<sup>5</sup> drew attention to this theory in 1977 and made much of its alarming implications:

'Judith Reisman, a media researcher from Ohio, traced how saturation with straightforward female stimulus like *The Sun's* page three leads slowly but inevitably to the need for, and acceptance of, such things as paedophilia and incest and sexual violence. An acceptance not just among minorities, but among the general population .... Judith Reisman says "media conditioning into paedophilia and incest" is now leading, according to her researches, into child sadism.'

Reisman, according to *The Guardian*, emphasizes the role of the mass media in making new kicks acceptable: where magazines like *Forum* lead, in carrying articles which suggest that activities like incest may be acceptable, big-circulation glossies like *Playboy* and *Penthouse* follow, and so on down the line. From where I stand, having been 'exposed' in the *News of the World* and elsewhere, I cannot say I have noticed the 'mass media' going soft on paedophilia! Nevertheless, there is a serious point here, which was taken up in the same article by Dr Michael Apter, senior lecturer in psychology at Cardiff University:

'The progression to sadism from other forms of titillation is explicable, says Michael Apter, by the theory of "new kicks" but it may have a more sinister element. Breaking a serious taboo in a sexual context leads to feelings of anxiety and guilt as well as to high arousal. But guilt and anxiety are inhibiting and can also turn to violence. To permit yourself to perform or imagine a "bad" action against someone it is necessary to create the feelings to match the action – which can be a feeling of hostility.'

My immediate reaction? The 'anxiety and guilt' would not arise if only we had the courage to scrap needless taboos! The article continues:

'The guilt involved in participating in taboo acts can turn into hate – a hate Ms Reisman says is abundantly evident in current hard and less hard core pornography. One of her examples shows a woman with a mutilated breast, another a torture scene, both in generally available – not forbidden – mags .... Films are emerging from South America of women sexually assaulted, mutilated and finally butchered .... Ms Reisman feels child sex could go the same way.'

Strong stuff. As the perils of porn involve, in Ms Reisman's view, the *general* population, not just those with a particular psychological disposition, no doubt everyone reading this will be asking themselves how far their own response to erotica substantiates the theory. Has exposure to mild erotica (in the newspapers and elsewhere) in fact led *you* to seek after slightly stronger stuff? Do you think *you* would ever develop an appetite for violent depictions? After all, to have any validity this avowedly very general theory must apply not just to other people, to deviants, but to oneself.

Personally, I feel that one part of the theory is correct, but that the major hypothesis is wildly wrong. It is important, in my view, that the half truth should not be allowed to give a spurious credibility to the whole thing.

Firstly, the half truth. I know that my own response to erotica, and that of a numbers of paedophile acquaintances, is indeed subject to the Law of Diminishing Kicks. Whereas at one time, when they first became available to me, pictures of (merely) nude boys were a powerful stimulus to masturbation, the response gradually wore off; after this, only 'stronger' pictures, showing boys engaged in masturbation, or fellatio with other boys, were capable of reproducing a comparably powerful masturbation stimulus to that which I had felt on my first exposure to nudes. Even the response to these stronger pictures diminished slightly with familiarity, but another new stimulus – pictures showing anal intercourse with boys – revived the response. Interestingly enough, I have never felt any urge to practise anal intercourse, actively or passively, and erotica has not turned me on to it as something to do myself.

I have no idea what other new depiction, if any, would turn me on, but I am quite sure it would not involve violence. How can I be sure, you may ask? Well, I have seen sadomasochistic material involving adults, and I find it very much of a turn-off rather than a turn-on, compared to other types of adult erotica, some of which do produce a mild positive response in me. I have no reason to suppose the pattern would be very different in relation to sadomasochistic material featuring children: if anything, it would be even more of a turn-off, because I would experience resistance to it at a moral level.

There remains the question of whether *some* people are likely to be corrupted towards violence. After all, there does appear to be a market for specifically violent pornography and, echoing the *Guardian* article quoted above, I know that this does extend to violence against children: I have never seen photos or films of children which depict overtly non-consensual, sadistic sex acts, but I have seen short stories included in photo mags, in which the appeal is distinctly sadistic, with children offered as the pain-suffering fantasy object. My own response to these stories, incidentally, has not been one of arousal. I have only attempted to read one example of the genre – 'attempted' being the operative word.

Which brings us to what in my view is the great weakness of the Law of Diminishing Kicks. The simple Reisman formulation would have us believe that a nude on page three of *The Sun* leads on to more sexually explicit photographs, and so on in a continuous unbroken line to incest, paedophilia and ultimately child sadism. The underlying assumption is that, given total freedom from socially reinforced taboos, this freedom being wrought by the apparently all-powerful agency of 'porn', everyone is going to want to try out every conceivable form of bizarre behaviour. Everyone, it is felt, has lurking somewhere deep and repressed in his psyche a desire, if not for paedophilia as such, then at least for incest and violent sexuality.

It would take a bold and foolish person to deny the possibility that such repressed feelings are widespread, and that in these circumstances both pornography and erotica could act as a powerful agency in the breaking down of resistance to such feelings. At the same time, there are a number of other factors to be taken into account.

Firstly, it seems unlikely that pornography/erotica can induce people to turn on to any sexual stimulation, simply by their mere exposure to it. People are not going to become paedophiles simply by being exposed to paedophilic erotica. Nor are they going to respond to violent pornography unless they already have some penchant for violence. Homosexuals can be exposed to any amount of 'straight' heterosexual erotica without it having the slightest appeal to them. It certainly doesn't turn them on to 'straight' sex. Similarly, 'straights' who are exposed to homosexual erotica have generally been left cold.



This being the case, it would appear far too pessimistic to assume that whole populations are going to be led by pornography/erotica to every kind of depravity. What we have to consider instead is particular kinds of material and particular kinds of customers. Let's forget for the moment about erotica which arguably encourages incest or paedophilia (neither of which are bad in themselves), and concentrate on the one thing we are all agreed is undesirable: the tendency of certain sexual responses to be linked to violence. In this regard, I would propose a refined version of the Reisman model. I would suggest that the seeking of ever bigger kicks does happen, but that this tendency is channelled in quite different directions according to the consumer's original, predetermined inclinations. This is a proposition with which I think Eysenck and Nias would agree.

What ought to be of concern, then, is the progression followed by those who *do* have an interest in violence and sex as an expression of hostility. By this I mean not necessarily those who would happily and guiltlessly call themselves 'sodomasochists', many of whom are not turned on by violence of a non-consensual nature, but those who, whether for sexual or other reasons, are attracted to what is best described as cruelty and hate. Some such people may have a specifically sexual orientation towards adult men, or women, or possibly even towards children, but it is their inclination towards violence which primarily concerns us, not the particular sexes or ages of the victims whom they may choose. If there is to be a censor at all – and I think there should be – it is this area which should be subject to his attentions.

Thirdly, just as pornography can be defined as bad, in terms of the direction in which it may encourage the consumer to go, so erotica may be defined as good for the same reasons – it can encourage people to explore good, worthwhile forms of sexual behaviour, which in the present climate of society they are too taboo-ridden and hung-up to investigate, or indeed of which they may be completely ignorant. Erotica, in other words, can play a positive role in the sexual revolution: if you think there is nothing wrong with incest, or with paedophilia, for instance, and if at the same time you believe people should be free to 'do their thing', then what could be more liberating and subversive than representations of people freely doing 'their thing'?

I would say that erotica has had a powerful influence on my own attitudes: an influence almost as powerful and revolutionary as the impact on me of Ford and Beach, and Kinsey. As I indicated in my opening chapter, I could never quite bring myself to believe, having been brought up in a severely anti-sexual family, that some children might be interested in sex. I learnt about their sexuality intellectually, through the writings of the sex researchers, but only through erotica did I come to see the possibility that it was real, not just an intellectual exaggeration: until I actually saw a picture of a five-year-old boy with an erection, I did not believe it could happen to such a young child. Nor could I believe that children of that age could have intercourse with each other, until I saw photographic evidence with my own eyes. And of course, having seen photographs of adults engaged in sexual acts with children, in which the children definitely appeared to have been enjoying the experience, I was sustained by a hope that one day I might do such things myself.

This does not mean I have been tempted, after viewing erotica, to go out into the street and descend on the first child I met, with predatory intent. The reaction is much more subtle than that. More ideological. It operates with me more on the level of defining what is possible in an acceptable relationship, rather than acting in terms of encouragement to *do* something at any one time – though it might have made me slightly less inhibited in talking to children about sexual matters.

Viewed in this way, as a means of educating people about sexuality, as a means of breaking barriers of guilt, the objections raised by Michael Apter seem to disappear. Erotica can make people feel *good* about incest and so on, whereas previously they may only have felt guilty.

To envisage erotica as a tool in the sexual revolution may seem odd to those feminists and others who see it as an agency for the reinforcement of existing social roles and states of oppression, and as a blatant expression of profiteering capitalism. It may even seem a slightly old-fashioned view, echoing the anti-censorship, liberal tide of the 1960s. Indeed, the anti-porn, and in fact anti-erotic, element in feminism is now a major component in its radical thinking.

As an antidote, it is worth noting that not all radicals, even among feminists, are anti-erotica. The following is from an interview Germaine Greer, the celebrated and controversial feminist, gave with the American magazine *Evergreen* in 1971:

Claudia: You are an editor of the European pornzine *SUCK* – a rather unusual position for one of Britain's leading feminists. In America, I couldn't conceive of a leading Women's Liberationist sitting on the editorial committee of a pornsheet. Do you see a conflict between your feminist ideals and your involvement with *SUCK*?

Germaine: I see no conflict at all. *SUCK* is not a pornzine in the American sense of the word. *SUCK*, as a matter of fact is no more the equivalent of *SCREW* than I am the equivalent of Al Goldstein [editor of *SCREW*]. *SCREW* is a sadistic paper. Its emphasis is completely masculine and it treats female flesh like it was so much butcher meat. It's completely unerotic – very American. It makes me puke. *SUCK*, on the other hand, is a completely different kettle of fish. The keynote of *SUCK* is that sexual relationships should be open and unpossessive. We are anti-possession, anti-conquest, and anti-demanding of the sexual object, be it male or female. We are pro-pleasure.

In an editorial for *SUCK* itself, Germaine Greer wrote:

'Our cause is sexual liberation. Our tactic the defiance of censorship. Thus expressed, our aims are political, for the patterns of sexual interrelationship are created by and in turn support the other social structures. The approved sexual relationship in all Western societies is exclusive, possessive, colonizing, exploitative; sex is recognized as intimately connected with violence, for the power of the one over the other must be enforced and enforceable. Butch rules bitch, pimp rules whore, man rules wife, queer rules queen. Like the most insidious tyrannies, it is spoken of as a natural law, nature red in tooth and claw. This organization, which is as clear and universal as if it were indeed the expression of an irrefragable law, has as its central pole pain instead of pleasure. The pain of sexual frustration, of repressed tenderness, of denied curiosity, of isolation in the ego, of greed, suppressed rebellion, of hatred poisoning all love and generosity permeates our sexuality. What we love we destroy. Censorship is the outward and continuing expression of this distortion of the human erotic faculty. It is the one public point at which we can join battle with what enslaves us. Defiance of censorship is an emblem of the removal of the swaddling bands that have deformed our sexual personalities and it is our faith that they must be removed absolutely as a first prerequisite of freedom and new growth ....'<sup>6</sup>

I have explored in another chapter the relationships between sex and power as they affect paedophilic relationships; any consideration of children in erotica has to take into account these factors, from the point of view of those involved in the

consumption of erotica (the paedophiles) and in its production (especially the children taking part).

Considering first of all the consumer of child erotica, one is faced with what appears to be a problem, one which feminists have pointed out in relation to adult erotica too, that of 'objectification'.

The starting point of much feminist thinking is that society is sexist. The men and women within it are taught and expected to behave differently in all matters, especially the sexual, and men are given the power to exploit women economically, emotionally and sexually. 'Pornography', they point out, caters almost entirely to men. It reinforces the male-dominated view of sexuality which sees men as aggressive and active in sex and women as passive, willing victims. Susan Brownmiller <sup>7</sup> claims that women are disgusted and offended by 'porn' not because they are sexually backward or conservative but because of 'the gut knowledge that we and our bodies are being stripped, exposed and contorted for the purpose of ridicule to bolster that "masculine esteem" which gets its kick and sense of power from viewing females as anonymous, panting playthings, adult toys, dehumanised objects to be used, abused, broken and discarded.'

Brownmiller links this to rape, and says that instead of 'porn' being a safety valve, it in fact encourages men to rape or use women whom they have learned are not 'real'. Men who masturbate to sexist images of women are 'objectifying', and thereby oppressing, all women. Thus instead of challenging existing notions of sexuality, 'porn' reinforces a traditional outlook. Says Brownmiller:

'Hard-core pornography is not a celebration of sexual freedom, it is a cynical exploitation of female sexual activity thronging the device of making all such activity, and consequently all females, "dirty".'

I share the sense of offence that she so clearly feels when she talks of women as objects 'to be used, abused, broken and discarded'. On the other hand, it does not follow as a matter of logical necessity that because a woman may be represented in a passive sexual role that this makes her a 'victim'. Such a view proceeds from a fundamentally anti-sexual (or at least anti-heterosexual) outlook, in which it is assumed that a woman could not find pleasure in such a role. Her remarks also ignore the possibility that erotica sometimes represents women in a sexually active role: as she has studied the subject, I imagine she must have seen magazines and films in which the woman, physically 'on top', fucks the man, so to speak. Such material is not uncommon and is surely worthy of remark.

I do not doubt that some sexual representations make a specific appeal to men's esteem in the way that she suggests; it is arguable that representing women as 'bunnies' is a deliberate form of ridicule and humiliation, though this I would not entirely accept: such a view presupposes a particular attitude in the mind of the beholder, and individuals of varying temperament and cultural background can be expected to take a variety of attitudes. The mere image of a woman reclining passively and nakedly provides no evidence of either the intent or successful effect of ridiculing the person depicted, or her sex.

In fact, all the more emotive parts of Brownmiller's argument – the supposed wish to make females 'dirty', the alleged purpose of ridicule, the desire to see women 'abused, broken and discarded' – relate not to sexual representation specifically, but to the way Brownmiller believes (the 'gut knowledge') that men think about women. She ignores the possibility that many men may have quite different feelings than those which she infers. In other words, there is nothing *intrinsic* in sexual representations of women which bolsters 'bad' attitudes in men: no one would argue that Rubens' classical female nudes, by depicting women as naked, and passive, were in

themselves degrading to women. If they did, one could ask the further question, 'Were Michaelangelo's nude men degrading to the male sex?' Presumably not. What matters is the societal context in which the representation takes place, not the representation itself.

Some research even appears to indicate that males who have a discernibly 'calloused and exploitive orientation toward females' may become *less* 'sex-calloused' after exposure to erotic films. In a study of 256 college males, Mosher found that over half of them had used exploitative techniques in an attempt to gain intercourse; these techniques included professing love (presumably insincerely) and use of physical force, alcohol or sexual materials to increase the probability of sexual intercourse. In a second study, he found that the 'sex-calloused' attitudes of these males to women decreased, rather than increased, for a sustained period of at least two weeks after viewing erotic films.<sup>8</sup>

I would, however, agree with Brownmiller that pornography and erotica alike share one undeniable quality: they both tend to 'objectify'. The person depicted in the erotic image is not 'real', is seen in a sexual dimension only, and is therefore capable of being considered only as an *object* of sexual attraction, not as a whole person. This is not a problem one can attribute to the mind of the consumer: it is inherent in the sheer fact of encapsulating just one aspect of a person in a photographic or cinematic image.

Writing in *Gay Left*, Gregg Blachford had some useful things to say about objectification:

'... In our specialized society we objectify people all the time. When we purchase goods, we make the sales clerk into an object to satisfy our needs. ... What is objectionable is not objectification itself but the power that exists in one person (the male) to determine the nature of the sexual and emotional relationship and retain control over it: in the family (husband/wife); in the advertising business (ad-man/nude women uses to sell products) on the streets where men feel justified in whistling at women or even raping them ....'<sup>9</sup>

This perception about our society's constant objectification of people is worth expanding, because it is not widely realized that the symbolic value, or 'meaning' of the 'object' in question, to the one who objectifies, is not necessarily impoverished or degraded in relation to the full human reality of the 'object'. In this regard, the field of non-erotic photography is worth examination: the teenager who sticks up posters of her or his favourite rock stars on the bedroom wall is to some extent objectifying them.

