

***I p c e***

# Newsletter

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Ipce is a forum for people who are engaged in scholarly discussion about the understanding and emancipation of mutual relationships between children or adolescents and adults.

In this context, these relationships are intended to be viewed from an unbiased, non-judgmental perspective and in relation to the human rights of both the young and adult partners.

Ipce meets once every one or two years in a different country, publishes a newsletter and a web site, co-ordinates the (electronic) exchange of texts and keeps an archive of specific written publications.

## **Introduction**

Here you are: the 15th electronically published Ipce Newsletter.

Note that the real newsletter is on line at < <http://www.ipce.org/> > in the section "What is new?" This is the paper version for those who cannot reach the Internet.

Those who want to understand and emancipate mutual relationships between children and adolescents and adults (see here above), need an insight into how these relationships are viewed in modern society: not always from an unbiased non-judgmental view, not always in relation to the human rights of both the young and adult partners (see again here above).

Yet, there are authors who want to contribute to a rational discussion, or who want to explain how these matters are developed and interpreted. Those wanting some insights should read these authors' publications. This Newsletter gives more or less an overview of some of them.

The December 2002 issue of Archives of Sexual Behavior is an honest attempt to have a rational discussion. Richard Green's paper proposes that we no longer regard pedophilia as a mental distortion and that it should be removed from the DSM list of such distortions. Gunter Schmidt's essay points out that many pedophiles and asks us to respect them. Twenty one peer comments follow, after which Green and Schmidt reply. The first article of the Newsletter gives a report - and a short comment.

Rod Downey published "The Moralist", in effect a love affair about such a relationship, and the problems it encounters.

Judith Levine has written "Harmful to Minors", a book that is highly critical of the (U.S.) policy to 'protect children from sex', a policy which in itself is perilous for those same 'children', especially teenagers. We present a review and a lecture about this book.

We have written earlier about Moral Panic, Philip Jenkins' book. Jenkins gives us the history of the former century in which the moral panic gradually grew to what it is nowadays, an irrational fear of the wrong phenomena. We present a review by Bruce Rind, written in the same issue of Archives of Sexual Behavior.

Two authors follow with an essay, one about the banning of gay related books in Australia, the other about the banning of nice and beauty clothes for modern boys and men out of fear of to be seen as a beauty, a gay.

As is customary, a list of documents closes this Newsletter; about a petition in Germany (not resulting in a law), a (won) court case in Australia, and more.

**Frans**

## **Is pedophilia a mental disorder?**

### **Discussion in *Archives of Sexual Behavior***

Report by Frans Gieles

The December 2002 issue is a *special* about pedophilia.

Richard Green argues for the removal of pedophilia from the DSM, the famous handbook that defines psychiatric illnesses, among which is pedophilia, albeit under certain conditions. Gunter Schmidt says that not all pedophiles are *per se* unscrupulous molesters; instead pedophiles have a problem of conscience, a moral dilemma, and they deserve respect rather than condemnation.

There follow *peer comments* from 21 authors, after which Green and Schmidt reply.

Ipce members should buy and read this special issue.

In this Newsletter, I give the following report.

### **Green's article**

Richard Green was very actively involved thirty years ago in the removal of homosexuality from the DSM list of mental disorders. As is known, homosexuality was successfully removed in the early seventies. Now he argues for the removal of pedophilia from the same list.

Green makes a distinction (also made by the Rind team – and by me) between three kinds of discussions or discourses: the legal one, the moral one, and the medical one. To give my own examples: starting a war may be legally correct, - IMHO it is morally incorrect - but it is not a medical illness. Smoking hash or drinking alcohol before a certain age may be legally wrong, but one might see no moral objections; a doctor might counter-advise it, but it is no illness *per se*. A pedophile who activates his or her desires into action may infringe the law; one may discuss if it is morally right or wrong, but it is another kind of question if her or his actions are the outcome of a mental disorder. Moreover: does a pedophile who inhibits her or his behavior within any legal or moral limits, still have a mental disorder through his feelings *per se*? No, says Green.

Green starts by presenting *cross-cultural arguments*. Intimacy between generations is spread worldwide among so many cultures and in so many eras, that one cannot reasonably argue that all those people have a mental disorder. They may have different cultural customs and opinions. Additionally many primates have these kinds of customs.-

The next group of arguments refers to personality characteristics of people with pedophilic feelings. Here we have a sampling problem, because most research has been performed on clinical and legal samples. If problematic characteristics are found, the choice of the sample, as well as the clinical or legal situation might cause these problems.

“Cause and effect here is arguable between social consequences of pedophilia and psychiatric problems promoting pedophilia”.

Green refers to a study of a non-legal and non-clinical sample:

A unique study at the Institute of Psychiatry of the Maudsley Hospital in London evaluated non-prisoner, non-patient pedophiles (Wilson & Cox, 1983). The men were

obtained through the *Paedophile Information Exchange*. The psychometric instrument utilized, it being a Maudsley study, was the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ). The EPQ is scored on three main axes of personality: extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. There is also a "Lie Scale" to assess "faking good." A total of 77 pedophiles were studied, with an age range of 20 - 60. They were compared with 400 controls.

Pedophiles were significantly more introverted. Psychoticism, or thought disorder, was slightly elevated but not to a pathological level. Occupational groups with similar scores to the pedophiles are doctors and architects. Neuroticism scores were slightly higher than controls, but not clinically abnormal. Pedophile scores were similar to actors and students. The lie scales did not differ. Wilson and Cox (1983) concluded that

"... the most striking thing about these results is how normal the paedophiles appear to be according to their scores on these major personality dimensions - particularly the two that are clinically relevant [neuroticism and psychoticism]. ... introversion ... in itself is not usually thought of as pathological." (p. 57)

Another researcher, Howitt (1998), reached a similar conclusion:

"The possibility of finding a simple personality profile that differentiates pedophiles from other men has appeared increasingly unrealistic as the research and clinical base has widened. Simplistic notions such as social inadequacy driving men to sex with children become unviable as highly socially skilled pedophiles are found" (p. 44).

Another argument for the normality of pedophilic feelings are the percentages of 'normal people' who are said to feel attracted to children (about 20 to 25%), and who react with penile erection to 'pedophilic' stimuli: more the 25%. One cannot reasonably argue that about one quarter of the population is mentally ill.

The last group of arguments refers to the DSM itself: its inconsistencies.

So what then of the pedophile who does not act on the fantasies or urges with a child? Where does the DSM leave us? In Wonderland. If a person does not act on the fantasies or urges of pedophilia, he is not a pedophile. A person not distressed over the urges or fantasies and who just repeatedly masturbates to them has no disorder. But a person who is not distressed over them and has sexual contact with a child does have a mental disorder. The APA position with its DSM catalogue is logically incoherent.

Confronted with the paradox that in contrast to other conditions designated a mental disorder, such as with persons who hand-wash to the point of bleeding and can't touch a door knob, or who are harassed by voices threatening their personal destruction, many pedophiles are not distressed by their erotic interest, aside from the fear of incarceration. Some celebrate their interests, organize politically, and publish magazines or books.