They become at once less, and more, than their real selves. Less, in the sense that their full humanity can never be revealed by a mere poster; they are reduced, by the functional apparatus with which they are surrounded – microphones, guitars, etc. – to the level of mere symbols of a generalized notion of excitement; and yet they become more, in so far as the particular star on the wall is a glamour figure, the subject of adulation – as well as looking at his image, the youngsters who buy the posters read long articles in the pop music press giving biographical details about the *particular* star's music, love life, personality.

The same applies to the boy who puts up a picture of his favourite football team. The picture thus represented is not 'real': all the good, or extravagant, or flamboyant – or even downright bad and nasty (as with Sid Vicious and other 'punk' figures) – aspects of a person are played up, at the expense of a reality which probably includes a good deal of the merely ordinary.

Does this matter? Is it an indication that the youngster who owns the poster is exploiting and degrading the rock star? Or does the rock star exploit the youngster? And what about the widower who keeps a photo of his dear, departed wife on the mantelpiece? To him the image is invested with all sorts of memories of a real, living person: one whose full personality he probably knew in intimate detail. No objectification here, one would think.

In addition, Brownmiller's critique is founded on the proposition that men are always in control, and that part of this control expresses itself in a cynical and deliberate degradation of women in pornography. While this regrettably may be true to some extent, it is worth noting that the male who most *needs* erotica is the one who is sexually deprived, and not in control at all. It is the adolescent who is denied the opportunity for sex; it is the man who is shy and lacks an ability to form intimate personal relationships; it is the old, the ugly and the disabled. They are people who would like to know women as full human beings, but are deprived of the opportunity for the necessary contacts. They are people who yearn for personal contact: for erotic contact, certainly, but for emotional and social contact too.

This longing for personal contact applies perhaps even more among paedophile consumers of child erotica. Their state of deprivation from 'real' children is of course legally enforced, so far as the erotic element of a potential relationship is concerned. The law-abiding teacher, or youth worker, or 'uncle', may be allowed to know live children up to a point – but only if his interaction with them is 'innocent', in a way that is just as unreal, just as denying of life and personality as any tendency erotica may have towards 'objectification'.

Feminists and other critics of child erotica really need to know a little more about how paedophiles think and fantasize about children. For my own part (and this is a feeling shared by many paedophile friends), I turn on most towards erotica in which the children, far from being mere passive objects of sexual attention, are themselves clearly sexually aroused, active participants in whatever act is depicted; paedophile erotica, involving both girls and boys is in fact largely of this nature. As for the fact that the images are *merely* erotic, this is a reflection not of the paedophile's one-track mind, but of the limitations of the medium. I would like to see *better* paedophilic erotica – feature-length films, say, shown at public cinemas, complete with the usual elements of feature films: plot, characterization, portrayal of emotion, and so on.

Some high-quality child erotica has been produced, though not by those who are so vocal in their denunciation of lesser-quality material. A good example is a book published in America called *Show Me!*, described by the publishers <sup>10</sup> as a picture book of sex for children and their parents. It contains a great many large photos of children and adolescents engaged in various sexual activities, supported by a text which briefly raises a variety of subjects, including anatomical variation, circumcision, masturbation, childbirth, nursing and sexual intercourse. In other words, it is a sort of sex-education primer.

Dr Larry Constantine, an assistant professor at Tufts University, who works on attachment to Boston State Hospital as a family counsellor, wrote a serious review of the book for the journal *Family Coordinator*, expressing the view that it was 'a beautiful book that breaks ground by its totally explicit photographs of children and adolescents in a variety of sexual activities.' The text, he felt, was less good, being characterized by out-of-date Freudian references and sexist bias. Yet on balance he still felt the book was valuable. Why? In a nutshell because it offers a warm, positive view of eroticism. He wrote:

'The reviewer's daughter, who at the age of six was able to point out the flaws in the book, said "It turns me on!" It is regrettable that

children's exposure to erotic love is through the distortions and deceptions of adult media. Television, for example, offers a sour brew of sex with violence fermented by adult hang-ups which demand that TV sex tempt and tease while ever maintaining a taint of comedy or contempt. It would be nice if kids had access to their own erotic literature – graphic, direct, explicit, natural, sensual, unconflicted ....'

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Of course, even positive erotica like *Show Me!* comes under attack from the anti-sexual lobby: this very book was featured in a picture in *The Times* of 8 February, 1978, immediately before the second reading of the Child Protection Bill. Holding it up for the photographer as an example of the iniquitous material that had to be stamped out was American anti-porn campaigner Judianne Densen-Gerber.

Feminists might also like to note that even if adult women are alienated from erotic imagery, the same cannot necessarily be said for female children, if Constantine's daughter is anyone to go by! Constantine rightly points out elsewhere <sup>12</sup> that there are no adequate research studies on the effect of erotica on children, though I would agree with him when he says:

'[I]n the final analysis it still reduces, like the question of exposure to violence, to personal views on the intrinsic goodness or evil of sex. A case can be made out that too little of a healthy, erotic nature is accessible to children, not too much. The poor quality, dehumanizing character and paraphilial emphasis that are the hallmarks of contemporary pornography are by-products of its socially marginal and only quasi-legitimate status. Were sex sufficiently acceptable so that healthy and affectionate but erotic portrayals of human sexuality became an integral part of children's literature and television, likelihood of interest in, exposure to, or negative effects from poorer pornography would be reduced.'

Public attention, however, has been swinging away from the adult or child consumer of erotica. The emphasis is now on the child's role in the production side. This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that in Western society childhood sexuality *per se* is denied and suppressed, and that all sexual activity is felt to be a private experience, rather than something which should be open for the whole world to share in. If one accepts these points as fundamental, it becomes self-evident that child 'porn' must be wrong, that it must be harmful to the child who takes part.

If, on the other hand, we proceed from a positive view of child sexuality, and even believe that sex between adults and children can be a positive thing, we have to ask ourselves whether allowing sexual acts to be photographed or filmed introduces any new elements, either harmfully or beneficially. Should we, for instance, regard sex as an intrinsically private act? Is the experience between two (or three, or four?) people in some way debased if others are allowed to witness it through photographic images? At a more practical level, does the camera in the bedroom introduce a harmful commercial element to sex, in the same way that prostitution does? Does it mean that children are liable to be exploited and harmed? What type of harm can we expect, if any? Can we quantify it by some sort of research?

The topic of child erotica is a very new one in the public consciousness. For this reason there has been inadequate time for resources to be devoted into research on it, and in any case few would think this necessary, any more than they would think it necessary to research the harm done to a victim by knife attacks. Nevertheless, one needs something more positive to go on than the notion of 'spiritual murder'.

Reports, particularly from the United States, suggest that at least some of the children involved come to a terrible end: that they are abused and exploited, sexually and in other ways. The *Daily Mirror*, in its exposé in 1977, referred to events in Los Angeles, where – allegedly – 'plastic bags have been discovered on garbage heaps containing the dismembered bodies of eighteen young mutilated children ... many of them suspected of having been used in pornography'. They also mentioned a film allegedly made in Houston, Texas, which supposedly showed 'a child being murdered in a shocking sexual rite'.<sup>13</sup>

Other stories have suggested that there is widespread trafficking in children, a white-slave trade; children bribed, bullied, kidnapped or sold by their parents in Mexico are said to have been used for pornography in California, and even as far east as Massachusetts. Attempts have been made to tackle the problem by introducing laws to prevent boys being passed across state lines within the US (there is already long-standing legislation concerning girls).

That herding children around like animals, and slaughtering them in like manner, is exploitation of the worst kind hardly needs stating. One is also entitled to draw the inference that those in charge of such operations are unlikely to be sensitive as to whether the sexual activity the children are required to engage in for the pictures and films is something they want to do: one can safely imagine that in these circumstances they are forced into it.

Child pornography is now said to be a multi-million dollar business in the United States.<sup>14</sup> If this is true then it will inevitably have attracted the most ruthless people imaginable, who would think nothing of brutalizing and murdering children for money. Yet such studies as there have been of the business indicate that not all the material is produced by ruthless gangster types, even in the United States, where the worst abuses have been reported. Robin Lloyd<sup>15</sup> reports that much of the material is produced by amateurs, who are themselves paedophiles: the photographs show their own little girl- and boy-friends, whom they may love dearly and be very proud of. The amateurs simply take the photos and sell them to the professionals who publish the mags and do the distribution. These pictures may well show children engaged in sexual activities which they are thoroughly enjoying.

As a customer – as a purchaser of child erotica (at least, until the Child Protection Act) – I have tried to buy material in which the children *appear* to be enjoying themselves, but for the most part it is impossible to tell with certainty what the 'actors' are thinking and feeling.

Smiling faces are much in evidence, though something more akin to scowls may be encountered, if the camera catches the tense, concentrated pleasure of orgasm. Magazine pictures, and films too, often feature children sexually active with each other, with no adult involved, as though the camera were merely recording spontaneous childhood sexiness which would have been going on even if no film were being made. These are children, we are invited to suppose, who are perfectly happy to fellate and masturbate each other, and to have coitus, with a carefree disregard for their being under public scrutiny. How much of this is real, how much a counterfeit designed to ease the buyer's conscience, it is hard to say, and only by talking to the particular children involved in each case could one be sure of the truth. I should add that I have met and spoken to some children who have been featured in erotica, and have fairly detailed knowledge, from reliable sources, of the personal circumstances and dispositions of others: in these cases, the photographer has been an 'enthusiastic amateur' and the children have definitely enjoyed their 'work'.

My guess is that there is a complete spectrum of ways in which children relate to the erotic photographs and films in which they appear, from total coercion to appear,

to total involvement with the sexual partner in question (though that of course does not necessarily mean total enthusiasm for performing sexual acts for public consumption). Possibly there is a comparable spectrum in economic terms: total exploitation at one end (when all the reward for taking part goes to the producer or distributor), to something like total fairness at the other end (I know one producer of child erotica who, until he was caught, gave all the cash he earned from selling pictures, to the children themselves).

Consumers of child erotica, like myself, try to distinguish degrees of goodness and badness in different examples of it, but those who legislate for the welfare of children have no use for such after-the-event judgements. They must try to prevent exploitation from taking place, and on the face of it this objective would best be served by banning all child erotica.

Such a solution would have implications (indeed, *does* have implications) far beyond the immediate problem, however: it is no accident that those in the forefront of the campaign against child erotica are also predominantly anti-gay, anti-heterosex-before-marriage, anti what they derisively call 'permissive' attitudes generally. They are people who in a wider context believe in an authoritarian society, in which Church and State between them call all the shots, in which dissidence of all sorts is severely punished. They are the people who, in their anxiety to promote the 'moral' welfare of others, overlook the misery, the frustration, and the violence engendered by sexual ignorance and repression. For they feel that people, especially children, must be kept sexually ignorant and repressed to free them from the 'corrupting' effect of their own feelings.

I believe there is an alternative way forward, as indicated by Larry Constantine.<sup>16</sup> He has this to say about participants in child erotica:

'Were the rights claims of children in this area vigorously defended, pornography using children would undoubtedly continue, but its production could be made more accessible to policing. Children who did not wish to participate could be better protected from exploitation at the hands of parents and other adults, just as child actors are protected by the scrutiny made possible by an open legal industry in which rights to participate are also recognized. The extremes of exploitation, kidnapping, rape and other excesses of the pornographer using children now are products of the illegality and marginality of the enterprise. True concern for children would prefer to see some children participating willingly in pornography under able-to-be-monitored conditions than to have other's brutally exploited because of their status as runaways or mere chattels of their parents.'

Constantine talks about the benefits of a legal industry. I would go further and suggest that part of the reason for the exploitation of children is not only the industry's present illegality, but also its profitability, albeit that the latter is to some extent dependent on the former. As well as monitoring the industry, why not take the profit incentive out of it? Why not have Government-sponsored erotica, produced and distributed at rates which would undercut illicit material? Via the Arts Council, say, it would be possible to create bursaries for artists working in the field of erotica, including child erotica, thus encouraging the emergence of really first-rate non-commercial material. The National Secular Society has in this regard made the sensible, and perfectly feasible, suggestion that child labour laws could be invoked, like those that prevent the exploitation of child labour in factories and other places of employment.<sup>17</sup>



In a monitored, and legitimate erotica industry, it would be possible to enforce a minimum wage, and children capable of acting, as well as of an elementary erotic response, might become valued stars in a whole new genre of film, which has its present nearest equivalent in the Tatum O'Neal/Jodie Foster/Brooke Shields phenomenon.

There is no harm in honestly recognizing that sex undertaken for erotica has elements of performance built into it which make it comparable with the other performing arts. It is not necessary to pretend that the only 'good' erotica is that in which the participants are simply being themselves. Erotica may be good if it comes over to the audience as an erotically charged performance, even though the actors may not really be erotically charged: just as a Shakespearian love scene between Romeo and Juliet can be very moving and effective even though the actor and actress involved are not in reality in love. Such a Shakespearian performance is in itself insincere; in a sense, all fictional drama is a lie. But it does not matter. The 'insincere' love scene does not debase love.

Neither does an 'insincere' sex scene debase sex: all that matters is that the participants in it are happy to take part, and are properly rewarded for doing so. In a sense, the best erotica, which I would like to see made (and which does not yet exist) will be more 'insincere' than the cheap, rather crude stuff that is turned out now: there will be more dialogue, more plot, more acting.

One problem of children in erotica which does affect them more than adults, arguably, is that of blackmail. The boy who is carefree enough at the age of twelve or thirteen to take part in erotic films always faces the possibility that ten years later his attitude will have changed. He may have married. The thought of his wife finding out might be enough to make him part with money to a blackmailer. It's an argument which could be raised as an objection to all sex between children and adults, though the presence of a celluloid record is an additional factor in the case of erotica.

Like so many other sexual 'problems', this one boils down to the necessity of getting rid of guilt. What we have to encourage is a society in which shame does not attach to involvement in any consensual sexual behaviour: and one of the fastest, most powerful agencies for the transformation of our thinking towards a less guilty view of sex is via the medium of erotica itself.

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## Ch 10 - Notes and References

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12. L. Constantine, 'The sexual rights of children: implications of a radical perspective', in Larry L. Constantine and Floyd M. Martinson (eds), *Children and Sex: New Findings, New Perspectives*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1980. [^](#)
13. *Daily Mirror*, 5 September, 1977. [^](#)
14. The anti-porn campaigners are given to exaggerating the money involved, however, aided and abetted by the news media who have an interest in coming up with sensational figures. See p. 249 regarding the accuracy of the *Chicago Tribune* exposé. [^](#) [NOTE: Use the following link to access the reference, then manually return to this footnote by searching for "See p. 249" (without quotes) LINK=<sup>1</sup> ]
15. Lloyd, op. cit., Chapters 7 and 8. [^](#)
16. Constantine, 'The sexual rights of children ...', op. cit. [^](#)
17. National Secular Society, 'Evidence to the Williams Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship' reprinted in *The Freethinker*, Vol. 98, No. 5, 1978, pp. 67-78. [^](#)

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## The Beginnings of Radical Paedophilia in Britain

The general public in the UK has long been aware of 'child molesting' and 'perversion'. But only in the 1970s did it come to hear about 'paedophilia', a designation suddenly lifted from the obscurity of medical textbooks to become a crusading badge of identity for those whom the term had been designed to oppress.

'Paedophilia' became simultaneously a recognized word and a public issue in August and September 1977, when a series of connected events resulted in the activities of the Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE) being given prominent attention in the national press. Prior to this time, most people had no idea that an organization like PIE even existed, which is perhaps not surprising considering its tiny membership – the total at that time standing around 250 – and the fact that it had only been going since October 1974. Nor, when the dust had settled on that late summer's attention, were they any the wiser as to the reasons for its appearance, its philosophy, its proposals: the nature of the publicity had seen to that.

It was not until PIE had been going for a number of months that I myself heard about it, or about Paedophile Action for Liberation (PAL), which was later merged with PIE. There had been virtually no newspaper coverage at that time, and the only people 'in the know' about paedophile groups were readers of gay newspapers and magazines, and others in gay circles who had heard by word of mouth.<sup>1</sup>

I came into neither category. The only friend of mine I knew to be gay had invited me along to a gay lib conference, but that was very much a 'one-off' event for me – a rather daring excursion into a completely alien world. Unlike the relatively sober conferences of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, this was a let's-be-outrageous Gay Liberation Front drag show, full of wonderful, gutsy, flamboyant queens, the air dripping with scent and theatricality: beards, I recall, were no longer just hairs growing out of a man's face, but were now pronounced, with great solemnity, to be 'the last bastion of male chauvinism'.