So to deal with this paradox, DSM dug itself deep into a logical ditch. If a person's erotic fantasies are primarily of children and masturbatory imagined partners are children, that person does not have a mental illness, without more. Never mind these mental processes, those readers of DSM who are psychiatrists and treaters of the disordered mind.

These people with these fantasies do not have a mental disease unless that person translates thought into action. This turns psychiatry on its head. Certainly a society can set

rules on sexual conduct and proscribe child-adult sex and invoke sanctions for transgressors. But that is the province of the law and the penal system. The DSM should not provide psychiatry with jurisdiction over an act any more than it should provide the law with jurisdiction over a thought.

Green concludes:

Sexual arousal patterns to children are subjectively reported and physiologically demonstrable in a substantial minority of "normal" people. Historically, they have been common and accepted in varying cultures at varying times. This does not mean that they must be accepted culturally and legally today. The question is: Do they constitute a mental illness? Not unless we declare a lot of people in many cultures and in much of the past to be mentally ill. And certainly not by the criteria of DSM.

### **Gunter Schmidt's article**

Schmidt argues for a reasonable discussion based on facts, not on moral prejudices or emotional indignation. Also Schmidt refers to the different kinds of discussions or discourses that are involved here.

However, the tendency to polarize and over-generalize is strong. Both, those inclined to de-emphasize the severity of the problem and those bent upon blowing it out of all proportion, distort the reality of children who are drawn into sexual contact with adults, colonizing their experience, their memories, and their own assessments.

It seems to me that one of the prerequisites for a more reasonable discussion is to disentangle the confusion of moral and clinical discourses. This requires that we argue,

- from a moral standpoint, where morals are at issue and,
- from a clinical point of view, when it comes to traumatizing effects.

Above all, we should not clothe moral judgments in the garb of clinical "expertocratic" language.

I shall preface my attempt to disentangle the confusion of these two levels of discourse [...].

There are *two* discourses going on now concerning this subject:

[...] we find ourselves in the midst of the moral discourse, or rather of the moral discourses, for there are at least two, and even they must be clearly distinguished from one another.

- **The first of these** is the traditional one, the one I refer to as the child molester discourse. It is blunt, highly emotional, over-generalized, full of prejudices -- you find it in the boulevard press but not only there. [...]
- **Today, there is a second form** of moral discourse, which presumably has a much greater impact on the current social situation of pedophiles today than the loud outcries of fundamentalists or barstool moralists. It represents a view based upon a broad social consensus. As an enlightened discourse on morality, it is particularly virulent in liberal

circles, in groups which were once rather more inclined to caution and concession in their judgment of pedophiles.

This is the discourse of sexual self-determination or equal rights, which has assumed a dominant role in the general view of sexuality today.

In the modern discourse between the free and intimate citizens, many forms of erotic and sexual behavior are freed from old conservative morals; nowadays, they are seen as free choices of free citizens. Except pedophilia.

Does pedophilia inexorably and categorically violate the morality of consent and intimate citizenship? Of course, there can be no question that it does so wherever violence, coercion, extortion, and emotional manipulation are employed. Thus, we must articulate the problem more specifically. Can there be sexual consensus at all between adults and children?

Many pedophiles say there can be, arguing roughly along these lines: "I want nothing more than what the child wants. I can enjoy it only when the child enjoys it as well."

This message comes across in a number of different versions. In numerous conversations with pedophiles seeking advice, I have rarely found myself compelled to doubt the subjective truth of such statements.

Schmidt then gives an example, a scenario in which a boy and a man play with an electric train. One might imagine the end of the story. Schmidt argues that the boy and the man "are on different pages" or have different scripts, different interpretations of the situation. The boy wants to play; the man desires more intimacy. There seems to be consent, but there is none.

Thus, the problem of sexual consensus between the adult and the child lies in the disparity of scenarios. Only by ignoring the aspect of social meaning is it possible to see consensus or at least the absence of dissent in such a situation.

Only the adult is aware of the disparity of scenarios and only he is in a position to overcome it, simply by saying what it is he really wants -- and in that case the boy's "no" would undoubtedly come more quickly and emphatically.

[...] I find it difficult to imagine consensual sexual acts between children and adults. There are undoubtedly exceptions, which would include cases of boys just entering puberty and who have masturbated or had other sexual experiences leading to orgasm with peers, that is, of boys who can be expected to know "what the score is" and who have experienced their own sexuality without adult participation and perhaps become curious about how adults would react in contact with them and about what they might experience with an adult.

Schmidt then mentions Kinsey's research, and describes the modern discussion about 'trauma or no trauma'. This discussion is one with two opposed camps. He proposes two fundamental points to have in mind for a more rational and scientific discussion:

- (1) Sexual contacts between adults and children pose *a risk of* lasting trauma for the latter even when they do not involve violence or the patent use of force, the risk is presumably greater the younger the child is, and is likely to rise in proportion to a number of other factors [...]
- (2) There are many cases of nonconsensual sexual contacts between adults and children that are *not* traumatic for the child, although they do indeed violate his or her right of self-determination. Nonconsensual experiences are not *categorically* traumatic; what is *morally* unacceptable is not necessarily *injurious*. [...]

Schmidt quotes Kinsey and the Rind *et al.* research to lay the foundation for the second statement. The first statement, however, describing the *risk of* trauma, places the pedophile in a dilemma.

The dilemma is tragic because the pedophile's sexual orientation is deeply rooted in the basic structure of his identity. Pedophilia is as much a part of him as is love for the same or opposite sex for the homosexual or heterosexual man or woman, the difference being that the one is accepted, while the other is categorically forbidden and virtually impossible to realize.

In view of the pedophile's burden, the necessity of denying himself the experience of love and sexuality, he deserves respect, rather than contempt.

### **The peer commentaries**

I shall give a short overview, summarizing the 21 authors in my own words.

**Fred Berlin** agrees with both authors in as far as he says one might treat pedophiles, but one should not reject them, rather respect them. Because a child is not always traumatized, one should not routinely give treatment to any child who had any sexual experience, nor to every person with pedophilic feelings.

**Wolfgang Berner** agrees with the normality of penile erections to 'pedophilic' stimuli – he quotes a 27.7% from literature – but adds that this is not necessarily a reference to a sexual *orientation*. An orientation is more than a single reaction of the body.

**Vern Bullough** accepts the conclusions of Wilson & Cox (1983) that people with pedophilic feelings are quite normal people who not should be demonized. Some behavior might be socially incorrect, but that is not the same as pathological. As long as these people limit themselves to have fantasies, nothing is wrong. If some people have to change their behavior, this is a case of re-educating those people, not of treatment or curing an illness.

**Alan Dixon** is simple in his comment: that pedophilia is a mental distortion: “bizarre”, “abnormal”. end of discussion.

**Julia Ericksen** gives a good summary of what both authors have said. She remarks that it may be so that intergenerational intimacy has been or still is quite normal in other eras and cultures – we still live in our time and culture. It is the culture that determinates one's sexual orientation. So, a 'deviant' orientation is not *per se* a pathological deviance, but a cultural one. Thus, for insight of the phenomenon, have a look at the culture one lives in, not at the person. Ericksen does not believe in a genetically fixed sexual orientation.