Much as I admired the panache, I felt this was not for me. I didn't feel like a queen. I didn't feel gay at all, and although Quentin Crisp is firmly in my pantheon of twentieth-century heroes, I felt as out of place in GLF company as I would sipping tea with Mary Whitehouse.

My discovery of the nascent paedophile subculture was something of an accident. At the time, I was editor of the Open University staff newspaper, *Open House*, and decided to cover an OU Women's Group meeting on homosexuality. This led to a controversial feature, in which two staff 'came out' as homosexual. It was rumoured that this attracted the ire of Sir Frederick Warner, Chairman of the University Council and the man chiefly responsible for my ultimate dismissal from the position of Press Officer with the University (on the grounds that my connection with PIE had embarrassed the University). In the preparation of the *Open House* article, I 'came out' as paedophile to the gay contributors, and was soon pointed in the direction of PAL and PIE, the latter of which I joined in May 1975.

In the same spring, I went to several meetings of PAL, which had developed as a breakaway group from South London GLF. It was at these meetings that I first met other paedophiles, and experienced the sheer exhilaration and joy of suddenly finding a whole new social world – a world in which the Great Unmentionable was all at once the thing to talk about, a source of instant, garrulous rapport, between the unlikeliest combinations of people: at my first meeting there were maybe a dozen, all male, mostly young not easily pigeon-holed – by either dress, accent or manner – into any

obvious social class stereotypes. Among them were a naval petty officer, a motor mechanic, a former child welfare officer, a medical-research technician, a high-ranking administrator and a bus driver. At a later meeting a middle-aged man introduced himself as the headmaster of a boarding school for boys.

It was not long that year before PAL proved itself slightly too garrulous, too open, too devil-may-care, for it became the subject of classic 'exposé' treatment in the Sunday press – a whole front page, plus centre-page spread, in the *Sunday People*, which resulted in local intimidation and lost jobs for some of those who were exposed. For a long time (though not ultimately), PIE was luckier, and better able to survive than the demoralized members – or embers – of the PAL conflagration. Personally, I felt that in a short time PAL had done a lot for me. It had given me new hope and new friends, but in the year that followed the exposé it was to PIE that I turned for some serious hope of encountering a durable vehicle for paedophile radicalism.

PIE, like PAL, had grown out of the gay movement of the mid-1970s. A brain-child whose parents were idealism and a sense of injustice at society's reaction to 'deviant' sexuality, PIE had been the idea of Michael Hanson, a gay student living in Edinburgh, who became the group's first Chairperson. He wasn't even a paedophile, though a passing relationship with a youth whom he took to be sixteen, but who turned out to be a year younger, provided the mental stimulus for his deliberations on paedophilia.

Set up initially as a special interest group within the Scottish Minorities Group (now the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group), PIE's advertising soon brought in a preponderance of enquiries from England, and the group's centre of gravity moved to London, where it acquired a new Chairperson in the following year.

This was Keith Hose, then aged twenty-three, who, like those who had started PAL, had connections with the South London group of GLF. He had found GLF radicalism exciting and productive. Inspired by Engels, their thinking questioned the basis of the family as an economic, social and sexual system. And well before Keith's appearance on the scene, a large contingent of GLF had favoured the abolition of the age of consent; their youth group had even staged a march in support of this.

It is also true that an equally large contingent were against paedophilia, on the ground that it had sexist overtones (boys, in relation to men, arguably being placed in a subordinate 'woman's role'), but to Keith GLF's appeal lay as much in the vigour and freshness of their direct action campaigns as in their ideas. If GLF gays found themselves discriminated against in a pub, they would promptly stage a mass sit-in there; action which sometimes won them the respect and support of 'straight' locals, rather than hostility. 'Radical drag' was one of their more flamboyant manifestations: gays would dress in weird combinations of clothes, such as 'butch' pit boots worn with a 'femme' feathered hat, in a graphic, art-derived and powerful visual challenge to traditional assumptions – assumptions not just about dress, but about the socio-sexual roles of the wearers.

Keith was also adamant that we must move towards a society in which children's rights, and the equality of children with adults as persons, would be recognized. In the original formulation of the aims of PIE, children's rights did not figure. They were:

- 1) To clear away, where possible, the myths connected with paedophilia by various means, including the making public of scientific, sociological and similar information.
- 2) To give advice and counsel to those isolated or lonely because of their paedophile orientation.
- 3) To help those in legal difficulties concerning sexual acts with under-

age partners that took place with the latter's consent.

4) To campaign, as members see fit, for the legal and social acceptance of paedophile love.

5) To provide a means whereby paedophiles might get in contact with each other.

Keith attended the Edinburgh meeting in March 1975 at which these aims were approved, and at his suggestion the following words were added: 'As a result of the above the group believes that it is essential that attitudes towards young people should change.' A small, but significant, change of emphasis.

The shock waves in the wake of PAL's *Sunday People* affair were felt in PIE, so that it proved difficult to find people prepared to take the risks involved in front-line activism. The only way out, it was decided, was an aggressive policy. 'The only way for PIE to survive,' Keith later wrote,<sup>2</sup> 'was to seek out as much publicity for the organization as possible .... If we got bad publicity we would not run into a corner but stand and fight. We felt that the only way to get more paedophiles joining PIE ... was to seek out and try to get all kinds of publications to print our organization's name and address and to make paedophilia a real public issue.'

The extensive publicity he had in mind proved harder to achieve than any of us imagined. For a long while our news releases were swiftly consigned to Fleet Street waste-paper bins, and we had to take what comfort we could from coverage in 'alternative' press sources. But PIE began to make its presence felt in other ways, notably by Keith's attendance at the 1975 annual conference of CHE at Sheffield, where he made an impassioned speech on paedophilia that was well received (and was covered at length in *The Guardian*) and also at a conference in the same year organized by MIND, the national mental health organization.

One outcome of the MIND conference was the suggestion to Keith that PIE should submit evidence to the Home Office Criminal Law Revision Committee on the age of consent. With amazing despatch Keith did exactly this, preparing and submitting the seventeen-page document discussed in Chapter 6 in a matter of weeks, without the benefit of research time or facilities at his disposal. What's more, we have it on reliable authority that his work caught the imagination of no less a figure than the Home Secretary of the time, Roy Jenkins. He is said to have been impressed (our informant did not tell us whether he actually agreed with anything proposed), but added words to the effect: 'Of course, it hasn't a hope in hell.'

The emphasis in PIE, during most of its short history, has been on campaigning, on producing what we have intended to be thought-provoking and controversial documents, such as our 'Evidence on the Age of Consent', and on seeking publicity for them. But, as already pointed out, our formally-defined aims were much wider than this: they included giving 'advice and counsel', and/or legal help, to paedophiles who ask for it, and providing a means for paedophiles to get in touch with each other.

In other words we have always intended to be a 'self-help' group. In this respect we have something in common with a 'slimmers' club, or Alcoholics Anonymous, though of course our philosophy of self-help has been vastly different to either. The point of paedophiles helping each other, as we have seen it, has not been to help each other to *reform* himself, that is, to try and modify his sexual identity to fit in with the demands of society. The point has been one of learning how to cope with the fact of living in a hostile society. How to be paedophile without being suicidal about it, without feeling guilty just because other people expect you to. Guilt-ridden, anxious paedophiles are almost bound to become more relaxed, more *happy* as individuals, if for the first time in their lives they find themselves amongst other paedophiles who have learnt not to be depressed by their oppression.

How have we fared in this aim? What have we done to help paedophiles themselves?

Like PAL, we have in the past had regular London meetings to which members could come along and chat about their problems and experiences, but beyond a doubt our most consistently successful service to members has been the Contact Page. As the name implies, this is a bulletin in which members who want to be put in touch with others place an advertisement, and wait for replies. The advertisers simply give their membership number, general location, and brief details of their sexual and other interests. Replies are sent to PIE, as with a box number system, so that until a measure of trust is built up between the correspondents neither is informed of the other's address.

Obviously, we have always had to be very careful in the kind of ads we have accepted. The purpose has always been to put paedophiles in touch with each other, *not* with children, and once in a while we have had to turn down ads which could have implied the latter. Likewise we have been careful not to allow ads for the sale or purchase of erotica. Not surprisingly, the *News of the World* eventually turned its attention to our ads. These are some that caught their eye:

No. 273 Energetic middle-aged male sincere and discreet lks boys 8-15 yrs and the various ways in which they dress. Int swimming. Wld lk to hear from others with similar ints.

No. 390 Male. Interested public school type boys, 12-16, either in football shorts or corduroy trousers, wd like to meet young male, 20-30, with similar interests. (S W London/Surrey).

No. 379 Male Int girls 6-13 wd lk to correspond/meet others with similar interests; music, sports, fashion, Hi-Fi, photography, dance, reading, films. (Blackpool).

No. 373 Doctor, male. Poet and author, interested photos little girls in white pants and little boys out of white pants. Wd like to hear from male or female with similar interests. All letters answered. Perfect discretion. (Reading, Berks).

No. 401 Anglican priest, south London, anxious to meet other paed for friendship and help.

We have never conducted a formal survey of our members' use of the Contact Page, but I imagine the figure would be well over 80 per cent having written or received at least one letter during their membership. I myself used the system during the early months of my membership.

Neither of these essential activities of a 'self-help' group – the holding of small, informal meetings, and the putting of members in touch with each other – is presently a simple matter for PIE: meetings have been infiltrated by a hostile press<sup>3</sup> and the contact ads have resulted in a prosecution, in that their publication has allegedly involved a 'conspiracy to corrupt public morals'. Such basic functions would present no problems at all for most organizations. Nor would they probably have become that much of a problem for PIE, if we were not also a vigorous and controversial campaigning group.

Our expressed intention to provide 'advice and counsel' and legal help is less controversial than either our campaigning or our contact ads, but, perhaps surprisingly, these are activities which have not been concentrated upon. Although PIE does deal with dozens of personal letters every week, many of them requiring carefully considered and tactfully worded replies, we find that the need for 'advice and counsel' doesn't often arise in quite the terms that we originally conceived it. Only very rarely do paedophiles write to us asking for 'advice', as opposed to information,

or a sharing of confidences, and in any case there is usually little advice that can sensibly be given. What we find people need is friendship, and that is something for members to give each other, not a commodity to be dispensed by experts specially assigned to the job.

There are exceptions. Like the sophisticated young man – good Cambridge University honours degree, several years' experience in teaching – who professed himself at a loss to know what to do. He felt that he was going to get into trouble with boys and wanted to know whether to accept his doctor's advice, which was to undergo a course of aversion therapy. We spent a couple of hours talking it over. I told him of the unpleasant nature of the treatment and the possibility of its failure. By way of balance, I also waxed fairly lyrical about the fate of the various people I knew in prison for paedophilic offences, and the fact that it might be his fate too, if, as he seemed to think likely, he was going to get into trouble.

I sensed that he really wanted me to *tell* him what to do. To *direct* him to have the treatment or not have it. Despite his obviously high intelligence and his ability to think the issues through, at that point in his life he simply wasn't capable of making tough decisions on his own. Maybe I let him down, because I declined to be judgemental in the way in which he was inviting me to be. I tried to hide my own distaste for aversion therapy, and other forms of 'treatment', but at the same time explored with him some thoughts about the *philosophy* of sexual identity – thoughts which underlay my distaste. In particular, I asked him how important a part of his personality he felt his paedophilic orientation constituted. If he were to wake up in the morning finding himself attracted to women rather than boys, would this give him joy, or distress? Would he feel still the same person essentially, or would the change have meant the death of a part of himself which he held dear, a part which was an inalienable aspect of his sense of self?

Somewhat to *my* dismay, his sense of the importance of his own sexual identity appeared to be rather slight, and I suppose if that were not the case he could never even have contemplated aversion therapy. I don't think I persuaded him, one way or the other, nor, as I say, do I think that is what I should have tried to do. Whether he ever took the treatment I do not know, but he did get into trouble, and is now serving a four-year sentence.

As you may imagine, I felt dreadful about that. If I had come down firmly in favour of him doing what his doctor told him, would it have happened? I wrote, and offered to visit him in prison, but it turned out that he was being well looked after there by his family, and had a good job in the prison library – where he was able to get on with writing his novel, plus a critical edition of the works of some eighteenth-century poet.

I do not think I can be *blamed* for him being in prison. But the incident threw into sharp focus for me the impossibility of a radical paedophile like myself giving 'good' or 'sound' advice. To have recommended the 'sensible' course of doing as the doctor ordered would have stuck in the craw too much.

PIE's contribution as regards the law has been more modest, and consequently less perilous. Usually, it boils down to recommending a good and unprejudiced solicitor – a rare commodity when it comes to dealing with paedophilic offences, but we know quite a lot of people who fit the bill. In addition, if the worst comes to the worst, we arrange where possible for people to be visited in prison, or for them to be provided with regular 'pen pals'. Practical help of this sort is almost certainly the most useful thing we can do for members, and a service which we intend to develop rather more systematically than we have done so far.

Already, in these remarks on self-help, I have indicated a number of areas in which our campaigning aims conflict with those of being useful to our membership. In

nothing is this more true than the scope and nature of the regular magazines distributed to members. The original *Newsletter*, run-off in sometimes almost illegible copies from a badly-typed original, was superseded in 1976 by an altogether more ambitious venture, called *Understanding Paedophilia*. As the name implies, this was conceived as something of a shop window for PIE, and for paedophilia generally, and the aim was to sell it in radical bookshops and elsewhere, as well as to distribute it free to our own members.

Printed on high-quality paper, with an attractive and stylish format, *UP* was very much the baby of Warren Middleton, one of PIE's first London members. The rest of us on the Executive Committee (which I had joined in 1976) were all too busy doing our own thing for PIE to thrash out what we wanted for the magazine in terms of any consistent approach or philosophy. Such comments as we made tended to follow the appearance of an issue, rather than precede it, and tended to be relatively minor suggestions, like 'Why not have a picture of a little girl on the front page for a change, instead of a boy?'

Yes, there were pictures, which brings us to the central dilemma of this and all our publications for members: Warren was firmly on one side in this dilemma, and to a degree, though not entirely, I was on the other. For Warren, *UP* was to be an almost entirely didactic enterprise, an elevated, cultured journal, which would show paedophilia in a new light. There would be extracts from sensitive paedophilic literature, and long highbrow articles from heavyweight psychologists and others throughout the world, who would establish the respectability of paedophilic love. Not *too* much emphasis would be placed on the physical minutiae of paedophilic *sex*, as this would be 'sordid' and would lower the tone – an attitude which I felt merely reinforced the anti-sexual prejudices of society at large.

By contrast, I reasoned that our members were paying a substantial subscription (then 5 pounds) and that apart from the Contact Page, the magazine was their only regular benefit from PIE membership. Accordingly, it ought to be geared to what *they* wanted, and if we failed to deliver the goods we could reckon on a low resubscription rate. What did I think they wanted? *Some* intellectual articles, by all means, but articles designed for *them*, not for the relatively ignorant outside world. I also felt that we should get as near as the law would allow us to doing a kind of *Forum* page – publishing letters from readers on the details of sexual relationships. There was also scope for erotic fiction, and erotic pictures of children (which the law would then allow rather more than it does now). And why not? What could be more in tune with our aim of taking the sense of guilt out of sexuality than to be cheerfully erotic about it ourselves?

With Warren's eventual departure from active work with PIE, *UP* was replaced by a new magazine called *Magpie*. Its approach has been, and continues to be, a compromise between the shop-window concept and a lively forum for members, which, although not overtly erotic, is still attractive. The staple is a mixture of news, book and film reviews with a paedophilic or children's rights angle, intellectual articles, non-nude photographs of children, humour (yes, *humour* about paedophilia), letters and various other contributions by members.

By 1977 we had yet another regular publication too, edited by 'David'. This was called *Childhood Rights*, and was an entirely campaigning journal. Since David's retirement, we have given more children's rights emphasis to the content of *Magpie*, in lieu of *CR*.