**Dean Fazekas** agrees in so far as he says that pedophilia, child molester, or incest offender, cannot be a diagnosis. However, he does not believe in the possibility of consent. He acknowledges that not all pedophiles behave wrongly. He provides a remarkable argument that there is *always* harm to the child: we spend so much resources and time to treat children as well as the offenders, that there *must* be harm.

**Richard Friedman** agrees only on the point that one should not demonize pedophiles. One should keep giving them treatment, including changing their too romantic, thus distorted, ways of thinking.

**George Gaither** disagrees with both authors. We need the DSM, he remarkably argues, so that we have the resources to continue our treatment and research. He keeps viewing a pedophilic orientation as a mental disorder to be treated and changed. He disagrees with the APA view that this is not possible.

**Richard Krueger & Meg Kaplan** also disagree with both authors. In other times and cultures pedophilia surely has been viewed as a disorder. They make comparisons with drug dependency and suggest that pedophilia can better be viewed as a disease than as an immoral act; for immoral acts, there is only a prison, but for diseases, treatment is possible. Thus, let's keep the DSM, and the possibilities of treatment, as they are. Only then understanding is possible.

**Ron Langevin** pleads for revision of the DSM paragraph about pedophilia, but not for removing it. OK, let other cultures have their view; that is no argument, we have our own view. He sees biases in the research quoted by Green, and refuses to see a penile erection as a sign of a sexual orientation.

**Michael Miner** also says that we do not live in Polynesia in far-off times, but in our own time and culture and its views. As with our culture, Miner sees pedophilia as a disorder, just because the effects of pedophilic behavior: bring harm to the child, and shame, social isolation and prison to the adult. The disorder is not one of sexual orientation as such, but lack of impulse control – just as it is in cases of pathological gambling, drugs or alcohol use.

**Charles Moser** strongly agrees with Green. *None* of the paraphilias should have a place in the DSM list of disorders. A sexual desire can *never* be a disorder. Sexuality is led by culture, not by illnesses.

**Emil Ng**, from China, shows the politeness and the preference for nuances of his country's culture. Doing so, he gives a cross-cultural view on the phenomena, putting narrow Western views into a broader perspective. Chinese literature does not ascribe any mental or medical diagnosis of pedophilia or homosexuality to "romantic affairs" between children or between adults and children, although they are not difficult to find in that tradition.

His comments on the Western ways of thinking and acting are quite incisive. The Western discussion about consent and traumas is "hypocritical", he says. Only in *sexual* matters western adults worry about consent and traumas, not in *all other* matters, from baptizing the child after birth until its education ends with a diploma.

Hence, the seemingly righteous and humanitarian debate on child self-determination and consent in sex is just another game adults play to impose their own values on children. For most of the everyday adult-assigned children's activities on which the adults hold no discrepant values, debates on child consent are taken as irrelevant and best to be forgotten for parental convenience.

Yet, for child sexual activity, the debate is raised only because not all adults hold the same value judgment. Despite what the debaters on each side may say, it does not follow that any of them are actually more concerned with children welfare and rights than the others. Both sides are only fishing out and exploiting the children's rights issue to support their own preconceptions or needs on child sexuality.

**Paul Okami** strongly agrees with Green. He agrees with Schmidt as far as "Schmidt rightly attempts to distinguish questions of *wrongfulness* from those of *harmfulness*. These concepts have become hopelessly entwined in the discourse on pedosexuality".



He also disagrees with Schmidt, but in the other direction from other peer comments. He especially disagrees with the presumption that there always is a power imbalance in contacts between children and adults.

The problem with the 'balance of power' argument is that dyadic power can be in constant flux within a relationship and, in any event, is always multidimensional. [...] Moreover, there is nothing logically intrinsic in power discrepancy that violates principles of justice or fairness in sexual relationships or that is necessarily harmful to the "less powerful" participant, unless one views sexual relationships as similar to hand-to-hand combat (e.g., heavyweight vs. flyweight contestant).

The instability and multidimensionality of dyadic power and the fact that a "power-balanced" relationship is clearly mythological (in the sense that it can never be logically ascertained) lay to rest as useless the "power imbalance" argument. At best, this argument is a fine example of late twentieth century cultural-feminist silliness.

So, Okami gives another interpretation of Schmidt's example of the electric train playing and the intimacy following it. He sees "straw man arguments" in Schmidt's argument.

**Robert Prentky** agrees with Green and criticizes the DSM list. As an example, he speaks about Lewis Carroll, the author of *Alice*, and James Barrie, author of *Peter Pan*. Mentally ill people? Surely not. If there must be a criterion for a mental disease, it should be self-control or the lack of it.

**Bruce Rind** agrees with Green, but disagrees with Schmidt's moral statements. Rind also refers to the *dynamics* in the power balance and disagrees that there always should be an imbalance.

Most objectionable from a scientific and philosophy of logic perspective is Schmidt's willingness to test a universal proposition with a single confirming hypothetical case. Appropriate testing would consist of determining whether disconfirming empirical cases can be found. **I provide such cases.** [...]

These cases, involving five men who had sex as boys around age 10 with men, dispute Schmidt's claim that there can never be sexual consensus between prepubescents and adults.

**Michael Seto** views pedophilia as a disorder, but the DSM has not defined it well. One should not define *behavior* as an *illness*. And one should define pedophilia so that it only concerns a sexual *desire* for sexually still immature *pre-pubescents*.

**Robert Spitzer & Jerome Wakefield** criticize Green. They agree that not all pedophile behavior refers to a mental disorder, only *some* behavior does. But they miss clear *definitions* in Green's argument. Clear definitions should discriminate between normality and disorders.

**Kenneth Zucker**, who, as the Editor of the magazine, has opened the special issue, now, with the "Z" in his name, ends the list of peer commentators by giving the history of the DSM from 1973, the year that homosexuality was removed from the DSM list. However, there are too many differences between homosexuality and pedophilia. Thus, the arguments cannot be the same. One should study how DSM defines a mental disorder and then see if pedophilia fits with this definition or not. Other arguments are irrelevant. The end of the debate is still unsure.

### **A comment from the reporter**

Several peer commentaries reject the cross-cultural argument, by saying “we don’t live in Polynesia in a far-off age” or so.

In my view, this seems to me a typical case of Americanism: the ultimate in the (post-)modern Western way of thinking:

‘We have found the light of the real truth; other cultures have for ages walked in the darkness of the wrong insights.’

In my opinion, *this* is not true.

### **Replies of the authors**

**Green** starts with the cross-cultural arguments:

At the outset, thank you to those commentators who added to my list of historical and cross-cultural examples of child-adult sex:

- the child-brides and grooms of China;
- Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), who brought us Alice;
- James Barrie, who brought us Peter Pan;
- Muhammad, who brought us Islam; and
- St. Augustine, who brought us Christianity.

He replies more or less comment by comment, which is too long for this report, but an issue repeating itself is the question of *harm*. Some comments said: ‘because there is *always* harm, there is *always* a distortion’. In reply to Spitzer & Wakefield, Green repeats his own words:

"Consensual same-sex adult-adult sexuality does not suggest the element of harm to one participant ... " and he adds:

Suggesting the element of harm does not equate with the universal certainty of harm.

In reply to Berlin:

He correctly states that pedophilia can create both psychological burdens and impairments (as can heterosexuality or homosexuality, I would add) but (like heterosexuality or homosexuality), must it? Why then declare pedophilia a disorder for all?

In reply to several commentators who took up Green’s nuance that harm is not *always* present, and that there are lots of pedophiles who only have their fantasies:

No harm, no foul.

And in other words, picking up the cross-cultural arguments:

If a society does not condemn a behavior, more will participate. I do not agree that those who continue to participate when society does condemn are necessarily mentally ill.

Antisocial behavior may be criminal (it often is), but it need not be a mental illness (it often is not).

**Schmidt** acknowledges in his reply that dyadic power is always unstable and multidimensional. He refers to Ng, Okami and Rind who

“argue that we are upset by this lack of consensus only when sexuality is involved, and this they regard as an ideological reaction. Neither argument can be effectively refuted. Yet, both Okami and Rind fail to make it clear whether their reference to these truisms means that they recognize no special characteristics of child-adult sexual interaction. [..T]hey avoid the central question underlying the debate on pedophilia: Is there anything special about adult-child sexual relations?”

This is the central question for Schmidt. He is not convinced by Rind’s five cases, which he sees as “exceptions” and the seeing of a general trend in these cases “breathtakingly simple and naïve”.

Schmidt agrees with the commentators who have rejected the cross-cultural variance as an argument. ‘The people of Sambia cannot help us’. So, he does not develop the argument, but he has great respect for these contributions:

“They sow doubts about positions that have come to be taken for granted in Western societies, and they keep the discussion open in a direction to which too little attention is given today: fairness against pedophiles. And they demonstrate admirable courage.”

### **The reporter looks back**

A very good initiative to make this special issue.

We could not expect unanimity, but we have seen reasonable thinking and polite arguing with a lot of subtle differences in approach.

The main recurring points of discussion were:

- (1) The distinction to be made between the different discourses;
- (2) The distinction to be made between the rich variety of pedophile behavior;
- (3) The question of harm, especially *inevitable* harm;
- (4) The question of whether a deviancy should always be regarded as an illness;
- (5) The validity of the cross-cultural arguments.

## **IS IT A BIRD? IS IT A PLANE? NO, IT'S SUPER PED!**

Rod Downey, *The Moralist* (Great Mirror Press, Ormond Beach, Florida, 2001)  
This book is available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or [www.the-moralist.com](http://www.the-moralist.com)

### **A review by Tom O'Carroll**

As solipsistic books go, this is as glabrous as it gets.

Stick with it, it gets easier. Let me put it another way. Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Super Ped! Or Super Red, seeing as how the hero is a guy rejoicing in the name of Red Rover – like the children's game – who is publicly a boy lover, privately a pederast, but just don't mention the other "p" word.

Red, fighting fit at fifty, is a man with a mission. He is a moral revolutionary playing for high stakes, putting his high-flying career in public relations on the line in a bold bid to capture the ear of his native America. Some see him as a Quixotic figure, a knight-all-too-errant on a mission impossible. But even that understates his task. Don Quixote's craziness was to tilt at windmills, whereas Red's enemies are real giants: rabid media figures and cops – people who seriously think it is better to be dead than Red; powerful people who can inflict serious harm.

Yet, amazingly, armed with courage, media skills, high culture and low cunning, Red makes his mark on US television and – once taken up in Europe, where the sophisticates know literary talent when they see it – becomes a celebrated writer. The irony is that it is arguably a Pyrrhic victory. Red's mission is to oppose "moral principle", with its wretched downside of love-killing rules imposed by authority. Instead of rules, he says, we should be ruled only by our hearts. There is no higher law than the love we feel – including the love of a beautiful boy. Yet the very act of proclaiming this gospel of beauty and love (and the truth of our existential condition that binds the two together), precipitates the "outing" of Red's deepest relationship with a boy. A tragedy then?

Readers may judge for themselves. All I should say is that Red's love for Jonathan, a gifted child he "mentors" in a programme to develop young literary talent, is a thread skillfully woven throughout a book with a well paced plot, a goodly seasoning of philosophical discourse and some dramatically lively lessons on communicating in a hostile media environment.

Notice I say "book", not "novel". One day, if the author achieves as much literary celebrity as his hero Red, there could be an exam question for college kids: "Is Downey's *The Moralist* a novel?" Well, we know it is not a bird, or a plane, but what sort of book is it? The question arises because Downey teases his readers as to whether it is indeed a novel, a work of fiction, or whether it is near as damn it pure autobiography. If the latter, its author and his young lover will be damned themselves unless an element of deniability is built in.

In Downey's capable hands the resultant collision of life with art produces a stunning hall of mirrors effect: the author, Rod, is himself a PR guru who has tackled the media on boy love; so is his hero Red; and Red is also writing an "autobiographical" (maybe) novel called *The Moralist*! It is teasing, tantalizing, post-modern in its self-referential aspects, and utterly queer in the "queer theory" sense that it confounds categorisation. Red is even depicted as reading reviews of this other *The Moralist* that eerily anticipate the observations I am keying in at this very moment. Red is a benign sorcerer in Jonathan's eyes. And Rod? Has he bewitched me into writing what he wants? Jeez, this is making me dizzy!

In a more straightforward way, Downey is good with dialogue too. The gripping scenes in which Jonathan valiantly battles to thwart a good cop/bad cop routine when interrogated over his friendship with Red, reminded me of John Grisham's *The Client*. And while the subject matter of *The Moralist* (to say nothing of the title) invites comparison with Gide, I found the dialectical handling of the philosophical issues reminiscent of Gore Vidal. As for the evocation of Red's "sorcery" with Jonathan, it is a triumph with few parallels this side of the ancient classics. Some may chafe at what may seem the author's self-congratulatory tone, given that we could be talking of autobiography. But that tone comes in a balanced context. Earlier in life, he confesses, "he had not a clue how to bag his prey. He was Aschenbach at twenty-six."

Nor is this glancing reference to Mann's *Death In Venice* the only example I could give of many subtle ways in which Downey seems to anticipate every conceivable line of criticism. The clearest chink in this Quixote's armour lies not in his skills as a writer or advocate, nor in his "predatory" love life, if that is what is being related. His often thinly disguised shadowing of real life BL political activism is likewise not a problem: the fact that I could identify no fewer than 17 real characters depicted under changed names just added to my interest. No, the vulnerability is philosophical.

While one cannot have too much "glabrous" youth in a book, what are we to make of one grounded in "solipsistic" moral philosophy? If only Red's ideas are at stake, not Rod's, then Rod has no problem. In this scenario, the literary character's ideas can be as off the wall as the author pleases: the character's living out of those ideas on the page may be just as illuminating as if his stance is rock solid. But what if Red is Rod, period? What if Rod is not looking for deniability in this area but is keen to nail his own colours to the mast?