How, overall, is the impact of PIE on its own membership to be assessed? Two letters have appeared in *Magpie* which I think sum up rather well the dilemma we have faced – the essential conflict between PIE the campaigners and PIE the self-helpers. First of all the pessimistic viewpoint:



'I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that I should resign from PIE. When I joined, I saw it as an organization serving the purpose of meeting friends whose sexual orientation was similar to my own. It therefore gave me: (1) a feeling of release, in that I could safely share views normally repressed; (2) a feeling of security – in that I no longer felt isolated from the world because of my sexual outlook.

'Speaking purely for myself, I no longer feel a sense of (1) release – in so far as our aims seem no longer the mutual discussion of views, but rather an attempt to convince the community of the rightness of our views; (2) security – in so far as I now feel much more at risk in expressing paedophile views than I did before this year's [1977's] campaigning began.

'It is, I think, a correct summing up of what happened in 1977 to say that in spite of the courage you have shown in your outspoken views, and in spite of the publicity we have sought – and gained – the image of the Paedophile in the minds of the Community is now much further removed from reality than it was before our publicity-seeking began.

'That is the cardinal, indisputable tragedy of our situation. There is thus no object in my remaining a member. My decision is, however, a most reluctant one, since some of the finest people I have ever met in the gay world are PIE members. I have very much enjoyed their companionship, and no doubt in leaving PIE I shall be losing that friendship. I have no doubt that my loss will be greater than theirs ....'

That letter saddened me, of course, and I answered it at length in *Magpie*. But it is only one side of the story. This member reached quite different conclusions:

'Yesterday I was clearing the moths out of my wallet when I came across my PIE membership card and noticed it was, like my bank balance, about to expire. This set me wondering what exactly my twelve months membership of PIE had done for me.

'Probably the most obvious thing is that I now have a number of friends who, like myself, are paedophile. Also I feel more secure and no longer have a great fear of others finding out about my sexuality. This is probably just as well, as I shall endeavour to explain.

'About four weeks ago I took out a subscription to *Boys International*. Three days later an envelope arrived containing my first issue of *B.I.*, some illustrated lists of other publications, and a subscription form containing my name, address and the magazine I was subscribing to. I put the copy of *B.I.* in a drawer and sat on the settee to look through the book lists. A couple of minutes later there was a knock at the door so I put the lists and subscription form under one of the seat cushions on the settee, and went to see who it was. Anyway for one reason or another that was the last I thought about the lists.

'That evening I was sat in the kitchen having a cup of coffee when a large van pulled up outside the house. In come two guys and promptly load the three-piece suite, book list, subscription form and all, into the van. My flat-mate had bought a new suite, sold the old

one and forgotten to tell me about it. Well twelve months ago I would have been running down the road after that van trying to recover the "incriminating evidence". Instead I finished up rolling about the kitchen floor laughing my head off at the thought of some prude cleaning the "muck" out from under the cushions.

'What exactly all this proves I haven't the faintest idea. But if I should find myself down at the local nick for having the audacity to love a young boy, now I have some friends who I know will understand. I couldn't have said that last year.'<sup>4</sup>

In its present form I suppose that PIE can only help those paedophiles who at least have in them the potential for this spirit – but I like to think that, despite all the problems, this amounts to not a few of our membership.

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## Ch 11 - Notes and References

1. The emerging gay movement of the early 1970s presented a challenge to established sexual mores and values and a forum for radical debate, out of which it now seems inevitable (with the benefit of hindsight) that the issue of inter-generational sex would be raised at some stage, from which paedophile groups would develop. Given such a context, it is not surprising that in the groups that did emerge there were far more homosexual than heterosexual paedophiles, though this would not appear to reflect the balance in society as a whole. <sup>^</sup>

2. PIE Chairperson's Annual Report, 1975-6. <sup>^</sup>

3. See p. 234. <sup>^</sup> [NOTE: Use the following link to access the reference, then manually return to this footnote by searching for "See p. 234" (without quotes) LINK=<sup>^</sup>]

4. *Magpie*, No. 7. <sup>^</sup>

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## The Big Bang

Stuart Henry, co-author of a book on self-help groups,<sup>1</sup> which featured PIE in a not unsympathetic way, before we had captured public attention on any scale, recently suggested that the reaction to PIE's campaign had 'put the case for paedophilia back at least ten years'.<sup>2</sup> The same view was put to me forcefully, even angrily, by a professor at the British Psychological Society's conference on Love and Attraction in Swansea in 1977.

'Who the hell do you think you are?' he said to me. 'Some kind of messiah?' He had clearly envisaged that the conference would be entirely an academic get-together, a place for quiet, rational discourse, unsullied by the coarse attentions of the press and its sensation-seeking public. He had wanted to introduce to an academic audience some ideas about paedophilia and child sexuality that were quite as 'advanced' as any I had to offer;<sup>3</sup> but his ideas were to be safely couched in academic language, with an air of tentative, disinterested objectivity. Thus, carefully sown, the seeds of his radicalism would be nurtured in good soil, and would in their own good time propagate themselves more widely.

That cosy notion had been entirely wrecked by my arrival at the conference, as a retinue of a couple of dozen notebook- and microphone- and camera-wielders followed my every move, determined to make a villain or a martyr of me, preferably both. I had no great taste for being cast as a martyr or as a messiah, still less as a villain. I hadn't intended to be singled out personally at all, though that is what happened. But I had felt – and so had we all in PIE, – that a big publicity bang on paedophilia was necessary in order to get the subject onto the agenda for public debate. In the absence of an aggressive push on our part, we felt it might be hundreds of years, if ever, before the age-old taboos could be broken.

At the same time, put on the spot by that angry professor to say what I thought such recklessness would achieve, I had no answer. Our visions had all been hazy, the product of a desperate, un-thought-out sort of hope which we had hardly dared to subject to penetrating analysis, even had we been able to. We hadn't looked at history for any sense of dynamic, for any precise revolutionary dialectic. We just did what we felt it was in us to do, what we were bursting to do, which was to stand up and say loud and clear that we were pig sick of creeping in the shadows, of pretending to be something other than ourselves, of apologizing for feelings which within our deepest selves we knew were capable of a good and fine manifestation, not a wicked or perverted or 'sick' one.

If we had looked at history, what would we have found? That whenever really new, heretical ideas are propounded, ideas which threaten to rock the society in which they are put forward, they inevitably encounter a vicious and forceful opposition. Some might feel we have moved on a bit from the era of throwing Christians to the lions, or even of Christians themselves leaning heavily on the likes of Galileo. After all, look what Darwin managed to get away with. And dear old Karl Marx, who could calmly set the world alight from a comfortable chair in the Reading Room of the British Museum! But we in PIE were under no illusions as to the reception we would get. We may not have thought it out carefully, but we knew in our bones that the fate awaiting us would probably be more like that reserved for the Tolpuddle Martyrs than for Darwin or Marx. We knew that we would be hitting a particularly sensitive nerve among practically every section of society. To isolate ourselves as a focus for universal hostility was indeed irrational, even downright crazy, and yet we still felt we had to do it.

Naturally, we didn't posit all this to ourselves in quite such stark terms. The tone, when I joined PIE, had already been set by Keith Hose, whose inspiration had been the openness and aggressiveness of the Gay Liberation Front in the opening years of the '70s. He could see that there was no shortage of hostility in society towards gays, but that this was being combated by rejecting the timidity of the past, by 'coming out', by wearing badges and going on marches, by 'zapping' pubs that refused to serve openly gay customers, by challenging dismissals from employment based on anti-gay discrimination. What he, and I, and PIE generally, had thought about rather less, was the cautious, stealthy progress that had made all this possible in the first place – such as the 'respectable', sober-suited closet-gay influence, in the Albany Trust and elsewhere, which by softly-softly tactics, by the skilful deployment of parliamentary lobbying techniques, by gentle public relations persuasion that was designed not to upset anyone, had managed to actually get a law passed in England and Wales, permitting homosexual activity between consenting male adults in private.

There was no way in which we in PIE were going to go through all that palaver. Not secretly or stealthily at any rate. We were just not prepared to wait for decades or centuries before declaring ourselves. It just wasn't in our nature. Instead, we naively supposed we could be both open and play the lobbying, public-relations game to some extent; we thought we could manipulate the Establishment and find allies within it, simultaneously with being the ogres of the popular press and the Church-based reactionaries like the Festival of Light.

With this in mind, we cheerfully sent off correspondence designed to establish links with appropriate professional bodies. The Inner London Probation Service, for instance. In the days before people had become fully alert as to our radical nature, we thought it might be possible to establish ourselves as a self-help agency, to which probation officers could refer anyone convicted of a paedophilic offence, on the (correct) principle that we could befriend and 'counsel' those involved more effectively than a professional with no great knowledge or understanding of the personal problems involved. In this correspondence we played down the fact that we were a campaigning body, but as an attempt to wear sheep's clothing this proved altogether too half-hearted: the wolfish form was spotted with consummate ease, so that the reply we received was terse and negative in the extreme. It appeared – but only after trial and error, for none of us had the foresight to see it – that we couldn't pass ourselves off as a sort of Alcoholics Anonymous just when it suited us, especially when most of the time we were busy promoting our tippie with the enthusiasm of a Guinness advertising campaign.

Our real mistake, however, was at a much deeper level than this. We could see 'the enemy' only where it was most obviously manifest. We knew the Whitehouse lobby had a broad populist appeal among the nation's churchgoers and was not without power and influence. We knew that most ordinary people had deep, gut feelings about the protection of children, and that many of them would see red about PIE so forcefully that they couldn't begin to give any rational consideration to our ideas. We knew that the popular press would play on simple fear and prejudice, given half a chance. We knew that even amongst the most educated classes there were intransigently conservative elements who would share, and perhaps very effectively endorse, the gut reaction of the man in the street. Having recognized all these enemies, we mistakenly supposed that in other areas we might find, if not friends, then at least rational, liberally-minded people, who would be open to ideas. We didn't expect *The Guardian* newspaper to react in the same way as the *News of the World*. Yet to our astonishment and disgust, there has been precious little to choose between them, and this just about typifies the reaction of the liberal intellectual establishment across the land.

What we had failed to see was that normally intelligent, broad-minded people were just as capable of giving way to their initial, emotional sense of revulsion as anyone else: in making an appeal to their brains, to their education, we put too much faith in these factors. We were quite wrong in supposing that only religious maniacs and splenetic judges are ruled by factors outside the intellect. Of course, had we been preaching any one of dozens of other doctrines, our supposition would have been correct: there is no shortage of liberals who are prepared to take a sympathetic view of the Provisional IRA,<sup>4</sup> despite their revulsion against the barbarity of kneecappings and the suffering of children who get in the way of the bullets and bombs and hatred.

Apparently violence, in the pursuit of a political end like nationalism, is somehow acceptable, no matter how horrific it may be. Yet for some reason that I cannot fathom, the non-violent love of children is regarded as more horrific, not less so. Those very liberals who, if they would not countenance, would at least talk calmly about the IRA atrocities, could not bring themselves to talk calmly and to think about paedophilia. One of my colleagues at the Open University, who held a senior administrative position, was a classic case in point. He was a chap with a good degree from London School of Economics, a fairly left-wing Socialist, with a fine and subtle mind. One could discuss anything with him sensibly, religion, politics, even sexual ethics, up to a point. But paedophilia? Well, when he found out about my involvement with PIE his shock was so complete as to render him literally speechless. When I eventually persuaded him to at least try to apply his brain to the subject, it was as though some blocking factor had got into his mental circuitry, as though to stay on the subject for more than a few seconds caused overheating and blown fuses all over his head – with the result that his usually fine mind just wouldn't function, but kept turning out apoplectic gibberish.

Despite these reactions, we were determined to conduct a no-holds-barred press campaign. We wouldn't temper our message with soothing reassurances. We would go in hard with the view that a fundamental, radical change in attitudes to sexuality and towards children in general was called for. The starker the message, the less it could be ignored and the more likely it was to start a real public debate. We recognized that we would have to sail through stormy waters, through shock/horror headlines, perhaps through sackings of our public representatives from their jobs and other forms of intimidation.

But at the same time we would win a measure of respect for our sincerity, and with the dying down of the initial revulsion, people would ask themselves why we had put so much at risk, and would begin to consider our ideas properly. In a few years time, when the trendy liberals had caught up, the really smart thing for the fashionable Hampstead hostess would be to gently drop into the conversation some tidbit about her little Julian's 'sensitive' relationship with film director *X* or famous artist *Y*!

I say we felt a strong press campaign was necessary. What I really mean is Keith Hose and myself, for although the PIE Executive Committee was behind us, the will to go public was primarily ours and there were those in the group who would have liked us to be a secret society. My own stance was perhaps the most aggressively outgoing of anyone in PIE. I was eager to launch the group in a big way, and thought I knew how to do so, simply by using press relations 'know-how' with which I had grown familiar during my work as a reporter with the *Leicester Mercury* and later as a Press Officer with the Open University. It would just be a mechanical matter, I supposed, of keeping the media informed as to what we were up to – of generating newsworthy events and then plugging them by means of press releases, press conferences and so on.

That's how it worked in my job with the Open University, and it was as easy as falling off a log: I only had to pick up a phone to Fleet Street, or knock out a few

paragraphs on the latest development in University policy and, hey presto!, there it was in the next day's *Guardian* or *Daily Telegraph*, or in *The Times* Higher Education Supplement on a Friday. The affairs of a large public body like the OU are automatically news – news which the media not only cannot ignore, but in which they are avidly interested.

The same applies to some extent in relation to many campaigning groups, as long as the group in question is seen as 'worthy' and basic goodwill exists between it and the newspaper. But PIE was an entirely different kettle of fish. By the time I came to be heavily involved with PIE, there had already been some publicity about us in *The Guardian*, but a press release on our all-important age of consent policy document had gone down like the proverbial concrete parachute. Throughout the whole of 1976, and the first half of the following year, PIE was hardly mentioned in the press at all. A press release on the substantial findings of a survey of our own membership was sent to something like 120 media outlets, including the Press Association. It was given coverage in *New Society* and *The Doctor*, plus a few 'alternative' press sources and the odd provincial here and there, but otherwise nothing. During this period I also pursued, with great energy but no success whatever, a number of TV documentary programmes, such as *World In Action*, *Tonight* and *This Week*, each of which said a programme was 'a real possibility', or words to that effect, but in fact did nothing.

Predictably, many would feel, the only time we surfaced publicly was when someone was putting the knife into us, either to prevent us from doing something positive or to libel us. An example of the former occurred when Mary Whitehouse publicly attacked our association with the Albany Trust. We had developed a contact with the prestigious and 'respectable' Albany Trust, which had been founded many years before, with heavyweight backing, for the counselling of sexual minorities, as a result of the MIND Sexual Minorities Workshop attended by Keith Hose. In 1976 PIE, and PAL, had been invited to help with the writing of a short question-and-answer format booklet on paedophilia which was to have been published by the Trust.

PIE responded with some enthusiasm – not surprisingly, allies being few and far between – and during the course of that year Keith Hose and I, together with a nominee of the Albany Trust, spent what felt like a vast number of committee hours in thrashing out the detailed text of the booklet. When we had done so, we went over the whole business again, in a further series of meetings with some of the Trust's senior personnel. Towards the end of these it looked to us as though the Trust was going to accept the fruit of our joint labours, though this was never ratified by a full meeting of the Trustees.

Then, just at the critical moment, enter the *deus ex machina*, Mary Whitehouse. A story appeared in the press in which she claimed that public funds were being used indirectly to subsidize 'paedophile groups'. She said that the Albany Trust – partly government-grant-supported – was itself 'supporting' such groups.

She had got her facts wrong, of course, but I don't suppose that bothered her too much. We didn't receive a penny from the Trust. On the contrary, Keith and I were giving our services free, so in that sense we were supporting them. But the damage had been done. Under pressure, the Trust couldn't stand by its dangerous connection with us, no matter how slight and tenacious that connection was. The Trustees decided not to go ahead with the publication of the booklet, giving as their public reason that it wasn't sufficiently 'objective'. Even that didn't let them off the hook: a whole year later the issue was raised in Parliament by Sir Bernard Braine, and despite being told by the then Home Office Minister, Brynmor John, that he had no evidence that public money was going to PIE, the issue rumbled on well into 1978 in a succession of accusations and denials in the letters columns of *The Guardian* and *The Times*.

The boot went in again in May 1977 when there appeared, out of the blue, a five-

column *Guardian* piece in the regular Tom Crabtree column. It too was dreadful. But at least it was all about PIE, and on the hopeful young starlet's principle that 'all publicity is good publicity' we were not that downhearted, and hoped it might lead to other things. These did not transpire; on the contrary, it began to dawn on us that the 'liberal' *Guardian* was prepared to use foul means – as well as fair – against us. In the article, Crabtree had half-implied that we were a furtive, shady group by suggesting that PIE should 'come out into the open and argue their case where everybody can hear it' – as if that wasn't exactly what we were bursting for a chance to do! At the same time, no one in PIE was approached for a comment before the article appeared, and afterwards, despite several letters and phone calls to the paper, we were denied any reply whatever. We took the case to the Press Council and, I am delighted to say, won.

But by the time the judgement had been given some publicity, in December 1977, all this seemed small beer: in the meantime there were countless press reports about us, many of which we might have successfully taken to the Press Council. And a dozen or so organizations and individuals whom we might have successfully sued, for libel and breach of contract, if we had had the money and the time to do so.

For in the late summer of 1977 everything finally came together. One decisive spark set off the most almighty conflagration, fuelled by a series of coincidental events – events which some people, hilariously crediting me with a genius I don't possess, thought I had cunningly arranged; or at least, they supposed that I had engineered all the publicity associated with them in a great and devious plan. Individually, the events seem unremarkable, and are in fact only four in number: a public meeting, which PIE proposed to hold in a London hotel; the annual conference of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE), at Nottingham; a British Psychological Society (BPS) conference at Swansea, on the theme 'Love and Attraction'; and, finally, a PIE public meeting held at the Conway Hall, London.

The first of these, planned for 1 September, was arranged by PIE's Secretary, 'David'. For a long time he had been in correspondence with one of the best-known continental experts on paedophilia, the Dutch lawyer Dr Edward Brongersma, a man of considerable eminence, as reflected in the fact that he was a member of the Senate of the Netherlands. David knew that Dr Brongersma was due to be in England in September, for a tour which was scheduled to include giving the opening address to the CHE conference, leading a workshop on paedophilia at that same conference, and attending the BPS conference. Would Dr Brongersma be so kind, David asked, as to address a public meeting held by PIE while he was in England?

Dr Brongersma was prepared to be so kind. Accordingly, a hotel was booked for the event, tickets were printed (admission £1.50), something like a hundred and fifty complimentary tickets were sent to the press and to organizations we hoped would be interested, like MIND (the national association for mental health) and the National Council for Civil Liberties. The event was intended primarily for the press, rather than the general public, though we did advertise it in *Time Out* and *A New Society*. So we were well pleased when we had a number of RSVP slips sent back to us, telling us that certain national papers – including the *Times* – would be in attendance.

In the event, it didn't happen like that. The press tickets, together with an explanatory news release, had gone out well in advance – giving plenty of time for Gerard Kemp, of the *Daily Telegraph*, to interview David, the outcome being an article of two whole columns. This appeared on August 23 – a day which marked the most decisive turning point in PIE's short history.

Typically, (to give the necessary impression of shadiness) we were introduced as a group 'which calls itself the Paedophile Information Exchange; we were 'a comparatively shadowy organization', operating from an accommodation address. The

article went into great detail about our operating methods and sources of finance – dragging up the Albany Trust connection in a way which was to give Mary Whitehouse more fuel for her attack.

In fairness, the rest of the article was unexceptionable, with quite a lot of space given to David's views. In fact, I have a sneaky suspicion that Kemp, and not a few *Telegraph* readers, may have been rather taken aback, and even impressed, by what they learned of David's background: seventy-three years of age, MA Wadham College, Oxford, served in the Welsh Guards, and also a one-time colonial administrator (1926-8 Assistant District Commissioner, Nigeria). Here was no callow student politician, no ten-a-penny revolutionary half-way to a sociology degree! No, this was a man of some distinction, albeit rather unconventional.

But I digress. The significance of Kemp's article, unlike any that had appeared in *The Guardian*, or elsewhere, was that it was noticed. The whole of Fleet Street read it, and every paper decided there was an angle they either could, or positively had to, follow up. The following day, on holiday from my job at the Open University, I spent nearly fifteen hours answering calls from the national and provincial press, and almost as long the day after that.

The result was explosive. *The Daily Mirror* ran the story as a front page lead, with the headline 'CHILDREN IN SEX SHOCKER', with appropriately horrified comments from the likes of Rhodes Boyson, and an editorial in which we were urged to 'crawl back under the stone' from which we came. Other papers carried reports in a similar vein, and some began to exert pressure on the management of the hotel which had accepted our booking for September 1. The pressure came not only from the press. Once the hotel had been identified, the manager had to contend with threats to smash windows and disrupt the meeting. Some even threatened to burn the place down and kill the manager if the meeting went ahead, according to hotel staff I talked to.

Not surprisingly, the hotel decided not to allow us to go ahead with the meeting, and the next morning's *Daily Mirror* rejoiced in the fact with another front-page lead story headed 'BOOTED OUT!' They reported that the staff had threatened to strike in protest against the meeting and that £1,500 pounds worth of bookings had been cancelled.

Faced with ejection from the hotel, Keith Hose and I made a number of vain attempts to find an alternative venue for the meeting by September 1 – which was now only a week away. Having put ourselves firmly in the focus of public attention, we were desperately anxious for the meeting to go ahead as planned; otherwise, we figured, it would look as though we were running away, as though, at the first sign of trouble, we were crawling back under our stone. Obviously, it would be next to impossible to get a hotel to take us in the atmosphere that had developed. The original hotel had tried to offload us by contacting a number of college venues on our behalf, but without success. For a few days, incredibly, it looked as though we might find sanctuary in the most traditional, yet unlikely, source: the Church. For we had managed to get hold of a sympathetic vicar who was prepared to loan us his church hall.

Thus, by the time the *Sunday Mirror* published on 28 August, it was reported that PIE was 'hell-bent on airing their revolting views in public', and that we had a new meeting place, kept secret in order to forestall trouble. 'Whatever the obstacle,' I was quoted as saying, 'we are absolutely determined to hold our first-ever public meeting.' We were as good as our word, too, though it took a week or two longer than we had planned, when our secret venue failed to materialize – unfortunately, the vicar in question took fright when, after seeking the advice of the Bishop of Truro, he was advised against giving us the hall. <sup>5</sup>



That *Sunday Mirror* story brought a new element into our relations with the press. For the first time there was an open attempt to victimize PIE's leaders by hounding them out of their jobs. This is what the *Mirror* editorial said:

'The Open University, which employs Mr. Tom O'Carroll, says that what any staff member does in his own time is his own business. However, it DOES expect to discuss Mr. O'Carroll's paedophile activities with him on his return from holiday. We say the Open University should go further. IT SHOULD FIRE HIM IMMEDIATELY.'

Why? No reason given. The impression one gets is that the *Sunday Mirror* wanted to see something dreadful happen to me to placate the righteous wrath of the people, and that this sentiment had nothing whatever to do with my capacity to do my job. Incidentally, I don't know whether the *Sunday Mirror* staff belong to the National Union of Journalists, but if they do, it appears they haven't read their own union's code of professional conduct. This states, *inter alia*, that 'A journalist shall not originate material which encourages discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed, gender or *sexual orientation*' (my italics).

A slightly, but only slightly, more veiled attack against PIE's Treasurer, 'Charles', had been made just a couple of days before, in the *Daily Telegraph*, when it proclaimed 'Child sex man is youth group administrator'. The *Telegraph* had taken the trouble to track him down to his job, which was as chief administrator of a young people's welfare organization which was heavily dependent on local authority funding, and money from the Gulbenkian Foundation.

Bravely, the management council of this organization did not at once collapse in the face of media pressure, though they were terribly vulnerable to the withdrawal of financial support. Initially, their reaction was to require Charles to resign from the treasurership of PIE – which he did – but they refused to accept his proffered resignation from his job. Not long afterwards, however, the pressures on them became too much to withstand, and in order to prevent the entire organization from collapsing, which would have caused twelve redundancies, to say nothing of the end of the group's work, Charles offered his resignation again. This time it was gratefully accepted – so that Charles was left looking for another job, and PIE, at a time when all kinds of pressures were on us, was left looking for another Treasurer: a seat so hot that no one was keen to jump into it.

Important as this was, the pace at the time was so hectic that I had no time at all to even think about it, for within hours of the *Telegraph* story appearing about Charles, I was due to register at the Nottingham CHE conference, and I had plenty to do in those hours. I don't propose to relate in detail the story of this conference, though there is a wealth of anecdote I could go into. It was at Nottingham, for instance, that I first encountered large numbers of gays speaking in angry solidarity against the way PIE had been hounded by the press – and against the pressures brought by commercial interests, such as hotel managements, against the discussion of paedophilia (the planned CHE workshop on paedophilia had to be moved out of the Albany Hotel, Nottingham, to humbler premises, when owners Trust House Forte took exception to it).

On the weekend after the Nottingham conference, we saw for the first time some good, positive publicity: The *Observer* did a long piece on Brongersma, under the heading 'Britain "intolerant" on child sex'. The *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Telegraph* also carried excellent articles. Could it be, I asked myself, that our strategy was paying off already: shock/horror, followed immediately by more serious coverage in the 'quality' press? The euphoria turned out to be short lived, but part of the reason for it was also the fact that some of those articles had been generated by an unlikely new

ally: a Dominican priest by the name of Father Michael Ingram. He it was behind *The Sunday Times* headline 'Priest to reveal startling facts on paedophilia', and *The Sunday Telegraph's* 'Sex offenders "can aid child"'.

I had known Father Michael for some time. I had received his hospitality at the Holy Cross Priory, Leicester, where he lived, and I had read his study of ninety-one man-boy paedophilic relationships – a study which had come out of his work as a child psychologist at St Thomas's Hospital, London, and with the Leicester Family Service Unit. I had long known that, although he did not defend paedophilia as such, he knew that a lot of relationships were loving ones, in which more good was done than harm. What's more, I knew that his study, giving substance to these views, had not been published, and I felt that it deserved to be – which is why I arranged for him to attend the Swansea conference on Love and Attraction, to give his paper there.

The whole thing had been arranged many months in advance. Father Michael had at one time contemplated publishing his paper in the United States – where incidentally, his views on sexuality appear to be held in more esteem than in Britain, Harvard University having invited him to give a series of lectures on sexual ethics – but readily accepted my suggestion that Swansea would provide a good platform. Accordingly, I contacted the conference organizers on his behalf, and they accepted his paper without demur.

They accepted my registration too: I had applied to attend simply to find out what the academic world had to say about child sexuality and paedophilia, which were both on the agenda. I welcomed media interest in the conference, not because I was seeking publicity for PIE, as was alleged, but because I hoped attention would be drawn to the Ingram paper and to several others which I had reason to suppose would take a radical line (as they did). In the event, the conference organizers were panicked – by the heavy involvement of the press – into turning the presentation of the paedophilia/child sexuality papers into a secret session. At least some of the academics presenting these papers agreed with the decision, and perhaps they were right, for by this time the mood of the press was such as to guarantee that its involvement would generate only heat, and no light.

Swansea turned out to be a catalogue of disasters, memorable chiefly for the fact that porters, kitchen staff and other auxiliary workers at the conference threatened to go on strike if I were allowed to stay, and for the disgraceful fact that the University, who were hosts to the conference, gave way to their demands – disgraceful, that is, not because I am anybody special, but because of the University's unwillingness to back the principle of free academic discussion, a principle which ought to be dear to its corporate heart. The conference did at least produce one lighter moment, however, as reported in *Medical News* a couple of weeks later by Eric Trimmer.<sup>6</sup> He wrote:

'Up in the Press room at the university one day, I met a very charming and lively little boy who was passing his time making paper aeroplanes out of abstracts of delegates' papers

'I asked his father, one of the Department of Psychology, if he was hiding him up there in case Tom O'Carroll was about.

' "Good God no, man," he replied in an accent straight out of Milk Wood, "he's such a little horror at home I'm hoping they do meet up. Might cure both of them."

By the time I left Swansea (without meeting the Little Horror, unfortunately!) PIE had managed to arrange a fairly secure venue in which to hold the meeting that had been intended for the London hotel. This was scheduled for Monday, 19 September, 1977, at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London.

Red Lion Square. An evocative name, which had come to be almost synonymous with political violence. It had been the scene of famous clashes between extreme right and extreme left, and in 1974 a demonstrator had died there. Would our humble little gathering be as fraught, I wondered. There was now not the remotest chance of it going ahead quietly. PIE was big news, and our new venue had already been given out in all the national newspapers. (one thing we could be sure of: in the event of violence, it wouldn't be a contest between the big battalions, of left versus right. For who would be the heavy infantry fighting for PIE? We could expect plenty against us. Lots of brave souls would enlist in what they knew would be the winning side. But what of our side? Were we going to go like lambs to the slaughter? The thought wasn't exactly attractive.

Keith Hose and myself – for we had been making most of the emergency decisions when it had not been possible to consult the whole Executive Committee – had from the outset been firm in our resolution not to be bullied out of the decision to hold a public meeting. We wanted to show that we were not going to crawl back under our stone, as the *Daily Mirror* had suggested, and that because our views were deeply and strongly felt, we would stick to our right to put them forward even in the face of physical danger.

At the same time, I couldn't help wondering whether in making an appeal to 'Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood ...' we would be relying on atavistic sentiments which had no place in our philosophy. Did we have to prove our courage when we really wanted to show that paedophiles are often kind and gentle, loving and non-violent people? There's too much courage, I told myself. A little less of the 'masculine' virtues wouldn't do the world any harm, as the hippies and the draft dodgers and other 'unpatriotic' Americans had shown at the time of Vietnam.

In the event, we decided to stick to our guns, and went ahead with extensive support – for which we shall be eternally grateful – from GLF veterans who agreed to act as stewards for the meeting. Richard McCance, Vice Chairperson of CHE at the time of writing, was one of our number. This is how he reported the meeting.

'Linking arms, marching abreast, women and men together, we succeeded in entering the hall, despite flower, fruit and veg., despite being clawed and spat at, kicked and punched by many of the hundred or so who awaited our arrival like starved dogs. Over the next hour about another hundred staggered in, like the battle-scarred reporter from the *Daily Telegraph*, his face bleeding, raked down by fingernails. Others arrived with torn clothing. Those who tried to enter on their own were led away bleeding from head wounds to a police van. There were only four policemen on duty at this time.

'As the meeting began, I looked at the growing crowd (now several hundred strong) and recognized from previous demos several prominent National Front thugs and sympathizers – male and female – including Dereck Day, who was featured in the *Observer* article on the National Front.

'In the hall we tried to listen attentively to the PIE speakers but the constant strains of "kill them, kill them" from the crowd, who were beating on the door, made this difficult. I was frightened and could not concentrate properly.

'The meeting ended half an hour earlier than planned in a bid to surprise the mob outside. Those who could run fast were advised to form ranks. The elderly and several disabled had to wait for further instructions. It all felt like abandoning ship into a cruel sea.

'Many of us were set upon individually by the crowd. A Jewish brother, his glasses stamped on, was kicked and punched. The police, now about thirty in number, reacted lethargically.

'Survival instincts are strong. I removed my gay badge and masqueraded as a het when challenged by a potential assailant. They seemed surprised that most of us were not old men in faded brown raincoats. We were all sorts – gay, paedophile, straight, press people, academics, coming to listen to what PIE had to say.

'As I was pummelled and kicked I appealed to a policeman for help, but I was told to "Get the hell out of here". Eventually three of us managed to stop a passing cab and escape.' <sup>z</sup>

To my amazement, the meeting itself went just about as well as possible in the circumstances. We had been worried about disruption inside the hall, with people storming the platform – after all, this was a public meeting, to which any of the mob outside could have come if they paid their money and showed no obvious signs of being hell-bent on disruption. But as everyone coming into the hall was being labelled by the crowd as a 'pervert' – including people who were trying to get into a regular Bible Class in another part of the building – there may have been an understandable reluctance to do so.

Among the hundred-plus people in attendance, there was not so much as a single heckler, and the press was probably the largest single category. In lieu of Dr Brongersma as our guest speaker, we had lined up a mystery man (Father Ingram), who had been announced to the press simply as 'a child psychologist'. In the event, he could not turn up either, as his church superiors forbade him to do so at the last minute. But having got so far, Keith and I had been determined not to let the little matter of having no guest speaker stop us from holding our meeting. Father Ingram was there in spirit, as they say, and, more tangibly, he had given us a copy of his intended speech.