In that case, he'd better make sure his ground is defensible against all comers. Red's/Rod's key perception was that "Good and evil were simply window dressing to justify whatever we want. 'Good' was what we wanted. 'Evil' was what we didn't." It is a view that seems to vaporise existentialism ("the philosophy of choice in the 20th century" as Red wittily put it). Each of us has no choice but to have a subjective position, comprising our own wants and preferences. We cannot choose what we "want to want," so to speak. And what we want is inevitably what we choose, if we can get it.

It is no new perception. Hume argued long ago that the distinction between good and evil must derive from our feelings, not from our reason. Kant took the completely opposite view. His privileging of abstract reason in the search for moral principles looks unrealistic these days but the debate is by no means over.

Kant was full of cant – in his private life too – but philosophers to this day, such as Thomas Nagel and Michael Smith, are finding ingenious ways to reinstate objectivity in moral debate.

Red is more a Nietzsche man, though not afraid to tilt at that giant either. Our reasoned choices are just "a second-generation copy of desire", he insists. He is full of flashy aphorisms like this, another reason why *The Moralist* is a delight to read. One senses Downey is steeped in the assertive manner of the German romantic philosophers, and a romantic individualist his hero certainly is.

He is utterly unfazed by science's important claim to have unlocked the secret origins of morality in the evolution of mutual cooperation. Darwin's heirs, he might have added, can explain love too. But then he seeks to slay the dragon of science: "All we really knew without question was that we exist. Science would forever seek to cast this final net over consciousness without

success. Because the episteme depended on consciousness as its source, consciousness would always be larger than knowledge."

He makes too much of this. A house will always be larger than its rooms. But you don't go in the bathroom or the bedrooms when you need the kitchen. They are irrelevant, just as are Red's argument and the admitted mysticism he retreats into when cornered. Mysticism implies mysteries, a feature which sits oddly with the confident, got-it-all-figured-out swagger of Red's usual style. The only reason Red's philosophy seems remotely plausible is because this mystical, romantic, revolutionary has style. He cuts a dash. Without laughing, one can see Tom Cruise in the role. And, most important of all, a boy admires and loves him.

But what if the hero were a little more flawed? Let's imagine Hannibal Lektor saying to himself "What I want is good." What he famously wants is to eat people. So why can't we accept this as morally acceptable? Is it just because we happen to have different wants? Is it because most of us (presumably) do not wish to eat people? No, it is because we do not wish to be eaten. Hannibal's wants are inconsistent with ours, so we need some system – some reasoned, principled system we can agree on – to arbitrate between competing wants. This engages law as well as morality, but both systems of restrictions on behaviour ultimately derive their authority from beliefs as to what is harmful.

Downey goes some way to tackle the Lektor factor. His hero's morality is thus based not just on any old whimsical desires a body might have, but on love. It is right and good to follow our hearts, to be guided by our desires. But the major and highly disputable premise is that we will all wish to act with love. Well, that's still no problem for Hannibal Lektor. He just loves eating people!

This might sound a mere semantic game, a trivial way of cheating. But it is not. It is serious. If subjective moral accounting is the name of the game, it can quickly become as dodgy as Enron's financial accounting. A much more serious example is to be seen in Dostoevsky's hero Raskolnikov, in *Crime and Punishment*. He too, just like Red, is a man with a heart. He is capable of love, tenderness, nobility of soul. And like Red he finds very good – highly subjective – reasons for breaking all the rules, for standing above them. He too is a philosopher, with a perceived destiny to do great things for the world. But, like Napoleon, he cannot be expected to be bound as are ordinary mortals to petty notions of right conduct. Great achievements sometimes require the will to shed blood...

"The moral struggle is not between good and evil, right and wrong, but self and society," Red avers. But "society" is not just government, it is not just authority telling us what to do. It is us, as well as them. It speaks volumes about our alienation in modern society that we lose sight of this. Other people – friends, family, lovers, colleagues – all want subjective "good" things that differ both subtly and drastically from one person to another. The way out of the problems this creates is the mutually advantageous resort to reason and, yes, moral principle. This need not result in the tightly defined codes and rules that are the authoritarian's paradise. It does not imply God-given fundamental truths as to what is good, but rather a consensus of shared feelings – a consensus more easily reached with close, like-minded friends than with distant, hostile forces.

But don't let these reservations of mine over the hero's moral vision put you off reading this wonderful book. I mean no criticism of Red's lifestyle or Rod's implied endorsement of it. Quite the reverse. And in the end it is indeed a novel rather than a philosophical treatise. The latter tend to give us headaches, but Downey stimulates real thought in a more entertaining way – and that alone does philosophy a service.

**JUDITH LEVINE: HARMFUL TO MINORS**

University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2002

**Review, by Tom O'Carroll**

No book I know of on child sexuality or paedophilia has been so trumpeted or traduced in advance as Judith Levine's *Harmful to Minors*. Months ahead of publication it was being denounced as "evil" by right-wing Christian fundamentalists, and high-level political pressure was heaped onto the University of Minnesota Press to abandon the project.

Even Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* of 1905 failed to create such a stir. Far from being scandalised, as myth would later have it, by his revelations of "polymorphously perverse" infants, the intellectual world to which these ideas were initially restricted gave them a soberly sympathetic hearing.

By contrast, Kinsey's two immense volumes half a century ago were deliberately promoted with a mighty fanfare. Huge football stadiums were filled for the great man's lectures. The books included a wealth of information on both child sexuality and paedophilia, but amidst a mass of figures and tables covering the whole range of human sexual behaviour at all ages, these data did not leap out as a big issue at the time. Of more urgent concern were the Kinsey team's equally hot revelations on extra-marital sex and homosexuality, an agenda that kept the reformers and moralisers occupied for decades.

Only much later, in the 1990s, did the most sensational aspect of the Kinsey enterprise come under closely antagonistic scrutiny. One such scrutineer was a certain Robert Knight, anti-homosexual, anti-evolution, anti-abortion crusader who wrote and directed *The Children of Table 34*, a documentary aimed at discrediting Kinsey and his alleged use of children in "sex experiments". The allegation was false, the attack scurrilous. And who do we see leading the charge against Judith Levine? Why, the very same Knight in tarnished armour!

Those who have followed the attempt to discredit the Rind team -- and more recently Harris Mirkin and others -- will recognise a clear pattern emerging in recent years, in which well organised reactionary forces have been able to mobilise media attacks and political pressure against scholarship of which they disapprove. It is a pattern which sees ideas and evidence denounced rather than debated, a pattern in which lies and distortions are used in an attempt to get academics sacked or their funding cut off, in which pressure is used to stop academic journals and university presses from publishing properly reviewed material.

What is unique about the Levine case is that the attack was so quick off the mark. Also, it was directed not against a figure in the academic world but a journalist. It is easy to see why opponents should fear the heavy scientific artillery of a Kinsey or a Rind, with their massive statistical fire power. But why should they be so worried about the musings of a scribe? Wouldn't it have been more sensible just to ignore her, thereby depriving her book of the free publicity generated by thunderous denunciations?