Keith chaired the meeting and I read out the speech, which in itself was so moderate, reasonable and academic that it was hard to believe it could bear any relationship at all to all the turmoil around us. Even the questions afterwards were strangely academic, and totally unreal in the midst of all the shouting and banging on the doors. The next morning the papers gave the meeting full coverage – after their own fashion. In most of them it was the lead story of the day, but significantly it was the righteous indignation of 'ordinary mums' that was played up, and not the slightest attention was paid to the discussion in the hall.

What has been the permanent impact of those four weeks, if any? Before then, 'child molesters' had always been considered the lowest-of-the-low. Now, the same thing was felt about 'paedophiles' – to most people it was just a new word for an old vice, without any understanding having been gained. In view of the nature of the press coverage, particularly in the *Daily Mirror* and the other 'populars', this was hardly surprising: it was just a catalogue of revulsion and hate, without any discussion of ideas. Now I am not quite so naive as to suppose there would have been: I was always well aware, and so were we all in PIE, that news stories cannot be used as a means of persuasion towards accepting unfamiliar, and perhaps difficult, new concepts.

But we had hoped to achieve something just by getting people to realize that radical paedophiles exist, and that they have a philosophy – which the more thoughtful of them might ultimately read about in a book by Tom O'Carroll, or whoever. And this realization could only be achieved, by a tiny, limited-resources group like ours, not by careful, patient, secretive, high-level lobbying, but by speaking out loud in public and simply having to ride out the inevitable initial period of hysteria. I believe the strategy

was right, but in the heat of the moment grave tactical errors were made, for which I personally must take the blame.

These are best exemplified in an interview I gave with the *Daily Mirror* in which I was quoted as saying, 'We would abolish the age of consent completely and intercourse would be allowed at all ages.' This was taking uncompromising openness too far by half. I should have insisted on the non-coital nature of most consenting paedophilic relations, and the almost exclusive involvement of children in higher age groups, and left it at that. I did say these things, but inevitably they never saw the light of day in view of my more sensational offerings.

I half knew they wouldn't too, but again the irrational crept into things: as a breed, we paedophiles had been hiding and running for so long that when it came to the point of having a chance to put two fingers up to the *Daily Mirror* – to say, in effect, 'Print what you bloody well like in your stupid rag and we'll have the serious debate elsewhere' – the temptation was overwhelming.

The popular press apart, the impact of those weeks has been far from entirely negative. Since then, PIE has been asked to provide speakers for undergraduate meetings at many universities, including the Oxford Union,<sup>8</sup> plus postgraduate meetings of trainee social workers, gay group gatherings, and even the annual conference of the Rational Association of Youth Clubs. In addition, written requests for information have come from many parts of the world, usually from academic psychologists and sociologists, and sometimes from serious journalists. It has fallen on me to fulfil many of the speaking engagements, and I have been pleasantly surprised by the usually unhysterical and sometimes even sympathetic reaction to what I have had to say. While there continues to be an undercurrent of this sort, I cannot see the future as entirely black.

But reactions such as these have not been the ones to catch the eye. More prominent has been the 'child porn' scare campaign and, in mid 1978, concerted action against PIE by the *News of the World* and the police. I do not propose to go into the passing of the Child Protection Act: as a saga of sensationalism and hysteria it is worth a volume on its own. All I want to express here is a sense of regret that we in PIE arguably gave the issue a head of political steam which might otherwise have been difficult to generate.

It is also worth pointing out that in at least one disgraceful instance, the media's determination to get 'a good story' meant that they were not above exploiting children themselves. I refer to a BBC *Tonight* programme, which I have reason to believe was damaging to one child in a way which his involvement in erotic pictures had never been. In the context of their big exposé, the programme showed on screen the faces of children who had been photographed. Reviewing the programme in *The Observer*, W. Stephen Gilbert rightly asked:

'How responsible is it to show the faces of those photographed kids on TV? Might it not be more damaging to expose them in this way than only to the customers of "dirty book" shops?'

I am confident that the answer is an emphatic 'yes'. I know the man who photographed the children referred to in that *Tonight* programme. I have interviewed him at length about his relationship with the boys, and secured a second opinion from someone who knew them. The man, a former teacher, had a number of excellent references attesting to his professional ability – particularly his capacity for dealing with difficult and delinquent youngsters, who seemed to benefit from his commitment to them: a commitment often not shared by the parents. The mother of one of his boys was a prostitute, whose time seemed to be more or less entirely taken up by her clients.

He, by contrast, gave the lad a lot of time and a lot of love. But of course, the laws of libel, combined with the conventional wisdom that the paedophile, or the 'pornographer', must be the 'baddy', would prevent anything critical being said by *Tonight*, or by the media generally, about the 'distraught' parents who find their children have been involved in 'child porn'. Half the time the parents couldn't give a damn, but of course they couldn't admit that to the TV people, and it is something the TV people wouldn't want to know anyway, because it would ruin their preconceived 'angle'.

And what of the children, liberated from their awful enslavement in the porn world when the TV come along? Word reached me that at least one of those who had been shown on the *Tonight* programme was recognized by his schoolmates. Since then, he has been persecuted at school, and both he and his parents have been taunted so much by neighbours that the family have had to move out of the district. Does that make the 'frank and fearless' documentary-makers happy, as they go off on their next assignment?

In addition to the interest expressed in PIE by the universities and so on, and in addition to the furore over 'child porn', which we unwittingly helped to fuel, there was a third major reaction to PIE's campaigning, though it appeared to be entirely detached from the events of 1977. This made itself felt on one devastating weekend in June 1978, when we not only fell victim to a Sunday press exposé that was in many ways a repeat of the attack on PAL three years earlier – this time almost an entire three pages of the *News of the World*, in which seven members were named, with photographs – but in addition several of our committee members' homes (including my own) were raided by the police and dozens of our files were taken away.

We have reason to believe that there had been cooperation between the *News of the World* and the police, and in the case of the former the timing of the coup is explicable enough; the exposé was based on a report of our annual general meeting, held the week before. The meeting had been infiltrated by an agent from the *News of the World*, who had become a PIE member some months before; a photographer had been posted outside the building.

We suspect there was another reason for police involvement at this time. Ostensibly, the police in question, from the Obscene Publications Squad, were interested, as you might expect, in obscene publications. But we think it may be more than coincidental that only a few weeks before the raid PIE at last published the booklet on paedophilia which had been turned down by the Albany Trust. Copies of the booklet had been mailed to every member of the House of Commons, plus a range of assorted bishops and barons, including the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Like so many things, it seemed a good idea at the time; but now I believe this particular exercise was such a red flag to so many important Parliamentary bulls that political pressure on the police to 'knobble' us became irresistible. This was a point I put to one of the detectives working on the case, in what later turned out to be a full-scale inquiry into all of PIE's activities, culminating in a 60,000 word report submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the prosecution of PIE activists for 'conspiracy to corrupt public morals': the detective in question said that action had been initiated at a high level, and that he was not in a position to know the thinking behind it – but, significantly, he showed no reluctance to agree that I could be right.

This review of the way in which PIE has been received in the twenty-six months (at the time of writing) following the events of August-September 1977 leaves many questions for PIE about the future. At times, it has seemed that no matter what we try to do we face huge, and usually insuperable, obstacles; we are now no nearer than ever to being able to hold a meeting – a simple task which practically every organization, from the pub darts team to the United Nations, takes for granted –

without the threat of violent disruption or 'exposure' in the press. Above all for many months the impending conspiracy trial is bound to ensure a major diversion of attention and energy away from the pursuance of our objectives as an organization.

Faced with these problems, we have sometimes found it a morale-boosting exercise to look at what is happening to radical paedophile groups abroad – for PIE is by no means unique – and in the context of this book, the experience of such groups in two countries, the United States and Holland, is of particular interest.

[\[Skip to Chapter 13 - A Wider Perspective\]](#)...[\[Skip to Contents\]](#)

## Ch 12 - Notes and References

1. Stuart Henry and David Robinson, *Self-Help and Health: Mutual Aid for Modern Problems*, Martin Robertson, London, 1977. [^](#)
2. *New Society*, 22 June, 1978, p. 656. [^](#)
3. By this time, September 1977, I was Chairperson of PIE. [^](#)
4. I'm not suggesting that all such sympathy is misplaced: the torture of captured terrorists by the state, for instance, is indefensible in my view. [^](#)
5. The vicar was not from the Truro diocese. The Bishop of Truro happened to be the Chairman of a relevant Church of England committee. [^](#)
6. *Medical News*, 21 September, 1977. [^](#)
7. Richard McCance, 'National Front attack P.I.E.', *Broadsheet*, October 1977, p. 3. [^](#)
8. This was a personal invitation from the President of the Oxford Union. Unfortunately, the meeting never took place, as the President in question took fright when his decision ran into criticism and he withdrew the invitation. [^](#)

[\[Skip to Chapter 13 - A Wider Perspective\]](#)

## A Wider Perspective

On the face of it, the United States might be thought infertile ground in which to nourish sexual change in the coming years: while in the UK we have only one Mary Whitehouse, the Americans have two – Anita 'Save Our Children' Bryant and Judianne 'Child Porn' Densen-Gerber – plus a formidable supporting cast of moral crusaders,; backed by mainstream news media, often as prurient and sensationalistic as the *News of the World*.

Judianne Densen-Gerber, it will be recalled, coined the phrase 'spiritual murder' in the *Chicago Tribune* 'child porn' exposé.<sup>1</sup> Anita Bryant is chiefly famed for her attack on legislation designed to prevent discrimination against homosexuals in employment – especially against homosexual teachers in schools – whence the slogan 'Save Our Children',<sup>2</sup> with which in 1977 she won her most notable victory, Miami in Florida. There, as in a number of other states, legislation against discrimination had been introduced in the previous few years. In Miami's Dade County, Anita Bryant succeeded in reversing the trend by invoking a constitutional provision for a local referendum on the issue, the referendum then being fought in a campaign which relied on a straightforward appeal to prejudice and fear. A similar campaign in California (the 'Proposition Six' campaign), held later, was defeated but not without gays, to say nothing of paedophiles, being put on the defensive everywhere.

The backlash styled itself as 'pro-family', and at its heart was detestation of all lifestyles that refused to conform with the traditional roles of women and men in society, as well as of non-traditional erotic behaviour – it was thus anti-feminist as well as anti-gay. The easy targets, however, were those at the margin of public acceptability, particularly paedophiles, and most of all – because of the dreaded homosexuality factor – male boy-lovers. Boy-love came to be for Anita Bryant what communism was to Joe McCarthy. Like McCarthy, the new witch-hunters talked about a 'national conspiracy' and citizens were urged to be ever vigilant to track down and expose the conspirators. One organization, the Interfaith Committee against Child Molesters, is alleged to have offered a 'Community Action Kit.' People have been urged to 'shadow' their neighbours, friends, and even relatives, and to 'turn them in' if they are suspected of sexual 'irregularities'. Guidelines are apparently being published on what to look for in nailing a boy-lover. If a man is frequently seen with a lad not related to him, then that man is patently up to no good and has to be investigated.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the most extreme manifestation of this backlash to date has been action taken by the Oklahoma legislature where, amidst scenes of coarse humour and the brandishing of penknives, a bill has been passed<sup>4</sup> which provides for the castration of child molesters. Also, a woman politician in the State of Maine has proposed a new law which would involve the 'castration' of both men and women convicted of sex offences against children. Punishment for male offenders would involve surgical removal of the nerves within the penis that control a man's ability to have an erection, thus impeding his sexuality far more effectively than traditional castration. Women would have their ovaries removed. This would not prevent a woman from having sex, but a lack of hormones produced by the ovaries would cause her vagina to lose its elasticity, to 'dry up', making intercourse less satisfactory and possibly painful.

At the same time, the word 'backlash' is of great significance here, for there have been in the United States extensive attitudinal changes to react against – changes which made equal rights for homosexuals acceptable to some state legislatures in the first place. At the fringe of such charges, largely beyond the everyday attentions of



mainstream politics, there has long existed a rich variety of counter-cultural activity, such as the sexually uninhibited communes studied by Johnston and Deisher, and the new politics of childhood generated by the children's rights movement.

A variety of organizations have also pioneered new thinking on children's sexuality and child-adult sex, particularly 'transgenerational' sex within loosely-knit families. First in the field was the René Guyon Society, formed in 1962 by seven couples at a lecture on sexuality at a Los Angeles hotel. The society was named after a French psychologist who died in Thailand in 1961. Guyon wrote treatises which, echoing Reich, asserted that many of the ills of civilization are products of distorted sexuality. It was from Guyon that the society took its motto, 'Sex by eight, or else it's too late'. Prior to the 'child porn' scare, a spokesman for the society, Tim O'Hare, was able to use erotic photographs of children to good effect, in an interview with a gay paper called *Newsweek*, which wrote:

'O'Hare has ... gathered a large collection of photographs showing young boys and girls in various states of intimacy with other children and adults. It is obvious that they enjoy it.' <sup>5</sup>

Also on the West Coast, in San Diego, is the Childhood Sensuality Circle, which issued the Child's Sexual Bill of Rights presented earlier. Prominent in this group is a retired social worker, Valida Davila, whose views have much in common with those of Dr. Alayne Yates. The circle works in close contact with the Sexual Freedom League, a group comprising a variety of sexual 'swingers', advocates of 'open marriages', nudists and others (these being heavily overlapping categories). The importance of nudism for children is understood by the League, one of whose co-founders, Jefferson Poland, has said they 'should be completely spared the morbid sickness of hiding their beautiful bodies like some sort of carrion deemed too foul for the light of day'.<sup>6</sup> Most 'swingers' would agree with him, and while some may continue to have reservations about child-adult sex, there is no doubt that they strongly approve of giving a positive emphasis to their children's sexuality.<sup>7</sup>

Astonishingly perhaps, the United States has never had an organization like PIE, with a membership of avowed paedophiles, campaigning for the acceptance of consensual sex between girls or boys and women or men. Until its demise during the 'backlash', the monthly magazine *Better Life* provided the nearest equivalent to a paedophile forum, though it focused entirely on the interests of men attracted to boys – with a strong emphasis, it must be added, on the fostering of responsibility within boy-man relationships.<sup>8</sup>

These activities have all been fairly precarious and some – like *Better Life* itself – have been swept out of existence in the recent tide of reaction. But already there are signs of a fightback. The Bryants and Densen-Gerbers are not having it all their own way, as the defeat of Proposition Six has shown.

And across the nation on the Eastern seaboard, another tussle has produced some surprises. It all started in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1977, when the nationwide crackdown on sexual nonconformity was at its height. In the 'Revere' case (named after the district involved) twenty-four men were indicted on charges related to a supposed 'sex ring' in which boys aged between nine and fifteen were said to have taken part.<sup>9</sup>

The story gave rise to such distorted sensationalism in the media that local gays swiftly formed an active civil rights group to combat what threatened to become a new Salem. The group became known as the Boston-Boise Committee, named after a similar witch-hunt in Boise, Idaho, in 1955, about which John Gerassi wrote in *The Boys of Boise*.

The Committee soon grew to over five hundred members in the Boston area, including fifty sponsor organizations ranging from churches to legal and even some straight radical and liberal groups. One of its first actions was to go to law over the use of a 'hotline' that had been set up by the District Attorney responsible for the Revere charges in order to solicit gossip from the general public about men seen associating with boys. Helped by the Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, the case was won. and the 'hotline' withdrawn.

Despite the risk of being tarred with the 'child molester' brush, support for the Boston-Boise Committee from the gay community was strong from the outset. Then, in March 1977, Boston police struck again, this time to arrest 102 men at the Boston Public Library on a variety of charges, mostly of open and gross lewdness and prostitution – apparently the library area was an established 'cruising' place among gays, with no connection to the boy-love scene. These new arrests were seen as even more evidence of intent to persecute gays. and encouraged yet more support for the Committee.

One highlight of the Committee's campaign was a fund-raising meeting addressed by author Gore Vidal, and attended by the head of the American Trial Lawyers' Association and several Senators, plus an audience of 1,500. The Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Superior court, who also had the temerity to go along, was suspended from the bench immediately after the meeting, and then impeached before the Supreme Court.

Tom Reeves, one of the leading figures of the Boston-Boise committee, called it 'Probably one of the most ludicrous incidents in the always ludicrous annals of US history ', but at least he was able to add, in a positive vein:

'The Chief Justice and his wife are now friends of ours – they spoke radical words at a rally we held against Anita Bryant, to which we drew about 2,000. <sup>10</sup>

Reeves himself is a totally 'out' paedophile, having been on many TV and radio shows as a boy-lover, and frequently mentioned on the front page of the Boston newspapers. He told me:

'My neighbours in a working-class Irish neighbourhood know about us – and they can see the boys coming and going – yet we seem to be better friends with them all .... I am a professor in a college and the faculty there have elected me President since all the notoriety .... The Student Government voted confidence in me last year when several conservative newspapers called for my ouster [sic]. I have not had one nasty incident, and my students and colleagues at work are very warm.' <sup>11</sup>

The success of the Boston-Boise Committee was soon followed up. A Boston conference on Man/Boy Love and the Age of Consent, in December 1978, was attended by two hundred people from fifteen states and three Canadian provinces. Out of it grew an organization called the North American Man/Boy Love Association, which was soon active in promoting a further conference, in March 1979, aimed, amongst other things, at consciousness-raising on some of the issues feminists have put forward in connection with boy-love.

In the teeth of a massive, nationwide crusade against paedophiles, how has it been possible for the Boston-Boise Committee and NAMBLA to be so vigorous and open? How, is it they could turn the tables on a District Attorney who was bent on a witch-hunt? <sup>12</sup> How did they tempt a Superior Court judge into supporting such a radical cause? How was it that even some churches offered their support? Despite the fear of

persecution, how on earth was it possible to get 1,500 people to turn up at a fund-raising meeting *and* avoid the violence that attended PIE's debacle at the Conway Hall?

A major part of the answer is that the Boston-Boise Committee was strictly a civil liberties group, which, although it did oppose the age of consent laws in Massachusetts, took no stand on paedophilia as such. It was also far less uncompromising than PIE in that the emphasis to its public approach was consistently on the sexuality of *adolescent* boys, of *youths*, rather than children – a fact which probably enabled it to maintain support within the gay community which might otherwise have been frightened off.

Another element perhaps lies deeper in the nature of American society, for I suspect that despite the readily whipped-up hysteria, there is also in the USA a willingness to consider new ideas that is almost wholly lacking in Britain: even the mainstream news media allowed themselves to be influenced positively by the Boston-Boise Committee's campaign, and began to run some open-minded articles.

Even in the context of the 'child porn' furore, for example, it was possible for the *Los Angeles Times* to carry an enlightened article by an anthropologist, Richard L. Currier, which included the following:

'Kid porn touched a nerve in American society, and the plain truth is that *nobody* likes it, aside from the people who are buying and selling the merchandise itself. But why has there been this shock wave of public nausea? Why this deep and almost instantaneous revulsion from a public that once tolerated with only minimal discomfort the wholesale slaughter of South-east Asian peasants – countless thousands of whom were children – as an act of official government policy.

'... Kid porn is particularly disturbing partly because it shows us that children will readily respond to sexual advances and even become active participants in sexual encounters. Like any human potential, the reality of juvenile sexuality can be tapped for evil as well as for good. The pornographers are simply forcing us to confront the fact that this sexual potential in children really exists.

'... The point is that Western society has undergone a revolution in sexual values, but it has tried to apply it exclusively to adults, and this rather arbitrary restriction is simply not working. How do we explain to our kids that while sex is natural, healthy, normal and good, they should refrain from enjoying it until they grow up and leave home?

More to the point, how do we explain it to ourselves?' <sup>13</sup>

Despite everything, despite the ferocity of the Bryant/Densen-Gerber phenomenon, I feel mildly encouraged by North America's openness to ideas – and when I say that, I include Canada, where early in 1979 a major court victory was won by the gay journal *Body Politic* (through a prosecution appeal is pending at the time of this writing), which had faced a charge in connection with a long, serious article called 'Men Loving Boys Loving Men', which was said to be 'immoral, indecent or scurrilous'. The charge was dismissed by a judge who spoke of *Body Politic* as 'a serious journal of news and opinion' and the article as 'a plea for understanding' which 'forcefully argues in favour of a particular attitude of non-condemnation of paedophiles'.

Significantly, although *Body Politic* at first took a hammering from the mainstream press in Toronto for running the article, attitudes did begin to change. By February

1979, the *Toronto Globe* ran a full (broadsheet) page article entitled *The Paedophile: the myth and the reality*,<sup>14</sup> which presented a much fairer and better-informed picture than had been seen before.

If there are small glimmers of encouragement to be detected in North America, there is by comparison a great, warm glow radiating from Holland. It has already been noted that such unlikely groups as the Netherlands Order of Attorneys and the Protestant Union for Child Protection believe that in the case of consensual child-adult sexual activity, prosecution of the adult is not justified.

It cannot yet be said, however, that most Dutch people approve of paedophilia, or that they have no misgivings about it:<sup>15</sup> their culture has too many roots in common with ours for such a carefree outlook. What appears to have happened is that in recent years the climate has been right for a more liberal approach to be taken to a variety of social issues (a mood which briefly prevailed in the UK during the 1960s), and that in the context of this new climate the discussion of paedophilia was subsumed at a critical phase within a *generally* more relaxed approach to sexuality – an approach which a year or two ago enabled Rotterdam city council, for instance, seriously to contemplate the building of a plush 'Eros Centre', for the improved accommodation of brothels, shops for the sale of erotica, live sex shows, and the like.

Historical accident may have helped the Dutch paedophile cause. Whereas PIE stuck its neck out in an era of conservative reaction and became an isolated target, progress in Holland has been promoted by a large and prestigious umbrella organization, the NVSH, (Netherlands Association for Sexual Reform). The early work of NVSH was in the field of family planning, but it gradually took a variety of sexual liberation causes under its wing, including the campaign for children's sexual rights and, in 1971, paedophilia.<sup>16</sup> A popular organization, it reached a maximum membership of nearly a quarter of a million a few years ago and has had a strong influence on public attitudes towards sex.

There are now paedophile groups under the auspices of NVSH in a dozen Dutch towns. They are publicly visible, too, not under ground: I know of one paedophile who has put up a big, pro-paedophile poster in the front window, just like an election poster, regardless of what the neighbours might think. He has not had his windows smashed.

The Rotterdam group, and others, hold regular open meetings, to which paedophiles are not afraid to take their child lovers, despite the fact that press and police are free to attend, and sometimes do.

A national newspaper, *The Hague Post*, has run a lengthy feature article in which paedophiles *and their young lovers* were interviewed about their relationship.<sup>17</sup> A TV programme, watched by two million viewers,<sup>18</sup> feature a Protestant minister with positive views on paedophilia, plus a enlightened mother and a medical student who felt he had received enormous benefit from a relationship he had had with a man from the age of twelve.<sup>19</sup>

Feedback from the public did not indicate outrage at the programme. Dr Brongersma, who was one of the principle contributors, told me that, on the contrary, reaction was favourable from the entire press (Communist to Roman Catholic) and from the general public.

There has even been a march through the streets, with placards, banners and, yes, children too, to protest at The Hague's Palace of Justice, during the appeal court hearing in 1978 of a thirty-four-year-old social worker who had been given a three month sentence (one month suspended) for his third conviction on charges relating to sex with boys under sixteen. The sentence itself was lenient by UK standards,

especially as the offence in question concerned not one, but three boys, aged fourteen and fifteen.

But the demonstrators were calling for nothing less than the abolition of 'Article 247' of the Dutch penal code – the article forbidding indecency with children under sixteen. Interestingly enough, the Netherlands had no age of consent laws for many years, between the Napoleonic occupation and the passing of this article in 1886, and there is no evidence whatsoever that children were exploited more in this period than afterwards, when they became officially 'protected'.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the case is that on appeal, the prosecutor, the Attorney General of the Netherlands, appeared to have some sympathy for the defendant. Instead of backing the lower court's sentence, he himself decided that the offence was 'not so enormously serious'<sup>20</sup> and he called for a complete suspension of the sentence, which was granted by the court plus probation and a fine.

After the trial signatures were collected for a petition to the Minister of Justice, calling for an end to all Dutch legislation on sexual morals. One of those gathering signatures was Gerald Zwerus, Chairperson of the National Paedophile Workgroup of the NVSH, and himself a teacher. Zwerus' campaigning does not appear to have affected his position as a teacher, and he has even been allowed to speak at schools on the subject. Following one such talk, an initiative was taken by some pupils to collect signatures for the petition.

Since then, there has been a further petition calling for the abolition of the age of consent, presented to the Government in June 1979, and signed by the Trade Union of Teachers, the Union of Probation Officers, the Protestant Trade Union of School Teachers, and the Protestant Union for the Family; this last-mentioned group recently published a completely-positive pamphlet on paedophilia, replacing an earlier one in which the emphasis was on 'child molesters'.

Evidently this group, concerned as it is with the family, does not see paedophilia as a threat to family life. What's more, the largest single party in Parliament, Labour, along with smaller ones, supports abolition, and if the Liberals join them (they are presently studying the matter) there will be a Parliamentary majority.

The Dutch psychologist Dr Frits Bernard related to me an amusing and true story which captures the mood of the Netherlands:

A German paedophile, wracked by guilt over his attraction to little girls, knew no one in his home town in whom he could confide. Then he heard that a 'World Sex Fair' was to be held in Rotterdam, and he thought that there he might be able to meet and talk to someone from a paedophile group.

Accordingly, he went along, and discovered that there was indeed an exhibition stand run by volunteers from the local NVSH group. He approached what he took to be the two volunteers on duty and tentatively struck up a conversation with them. They both listened sympathetically to him, and in the relaxed atmosphere he soon found himself pouring out a great many secrets about his relationships with little girls. To his surprise and pleasure neither of his newly-found confidantes seemed in the least bit shocked, or disapproving.

Then one of them had to go.

'Sorry to leave,' he said, 'but I am a policeman and I have to go on duty.'

It was some time before the other man, who really was an NVSH

volunteer, could convince the shocked German that he was not going to be arrested, or that details of his confession would not be released to the police back in his home town. What the NVSH man knew, and the German did not, was that generally speaking the police in Rotterdam do not now go out of their way to concern themselves with under-age sex. Although the age of consent is sixteen, for both homosexual and heterosexual acts, no action is taken unless a complaint is made, when the child is a girl between twelve and sixteen.

In the case of boys in this age range being involved with men, the police still sometimes take a dim view. Dr Brongersma has cited a case as recent as 1974 in which the police used highly dubious methods to extract a 'confession' from a thirteen-year-old boy.<sup>21</sup> But things are changing, as the police, like others, become better educated. In the TV programme referred to above, the Protestant minister, Pastor Klammer spoke about this process of enlightenment:

'I have occasionally given courses, lessons to police personnel in authority, and when this subject comes up you realize that even amongst the police the thinking is changing. Their first reaction is "I'll hang those guys if I ever get my hands on them!" That sort of tough guy reaction. But then one of the other officers always disagrees, and we spend the whole time talking about these matters. At the start I sometimes say, "I think I'd better sit by the exit because of your violent reactions." But then you notice that a great many policemen are horrified by their own actions against paedophiles, and parents and children.'<sup>22</sup>

At a symposium held in March 1977 by the National Centre for Public Mental Hygiene, the Chief of the Rotterdam Vice Squad announced that in every case they now handle parents are warned of the sometimes disastrous consequences of police investigations for the child, and are left free to decide if they wish to see their child put through such an ordeal.

Even in those cases where action is taken by the police, it is a matter for the discretion of the local public prosecutor whether court action will be taken. The question prosecutors ask themselves these days in all cases, not just sexual ones, is not 'Why *shouldn't* I prosecute?' but 'Why *should* I prosecute?' In other words, 'Are there really good reasons for believing that a prosecution is necessary?' Often, it is decided that prosecution would do more harm than good, and the case is dropped.

Dr Brongersma, himself a lawyer, told me of one such case, which he took on in 1977. A teacher had been having a sexual relationship with a young boy (not from his own school). He was foolish enough to give the boy an expensive present. The parents' suspicion was aroused, and he was soon found out. When the police visited the teacher's house, they found photographs which showed him and the boy engaged in erotic acts together – and evidence does not come much more conclusive than that.

Yet what happened afterwards would be quite inconceivable in England. Dr Brongersma made representations to the public prosecutor. He pointed out that the teacher had not abused his professional standing, since the boy had not been one of his pupils. It was also a first offence, after some years in the teaching profession. The relationship in question had been struck up during the summer holidays. During the term-time, the teacher was happy to be amongst children at his school and, feeling involved with them, rather than lonely and alienated from children, it was possible to contain his erotic feelings. If he were to be prosecuted, argued Dr Brongersma, he would probably lose his job. He would no longer have those long term-times of

constructive involvement with children. Instead, he would be demoralized. And would have nothing to lose by trying ever more desperately to seek out casual sex with boys.

The public prosecutor accepted Dr Brongersma's arguments. He invited the teacher along to his office, told him that he did not intend to prosecute, and let him go with a friendly warning that in the event of a repetition he would be obliged to do so. He would not necessarily go to prison, even then, the prosecutor said, but he would certainly lose his job.

From 1967 to 1972, the number of prosecutions in the Netherlands under Article 247 went down by 55 per cent. Generally speaking, sentences are much lighter than they used to be, too. The maximum for indecent assault is still severe (six years' imprisonment) but more often sentences are of months, rather than years, if there is any sentence at all.

The idea that a paedophile may be *excused* or *tolerated* in his misdemeanours in this way is not one that either Dr Brongersma or I in any way regard as ideal. A consensual relationship involves no offence, so it should not be necessary to make excuses for it. But the spirit of tolerance in the Dutch system has developed in an increasingly questioning atmosphere. Not only is it now seen as inappropriate to try and bludgeon paedophiles into conformity by savage prison sentences, but other misconceived ideas – such as the view that paedophiles are 'sick' – are finding it hard to survive in a society which is becoming increasingly *educated*, thanks to the NVSH and the numerous influential publications of such figures as Dr Bernard and Dr Brongersma.

What are the limits, one might ask, of this public educability? Will the penal laws against consensual paedophilia soon be swept away in Holland as more and more influential people and institutions come to be aware of their negative impact? It would appear not. Not yet, at any rate. At the time of writing, it seems that the Governmental Advisory Commission on Moral Legislation (the Melai Commission), which has been deliberating, *inter alia*, the future of Article 247, is going to take a fairly conservative line; even in the most liberal country in Europe, there is some hanging back from total acceptance of paedophilia, some feeling that tolerance is alright, but positive encouragement is not.

My guess is that paedophilia will never be accepted, in Holland or elsewhere, by any society in which paedophiles are singled out as a minority – a minority which, like the homosexual *minority*, cannot help but seem bizarre and alien to even the most understanding onlookers, when the focus of attention is on the peculiar sexual orientation of the 'problem' group involved.

Ultimately, it is no use fighting for paedophile liberation, though this is a stage which has to be worked through. Sexual liberation can only mean something valuable to most people in the context of their own lives, and the lives of their own children, not the lives of some minority group with whom they are asked to sympathize. This fact is recognized by those sexually progressive groups in America who encourage cross-generational sensuality within the family, in a way that comes across as 'natural' and non-threatening, to average parents.

It is not to be overlooked that the dominant culture in most of the Western world is rediscovering corporality. Whereas in the past, the greatest importance was attached in parent-child relations to the inculcation of *virtues*, such as self-control and cleanliness, the emphasis is now towards the child's more immediate *needs*, such as the need for attention and security. In this context, the erotic affinity that exists between members of a family is bound to manifest itself, despite everything. Simple questions arise (of a kind that would never have arisen previously), such as 'Should

parents and children have a bath together?" The trend is clearly apparent in letters to women's magazines, educational publications, radio programmes and so on.<sup>23</sup> Seen in this way, 'paedophilia' doesn't exist independently: it is subsumed into a much wider awakening of the wish to emancipate affectivity in all human relationships.

Will it ever be possible for a 'civilized' society to totally rediscover affectivity? Will we be able to recreate the best, most sexually guilt-free elements of 'primitive' cultures? Why were those elements lost in the first place? Is there something in advanced societies *necessarily* inimical to sexual shame and guilt falling below a certain irreducible plateau level? Are we doomed to a regime of more or less continuous sexual repression, punctuated by occasional, half-hearted bouts of 'permissiveness'? Are our social and sexual roles inevitably distorted, as Engels and others have suggested,<sup>24</sup> by the very nature of our economic system? Or is there something about the late twentieth century – the technological revolution, which promises fundamental changes in the way we live – that suggests possibilities for a completely new beginning, for a new approach to social and sexual relations?