A small part of the answer is to be found in the fact that Levine came to her latest book as a well-established, well-regarded author. A slightly larger part may be attributed to a Foreword by Dr Joycelyn Elders, who held the prestigious and high profile position of United States Surgeon General under the Clinton presidency. Elders and Levine are both women. That must have

helped too: where children's sex and sex with children are concerned, it is much harder for male writers to have credibility and gain attention these days.

Most important of all, though, Levine has a powerful case to present - as must have been feared. *Harmful to Minors: The Perils of Protecting Children from Sex*, challenges conservative America head-on, as the full title boldly proclaims. Starting with obscenity laws supposedly designed to shield children from material "harmful to minors", but actually aiming to keep them in "innocent" ignorance, she goes on to blast statutory rape laws that rely on "the oxymoronic concept of consensual rape", demonstrate that "abstinence education" is a failure, expose the lies put out by anti-abortion extremists, and stake a claim for sex education that addresses pleasurable intimacy, rather than seeing sex solely in terms of delinquency and diseases.

Bravest of all, right from the early pages Levine advances a daringly liberal view of paedophilia, arguing that society's panicky emphasis on "predators" and suspicion of strangers serves only to generate paranoia while leaving children defenceless in truly abusive homes. Declining the usual ritual condemnation of paedophiles, she points out the comparative rarity of rape and other violence. Instead she notes the prevalence of such activities as kissing and mutual masturbation - acts which reveal a willingness to engage with children at the level for which they are ready, rather than imposing adult sexuality.

Later in the book she uses the term "intergenerational relationships" when referring to clearly consensual love affairs between adults and youngsters in early adolescence. Nowhere does she openly argue for the legitimacy of such relationships where pre-pubertal children are concerned but neither does she insist that such contacts are necessarily harmful. The philosophy advanced is admirably consistent in its focus on the pleasurable and positive potential of sex at any age.

Indeed, many would describe Levine's line on paedophilia as radical rather than liberal. Ironically, the fact that I have balked at doing so owes much to her undoubted radicalism in another respect. While I like to think she may be among the most humane and delightful people on the planet, she also emerges as a hard-line Social Fundamentalist. For her, nothing in human nature is hard-wired. All our behaviour is the product of social forces and only acquires meaning through its social context and interpretation. In effect there is no such thing as human nature in her view, unless we say that it is much the same as the nature of water, taking exactly the shape of anything into which it is poured.

We speak of "moulding" human character, do we not? Liquid steel may be poured into a mould like water, yet set as hard and inflexible as, well, iron. But the image where humans are concerned suggests hands shaping clay - a malleable material before it is fired, yet not wholly without resistance. So what are we, clay, or water, or that to which no metaphor can do justice? Do we set hard, and if so, when and how and why, and is it inevitable?

I make an issue of it because Levine's fundamentalism is utterly integral to her case. It is what gives her hope. All we need to do - given the malleability of human nature - is to identify the problems, whether it's unwanted pregnancies, or aggressive male sexual behaviour, or the ignorance and social deprivation that foster sexual diseases, then find the political will and the resources to invest in the social education that will put things right. Simple! Except that those who stubbornly doubt the perfectibility of man remain sceptical and antagonistic, whether it be through a Christian's view of our sinfulness or the neo-Darwinian notion that our nature has been moulded -- and fired -- by evolutionary circumstance.



Simple, except that the sceptics may in some degree be right. Our bodies may be mostly water, but we are not water. We are not clay, but we do have feet of clay. Love, hate, jealousy, fear, ambition, desire -- they are all aspects of our inescapable nature. They may be highly malleable in their expression but not in their essential existence.

Take desire, and what Levine says about the paedophiliac variety. After referring to a "paedophile" who also appeared to have adult lovers, she says:

"In other words, there may be nothing fundamental about a person that makes him a 'paedophile'. So-called paedophiles do not have some genetic, or incurable, disease. Men who desire children can change their behaviour to conform with the norms of a society that reviles it. Paedophilia can be renounced; in the medical language we now use to describe this sexual proclivity, it can be 'cured'."

Those unfortunates in past decades who were unsuccessfully subjected to electric-shock aversion therapy or chemical castration might beg to differ. The thousands right now being "mentally cleansed" in those brainwashing gulags, the cognitive-behavioural sex offender treatment programmes, could also tell a different story. It would be one in which offenders may indeed speak of being forced to conform through sheer coercion. But how many would say they had been "cured" or ceased to feel their desires? If desire is so socially malleable, how come gay boys persist in their gayness in the teeth of relentless hostility among their peers at school and sometimes rejection at home?

Desire is not entirely inflexible. How else could "political lesbianism" ever have become fashionable? Perhaps feminine desire is in general more malleable than men's feelings, but men may also be taken by surprise with the late emergence of new forms of desire and the fading of old ones. But seldom does a man's core sexual orientation deviate by more than a few degrees from its earliest conscious starting point, which may go back to the age of five or six and may have been determined much earlier. Nor can genetic factors be ruled out, as Levine asserts. Unlike most of the points she makes, this one is offered utterly without evidential support.

But it would be wrong to dwell solely on the weak spots in Levine's fundamentalism. Its strengths enable her to write persuasively on things that can and should be changed. Her perspective enables her to see the potential of a "desire education" aimed not at changing gays into straights or paedophiles into either but rather at enriching the lives of growing boys and girls by such means as querying unhelpful gender-role expectations, so that boys need be less worried about performance anxiety and girls less enslaved by false and damaging romantic ideals. Best of all, in the context of the danger of AIDS, her approach leads us away from "morals" and towards ethics. In what is clearly a deeply-felt appeal to our sense of community, she demonstrates the value of public-spirited altruism as against the narrow privatisation of love implied in the "family values" ethic.

To my mind Levine's most heartrendingly effective chapter, however, is one in which she exposes the nightmare to which "children who molest" are being subjected in America today.

It's a world in which the lunatics are in charge of the asylum. Take psychologist Toni Cavanagh Johnson, partner in crime of Kee MacFarlane, the social worker behind the notorious McMartin Preschool investigation. We are treated to a quote from Johnson straight out of the satirical classic *Brass Eye*. Remember the spoof anti-abuse ad where a British radio star claims paedophiles have more genes in common with crabs than with humans? "There's no real evidence for it," he confidently proclaims, "but it's a scientific fact." Compare that with this,

from Johnson: "While norms do not presently exist for what is normal sexual behaviour in children, the behaviours exhibited... led us to label the behaviours as being outside the normal range of sexual activity for their age group."

And what are the lunatics doing to the kids? The details are horrific. Suffice it to say that one programme for adults with similar elements to the infamous STEPS regime for youngsters was condemned and halted by a judge as a cruel and unusual punishment. But the kids must keep on suffering. After all, children must be protected!

## **'Harmful to Minors'**

### **The perils of protecting children from sex**

Lecture about the book of  
Judith Levine, Harmful for Minors,  
The perils of protecting children from sex, 2001,  
University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis / London

Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1 November 2002  
Study conference 'Aljen Klamer group', Paul's Church,  
"Abuse by definition? Image and reality"

Frans Gieles

### **The reactions**

Protecting children from sex is dangerous, says Levine in the subtitle. To say this is also dangerous in contemporary USA. Bruce Rind, Robert Bauserman & Philip Tromovitch, who have been guests in this church in 1998, have written about the nuances of sexuality and childhood [\*], and have also experienced it.