As I said in the last chapter, we in PIE, did not have any 'revolutionary dialectic' worked out. We did not *know* what was going to happen, even within the narrow confines of our own society, in either the distant or near future. We just did what was in us to do. And I personally find it as hard now as I did two or three years ago to tell whether in Britain attitudes are progressing, or regressing, or neither.

The limited perspective of the last ten years or so tells us very little: we know that in the early part of the 1970s Gay Lib was a fresh and flourishing phenomenon, which sprouted all sorts of sexually radical blooms – including PAL and PIE – in an atmosphere relatively free from police, or other official, coercion.

Since then, the outraged forces of reaction have girded up their loins in the battle to see to it that everyone else should do the same. The populist appeal of Mrs. Whitehouse, filling the 'morality' gap left by an established Church that is no longer sure of anything very much, had succeeded in holding in check not only any advances that might have been made by PIE, but by the gay movement generally, and there has been an even more general reaction against 'permissiveness', against 'teenage promiscuity', against the 'soft' or 'do-gooder' attitude to the treatment of criminals, against 'slack discipline' and 'falling standards' in schools.

This wider revival of conservative values, in which there has been a central emphasis in the rhetoric of the major political parties on 'the family', may be seen as a reaction against the 'Jenkinsite' view of society that flourished in the reforming 1960s, (which saw the liberalization of the abortion laws and the abolition of hanging, as well as the reform of the law against homosexuality). In the view of the then Home Secretary Roy Jenkins, the 'permissive' society was a civilized society, based on rationality, tolerance and intellectual understanding – not unlike Dutch society now.

The limited perspective of a few years confines one to a superficial analysis. One witnesses a 'reaction' against a fashion that has gone before it, without understanding the forces that make any one fashion prevail at a particular time. Stepping back a little, to view the last century or so as a whole, it becomes possible to assess the impact of a variety of long-range factors influencing society generally: the changing structure of the family in response to economic pressures; the challenges that 'science' has made to religious belief and codes of morality; even perhaps, the response of the British people to national decline and the loss of their empire.

Factors such as the last mentioned, oblige us to then extend our horizons yet again, to compare attitudes towards sexuality as they have developed in other advanced countries, like the United States and Holland in the same period. Do there appear to be underlying factors in common? Can we see any coherent reasons why societies



have a particular attitude at a particular time'. If we take a perspective as wide as this, we will find that history affords us some examples of spectacular and unexpected changes in direction: Germany, the country which had the world's best established sexual reform movement in the early part of this century, where the work of Dr Magnus Hirschfield promised to lead the world to a new rationality about homosexual and other aberrant behaviour, was soon in the grip of a massive persecution of homosexuals.

It is hardly coincidental that persecution went hand in hand with the arrival of a regime that was totally oppressive and autocratic: political oppression cannot exist without sexual oppression.

Or can it? An assertion like that more or less obligates us to examine the entire history of the world, including the debauchery of Rome, Persia, the sexual philosophy of the Greeks. and a huge range of anthropological data. It is an exercise of Olympian proportions, which I do not propose to add to my already difficult task in this volume. But in briefly reviewing the scope of the problem. I hope I may have provided the basis for an excuse to refrain from crystal-ball gazing

While I cannot prophesy, it is given to us all to hope, and to work, however falteringly, for better things. I hope, first of all, that it will have been apparent from these pages that the guiding star I have followed in writing them is the same that shines for a diversity of sexual radicals: the vision is not merely the narrow one of 'paedophile liberation', but of liberating the *positive* potential that resides in everyone's body – a liberation which, if effected in the years of infancy and childhood, tends not towards the selfish sexual anarchy and brutalism that some fear, but, on the contrary, towards a loving, and, as we have seen from Stoller, a less *pervverted* attitude to sexual relations and possibly to life as a whole.

Until we stop alienating children from their bodies, by cruelly binding them in swaddling clothes of shame, they will be bound to grow up deformed, as surely as if, like the Chinese of old, we were to bind their feet.

Before the apostles of despair begin to write off the possibility of change, before they suggest, as they always do, that a radical approach is 'unrealistic', let us reflect on the fact that children's feet are no longer bound – and on the fact that children are now but rarely subjected to terror, once commonplace, based on the lie that masturbation causes insanity or blindness. In a rapidly changing world, advances in sexual attitudes are not only possible, but are going on around and amongst us all the time.

In this context, I believe it is not a wildly unrealistic dream to work for the achievement of the types of law reform proposed in this book. There is nothing 'PIE in the sky' about PIE's proposals. They could actually work in a society not so unlike our own, given a slight shift towards a more reforming climate such as Holland has experienced, and they could obviate an immense amount of suffering for children and paedophiles alike.

Law reform of this nature is of course only a limited objective, and it may be thought a rather parochial one at that, in so far as it could be considered of direct concern only to that minority of children who become involved in a child-adult sexual relationship, rather than all children. Society may come to accept such reform in a pragmatic spirit, recognizing that the intervention of the criminal law often does more harm than good, while continuing to have reservations about sexual freedom for children as an idea.

What of the higher aspirations? What of the achievement of a society in which children are genuinely treated as human beings, with rights, including sexual rights; in which it is fully accepted that they are not mere chattels, at the arbitrary disposal of their parents; in which people of all ages and both sexes have full self-determination

to engage in consensual sexual activity; in which there is no oppression of any sexual minorities, providing that they do not infringe the rights of others; in which, for that matter, love and peace at last gain the elusive ascendancy over perversion and war for which all people of good will pray, in their own fashion? All these things are plainly ideals rather than completely attainable targets. But the fact that they are not easily realized is no reason for relinquishing the perpetual struggle to do so – for failure to at least define and pursue an ideal can lead only to cynicism and despair.

As a mere sweating, overworked labourer on the New Jerusalem building project, I can offer no authoritative prophesies, but I could do worse than leaving you with the words of one who was the visionary that I am not:

*Children of the future age  
Reading this indignant page  
Know that in a former time  
Love, Sweet love! was thought a crime.* <sup>25</sup>

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## Ch 13 - Notes and References

1. In that same exposé, the *Chicago Tribune* (16 May, 1977) stated that the boy-lovers' newsletter *Hermes* sold for ten dollars an issue, with 5,000 copies being sold per issue, and that the newsletter grossed more than 300,000 dollars per year, *none* of which was anywhere near the truth. The publication's subscription rate was \$7.50 for six issues, and it had a mailing list of only 800, with approximately another 100 copies being sold through another source. It came out bimonthly. Thus it would have grossed around 6,750 dollars per year -less than one-fortieth of the figure claimed. Exaggeration of this order casts serious doubt on claims of a 'multi-million dollar child porn industry'. (Information from D. W. Nichols, interviewed by Daniel Tsang, *Midwest Gay Academic Journal*, Vol. I, No.3, 1978, p. 15.) <sup>^</sup>
2. Implicit in the campaign is the assumption that homosexuals are more likely to 'molest' children than heterosexuals. In fact, far more child-adult sexual encounters, whether molestations or not, are heterosexual in nature. <sup>^</sup>
3. Nichols, op. cit., p. 14. <sup>^</sup>
4. According to sources which had not, however, been confirmed at the time of going to press. So far as I know, the penalty has not yet been imposed by a court, but if any such order is made, it is almost certain to be challenged as unconstitutional, on the grounds that it is a 'cruel or unusual' punishment. <sup>^</sup>
5. Douglas Sarff, 'Sex begins at a very early age', *Newsweek*, 11 December, 1975, pp. 3-5. <sup>^</sup>
6. Quoted in Pasle-Green and Haynes, op. cit., p. 52. <sup>^</sup>
7. A study of the San Francisco 'swinging scene' by James R. Smith and Lynn G. Smith showed for instance that swingers appear unanimous in regarding masturbation as a proper and important part of childhood. Quoted in E. Brecker, *The .Sex Researchers*, Panther, London, 1972, p. 255ff. <sup>^</sup>
8. 'Responsibility' in this context does not mean the adult refraining from sex with the child. Rather, the emphasis was placed on regard for a boy's feelings, and rights. The ethics of boy-love have been. approached from a positive point of view in Eglington, op. cit., and in D. W. Nichols, *Toward a Perspective for Boy-Lovers*, Editorial Creative Products, Lansing, Michigan, 1976. <sup>^</sup>

9. One of the Revere defendants – a psychiatrist – was convicted early in 1979. Ironically, he was ordered to undergo psychiatric treatment. [^](#)

10. Personal communication, 30 January, 1979. [^](#)

11. Ibid. [^](#)

12. At the time of going to press, news has just reached me that the tables were turned even more dramatically than I had supposed. Tom Reeves writes: 'The old District Attorney, who had brought the charges, was soundly defeated, partly due to the work of gay people. The new DA, after election, appeared on TV with me and said that no man need fear prison for sex involving a teenager unless coercion was involved -every single one of the Revere 24 went free; only a few were found guilty or pleaded guilty, and they received light probation. Such sentences were previously unheard of in Massachusetts, for sexual crimes of this sort. To show the impact of our work, the one man who was sentenced *before* our committee was formed is now serving a life sentence. We are attempting to publicize his plight and get him released. Many people -including gay people -had warned us that open gay work for so-called child molesters would backfire. It did not. It gave us strength.' (Personal communication, 8 October, 1979.) [^](#)

13. R. L. Currier, *Los Angeles Times*, 18 September, 1977. [^](#)

14. *Toronto Globe*, 17 February, 1979, article by David Lancashire. [^](#)

15. In mid 1976 a survey was undertaken by the Institute for Preventive and Social Psychiatry at Erasmus University, Rotterdam. The question asked was: 'Imagine that you learned that someone you knew liked to play with children and took obvious sexual pleasure in handling and caressing them. Would you, then, allow this person to take care of your children in the role of a teacher?' Thirteen per cent answered 'Yes', 9 per cent had no opinion, and 77 per cent answered 'No'. To the question, 'Would you allow such a person to act as a baby-sitter for your child?', 4 per cent answered 'Yes', 89 per cent 'No', and 5 per cent had no opinion. Further, 68 per cent would: dissuade their children from marrying such a person and 44 per cent would not accept him as a next-door neighbour.

While this response is broadly negative, it is perhaps remarkable that more than one person in five (22 per cent) was either prepared to allow a paedophile to teach her/his own children, or had no discernible negative view. In Britain, I suspect the figure would be more like one in twenty-five, or less. (Survey reported in *The Hague Post*, 18 March, 1978. English translation in *Magpie* 12, December 1978.) [^](#)

16. There has been a long build-up to this development. Work towards the paedophile emancipation had started in Holland in the 1950s, with the growth of the *Enclave* movement, which brought paedophiles into correspondence with each other, both inside and outside Holland. In 1958 *Enclave* also became an international publishing house specifically orientated towards paedophile books. See Frits Bernard, 'Paedophile liberation in Holland', *Pan*, Vol. 1, No.1, 1979, pp. 15-18. [^](#)

17. *The Hague Post*, op. cit. [^](#)

18. *Groot Uur U* ('Your Big Hour'), broadcast on *VARA* Television, Amsterdam, 30 October, 1978. [^](#)

19. He had been a neglected child, brought up in an institution. His adult lover drew him out of a period of apathy and isolation, he said, and gave him consistent encouragement with his schoolwork, which helped in his eventual achievement of a university place. [^](#)

20. Reported in *Algemeen Dagblad*, 5 May, 1978. [^](#)

21. See p. 67. [^](#) [NOTE: Use the following link to access the reference, then manually return to this footnote by searching for “See p. 67” (without quotes) LINK=[^](#)]

22. *Groot Uur U.* [^](#)

23. I am indebted for this paragraph to the Belgian paedophile group, *Studiegroep Pedofilie.* [^](#)

24. F. Engels, *The Origins of the Family*, Charles Kerr, Chicago, 1902. [^](#)

25. William Blake, 'A Little Girl Lost'. [^](#)

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## Further reading:

This page has been created by '[lanthe](#)' for the 1998 web edition of *Paedophilia – The Radical Case*.

### Contemporary and subsequent history of PIE and PAL:

Campaign Against Public Morals. *Paedophilia and Public Morals*. London. CAPM, 1980.

(Pamphlet. Reproduces news-cuttings about the PIE arrests, along with analysis of where PIE tactics went wrong, and details of the defence campaign run by anarchists – the only section of the Left which had the courage to mount one! The title refers to the antiquated 17th Century charge of "Conspiracy to corrupt public morals" used to prosecute PIE Executive Committee members)

Moody, R. *Indecent Assault*. London. *Peace News*, 1980.

(Account of the trial and police harassment of a PIE campaigner, who was later acquitted of false charges of 'indecent assault' – still available from the Prinz Eisenherz address in Berlin)

Plummer, K. Chapter 8, "The paedophile's progress; a view from below", in: Taylor, B. (ed.) *Perspectives On Paedophilia*. London. Batsford, 1981. ISBN 07134 37189.

(Positive overview of paedophile attempts to set up self-help groups/organisations, in Britain and elsewhere)

Wilson, G. and Cox, D. *The Child-Lovers – a study of paedophilia in society*. London. Peter Owen, 1983. ISBN 0 7206 0603 9

(Study of answers from a questionnaire answered by 77 PIE members in Britain in the late 1970s. Also includes case-studies. Very interesting, but although non-condemnatory it is not wholly positive, and is by psychologists. Available from the Prinz Eisenherz address in Berlin)

Smith, S.A. 'PIE – from 1980 until its demise in 1985' in: Middleton, Warren (Ed.) *The Betrayal of Youth – radical perspectives on childhood sexuality, intergenerational sex, and the social oppression of children and young people*. London. CL Publications, 1986. (pp. 215-245)

(Also reprinted in NAMBLA Journal Number 8, 1992)

## USA

For an excellent take on the contemporaneous panics happening in North America at the time this book was written, see the two seminal essays in:

Califa, Pat. *Public Sex – essays on the culture of radical sex*. Cleis Press, 1994. ISBN 930416891.

### Some subsequent books of interest:

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Tsang, D. (Ed.) *The Age Taboo – gay male sexuality, power and consent*. London. Gay Men's Press, 1981. (In USA by Alyson, Boston, 1981)

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# Websites of Interest

(This section added by the Editor of this special *e-book* edition)

Don't forget to visit:

<http://www.ipce.info>

... for additional accurate, reliable and factual information on pedophilia and BoyLove.

At Ipce.info you may read about the peer-reviewed (and replicated - the study was done *again* by others to confirm its accuracy) Rind *et al* meta-analysis of the studies which show that *little or no harm is normally experienced by young people - especially boys - engaging in unforced adult/child sexual relationships.*

In plain English, when young people have sex with older people, it *does not* usually hurt the young people.

Sex which does not involve force is *almost always harmless.*

The study is titled:

- A meta-analytic examination of assumed properties of child sexual abuse using college samples. Rind, B., Tromovitch, P., & Bauserman, R.

While on that site, be sure to also see information about the following:

- *The Trauma Myth - The truth about the sexual abuse of children—and its aftermath* by Susan Clancy,
- *Harmful to Minors: The Perils of Protecting Children from Sex* by Judith Levine,
- *Sex Without Shame: Encouraging the Child's Healthy Sexual Development* by Alayne Yates,
- *The Man They Called a Monster* by Paul Wilson
- “Social response to age-gap sex involving minors: Empirical, historical, cross-cultural, and cross-species considerations” by Bruce Rind.
- “Hebephilia as Mental Disorder? A Historical, Cross-Cultural, Sociological, Cross-Species, Non-Clinical Empirical, and Evolutionary Review” by Bruce Rind and Richard Yuill

...and last-but-not-least

- *Paedophilia: The Radical Case* by Tom O'Carroll.

And much, much more...

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## Other Websites of interest:

- Male Homosexual Attraction to Minors Information Center  
<http://www.mhamic.org/>  
*Alternative source for above:*  
<http://web.archive.org/web/20090317025454/http://www.mhamic.org/index.htm>
- Newgon's informative site:  
<http://newgon.com/wiki/>
- Site of retired university professor Dr. Gerald Jones, Ph.D:  
<http://exitinterview.biz/>
- A massive collection of links for BoyLovers and Boylove information:  
<http://www.boylinks.net/>
- Many excellent materials for downloading:  
<http://snifferdogonline.com/reports/>
- SafeHaven Foundation Press - Many good books and other materials on BoyLove:  
<http://www.shfri.net/>
- “Institute for Sexology,” Humbolt-Universität of Berlin  
(The finest web-site in the world about human sexuality!)  
<http://www2.hhu-berlin.de/sexology/>

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