[\*] Rind, B., Bauserman, R. & Tromovitch, An examination of assumed properties of child sexual abuse based on nonclinical samples, Paper presented at Rotterdam, The Netherlands, December 18, 1998. [External link]

In many ways they have been vilified and threatened. It is unique that the US Congress would condemn a scientific article in the same manner as the former Russians did. [\*]

[\*] Gieles, F.E.J., Mister President... The USA is shocked by the research of Rind, Bauserman & Tromovich, In: Ipce Newsletter nr. E6, July 1999

In the so-called 'Free West', this has not happened for quite a while. Galileo had such a problem when the Pope disagreed with his scientific conclusion that the earth circles around the sun instead of the contrary.

A radio broadcast car positioned itself just outside of Rind's office at the university. Nobody could enter or leave the building without intruding and indoctrinating questions from the reporters. The program was sent out live and went on for six hours.

Professor Harris Mirkin, a man who looks remarkably like old Einstein, has also written his opinion, in two articles. In the first one [\*], he analyses the battle against homosexuality as a political fight, a power fight. In the other [\*\*], he says he agrees with Rind and his team.

[\*] Mirkin, Harris, The Pattern of Sexual Politics: Feminism, Homosexuality and Pedophilia, J. Homosex. Vol. 37, No. 2 (1999)

[\*\*] Mirkin, Harris, Sex, Science and Sin: The Rind Report, Sexual Politics and American Scholarship, Manuscript submitted to Sexuality and Culture, Special Issue on Rind-Tromovitch-Bauserman

Immediately after the public recently discovered his articles, hate-mails and very hostile articles appeared. The politicians also reacted. The state of Missouri diminished the subsidies for Mirkin's university by exactly the amount of his yearly income, with a letter explaining the reason for it. Nevertheless, the university defended the freedom of science and let him retain his job.

Before we have a look at Levine's book, let's have a look at the reactions to her book, even before it was printed.

Note: before the book was published, thus before it could be read, it was condemned. Judith is an independent writer, so she could not lose any job. Instead, the University of Minnesota, the publisher of the book, had a rough time. However, this university also defended the freedom of science, opinion and speech.

### **"Knight Urges University of Minnesota to Fire Officials Responsible for Book Advocating Adult-Child Sex"**

This 'Knight' was Robert Knight, the male speaker of the religious-fundamentalist propaganda-organisation "Concerned Women for America's Culture and Family Institute". He wrote in a press release shortly after a broadcasted interview with Levine, far before the book was published:

"Child molesters are getting a big boost toward legitimacy with the University of Minnesota Press' publication of a book advocating sex with children."

"Harmful to Minors: The Perils of Protecting Children from Sex is every child molester's dream -- and every parent's nightmare."

"Joycelyn Elders, who was Bill Clinton's surgeon general, wrote the foreword for this evil tome," Knight says. "Not content to advocate for adults teaching children to masturbate, she is giving cover for adults having sex with kids -- so long as the kids give their consent. Everybody except for the molesters and their apologists knows that children cannot give meaningful consent to sex. Everybody knows that children are coerced into giving 'consent,' and that the damage can last a lifetime. The author of this book, Judith Levine, is Exhibit A. She was molested as a child and now advocates it for other children."

### **Levine herself**

... has other ideas about this. We leave Sir Moralistic Knight for a while and read what she herself has written about it -- not in her book, but in an article in Village Voice, July 3, 2002.

"This is an innocent story. In 1967, the summer before my 15th birthday, I fell in love. It was my first intense erotic love, and its object was the photography counselor at camp -- a lean, bearded, blue-eyed guy I'll call Jake. He was 26. Nothing sexual happened. Still, I think of those two months as the summer of my panouissement, a French word meaning blossoming or opening, which also means glow. Jake took hundreds of pictures of me, and his affirmation and his camera opened me to myself. They helped me begin, sexually, to glow."

"If the same events had occurred in 2002, they would not be viewed as innocent. The adults around me would write my chaste romance as a perverse tale, casting Jake as a predator and me as his hapless, clueless prey. Had I started my sex education with good-touch-bad-touch lessons in kindergarten or listened for a decade to media reporting on a world allegedly crowded with sexual malefactors sniffing the world for young flesh, I might even have believed that my friend and mentor Jake was one of them. That sweet idyll would have been, instead, the summer of my victimization. And instead of opening me, Jake's attentions might have closed me down in fear and confusion."

[...]

"He liked me, I felt, and he saw me -- saw the person I was beginning to know as myself. I could read his recognition in the photographs."

[...]

"I tried to seduce him. [...] I fantasized the day Jake would ask me to take my shirt off, brush his lips over my nipples, then pull down the short zipper of my pants. I imagined the bristles of his beard as he kissed me there.

He never did. In fact, he mentioned sex only once that I remember, as I sat on the counter in his darkroom, watching his red-lit face concentrate on the images emerging in the trays (the smell of developing fluid is still erotic to me). He said, 'There are two things I know I can't do while I'm working here: smoke pot or make love to a woman'."

[...]

"He never touched me, except to drape an arm over my shoulder or sit close to me on a bench. He kissed me on the lips only once, mouth closed, on the last day of camp."

[...]

"In the summer of '67, a man gave a girl the innocent gift of her emerging erotic self. I wonder if I could receive it with such happiness and grace were I a girl today."

### **Back to our Knight the Moralist**

Knight the Moralist wrote about the same story:

"The author of this book, Judith Levine, is Exhibit A. She was molested as a child and now advocates it for other children."

With this flagrant misrepresentation of the true story, our Knight himself is Exhibit A of his own untruthfulness, and so of his own moral untrustworthiness. Nevertheless, he unconcernedly writes further:

"Accused molesters have already misused a 1998 study published by the American Psychological Association to justify their perversion; now they will be citing this hideous book to excuse their crimes against children."

"If the Regents of the University of Minnesota do not act quickly to fire those responsible, the people of Minnesota and their elected representatives should move quickly to replace them," Knight said.

The press release, spread among millions of households and spread by many web sites, quotes King:

"the action is so grievous and so irresponsible that I felt they relinquished their right to academic freedom."

He calls the book "very evil", although he admits ... he hasn't read it.

### **Levine replies**

Levine says her quote was misconstrued and that she does not approve of sex between authority figures such as parents, priests and teachers and the minors in their charge. However, she argues that teenagers should be given more credit for the choices they make when they become involved in relationships with adults.

Levine endorses the Netherlands' approach to age-of-consent laws. In 1990, the Dutch parliament made sex between adults and children ages 12 to 16 legal as long as there was mutual consent. The child or the child's parents can bring charges if they believe the minor was coerced into sex.

Levine believes the Dutch law is a "good model" for the United States because it recognizes children as sexual beings who can determine their future while not ignoring the fact that they are weaker than adults and still need legal protection. U.S. consent laws, she says, mistakenly put all minors under one category without recognizing their ability to pursue relationships.

"Legally designating a class of people categorically unable to consent to sexual relations is not the best way to protect children, particularly when 'children' include everyone from birth to eighteen," Levine writes.

[...]

"The hysteria surrounding my book is precisely what my book is about," Levine said.

Her reply did not help.

### **Tim Pawlenty**

Tim Pawlenty, majority leader of the Minnesota House of Representatives and Republican candidate for governor, called for the stop of the book's release, according to the Star Tribune:

"In recent weeks, the headlines have been filled with the stories of victims sexually abused as children," he said in a prepared statement. "This kind of disgusting victimization of children is intolerable, and the state should have no part in it."

[...]

"We deserve to know why the name of one of our most respected institutions is being associated with this endorsement of child molestation," Pawlenty said.

Pawlenty said that he ... had not read the book.

These are only some of the hundreds of negative reactions. We could fill the whole hour of this lecture with but a few of them, but we won't. The quoted passages above are sufficient to illustrate the atmosphere. We won't even mention the hate-mails. Let's quickly go to the book.

## **The book**

The book has two parts. The first one tells what's gone wrong, the second one gives alternatives to make things better.

First, I want to highlight two issues mentioned throughout several chapters. About the first issue, one may laugh or cry, about the second issue one can only cry.

### **Sex education in the U.S.A.**

Sexual education does not exist in the USA, only anti-sex education. Real sex education does not exist because parents don't dare to do this. There is actually little real contact between parents and children in that country anyway and what contact there is is usually poor. Schools are not allowed to give real sex education because the school boards are usually conservative and because schools are afraid of losing their funding.

Libraries can only get subsidies if they have a filter in their computers to filter out web site with words like "breast" or "vice" or "fornication" for children. Thus, children see no web sites about breast feeding or even biblical sites which mention "fornication". Schools that give real sex education receive less funding. Because of this kind of ruling, the government prevents the children from seeing pictures during the sex lessons. Only clinical or biological schemes are permitted.

Very young children get lessons about good touch and bad touch. They learn to be afraid of strangers, especially men.

Usually, the educators do not mention any method of birth control. This might encourage sexual behavior. Unfortunately for the educators, young people do not need any encouraging: they do have sex frequently. One may guess the consequences: an enormous amount of unmarried teen mothers, and a lot of AIDS cases.

Instead they speak about all the illness sex may cause. Levine gives a long list of such illnesses she found in such a program (p. 105-106). No one ever speaks about any pleasure that might be obtained by sex.

In one of her chapters (# five), Levine tells about a lot of education programs and schools she has visited to see how sex education takes place. Speaking from a woman's perspective, she highlights the fact that these programs never mention that a woman may desire sex. This is completely taboo. A woman can only be the victim of the desires of men - pure and simple.

The message is everywhere, complete and total abstinence. Don't have sex until you are married.

At the congress of the World Association of Sexology in Paris in 2001, I have given a lecture [\*],

[\*] Helping people with pedophilic feelings (lecture & web site)

and so did an American scientist, Michael Young.

He told about his research project to find a way to promote Postpone Sex. It appeared that the teenagers did not postpone sex, but had sex in spite of that campaign.

Other research tells us that young people who officially promise to postpone sex tend to do it for only a few months. If they have sex, it is unprotected sex, usually quite long before their 18th birthday.

Thus, Young concluded that he and his team had to continue the research to find the right way to present the Postpone Sex message.

Taking the microphone for feedback, I told that we here in the Netherlands have the world's lowest percentage of unmarried pregnancy -- not because of a postpone sex campaign, but because of a sex education from the cradle to adulthood.

This corresponded precisely with the lecture given by Sanderijn van der Doef about Sexual education from birth to adulthood in The Netherlands.

The public reacted by saying things like 'You have a good

Predictors of virginity and recent sexual involvement among rural adolescents

Michael Young & Denny George, USA

Abstract of a lecture, given at the 15th World Congress of Sexology, World association of Sexology, June 2001, Paris (Abstracts book, page 268)

The purpose of the study was to identify the role of educational aspirations, self-esteem, and religion in early sexual involvement. To develop programs that are effective in helping young people postpone sexual involvement, it is important to identify the antecedents of such involvement.

Voluntarily and with written parent permission, students from 15 rural school districts completed a study questionnaire in their regular classroom setting. Approximately 18 months later students completed the same questionnaire a second time. Completed questionnaires from both test times were received from 704 students. Data were analysed using logistic regression. Data from the first survey were used to predict behaviour at the time of the second survey.

For the variable "transition from virgin to non-virgin" only confidence in completing high school and plans to attend college were significant predictors of maintaining virgin status ( $r^2=.036$ ). When separate analyses were conducted by gender no significant predictor variables were identified for males, but confidence in completing high school and plans to attend college were significant predictors for females.

For the variable "had sexual intercourse in the last month" significant predictor variables were age, church attendance, religiosity, peer self-esteem, home self-esteem, school self-esteem, confidence in completing high school, and plans to attend college ( $r^2=.152$ ). When separate analyses were conducted by gender, significant predictor variables for males included age and peer self-esteem. For females significant predictors were age, religiosity, and home self-esteem ( $r^2=.225$ ).

Higher scores for home self-esteem, school self-esteem, religious variables and educational variables were associated with a decreased likelihood of engaging in sex.

country! It is an example to us!  
Continue your own course!"

The scientist Young reacted by saying that he surely wanted to do so, but that the school boards and the parents make this impossible. They simply don't want it.

Increased age and higher scores on peer self-esteem were associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in sex. Results of the identify possible variables to address by those interested in program to help young people postpone sexual involvement.

Levine mentions (on page 93) that 98% of the parents of a national sample of 2000 wanted a kind of education that would prevent AIDS, but that 97% of the same parents wanted this to be done by only highlighting abstinence during the sex ed lessons.

The idea that sex is a normative -- and, heaven forbid, positive -- part of adolescent life is unutterable in America's public forum. "There is mainstream sex ed and there is right-wing sex ed," said Leslie Kantor in 1997, when she was traveling the nation in her work for SIECUS. "But there is no left-wing sex education in America." She included her own organization in that characterization.

Just fifteen years after Joyce Purnick's newspaper denounced the idea of chastity as antediluvian, the New York Times columnist felt compelled to insert a caveat into her critique of the new abstinence-only regulations. "Obviously," she began, "nobody from the Christian right to the liberal left objects to ... encouraging sexual abstinence."  
(Levine p. 93)

In the meantime, so she says, nearly all teenagers do have sexual contact. Thus, all those wise lessons referring only to abstinence, do not have any effect.

The Allan Guttmacher Institute, an institution promoting birth control and family planning, speaks about "a national epidemic of teen pregnancy" (p. 96). Other reports tell how many AIDS cases there are -- and that is worse: teenage pregnancy leads to new life, AIDS leads to death.

### **The young 'predators'**

This is a sad story. Levine names one of her chapters: "Children who molest -- the tyranny of the normal".

Children who go in for whatever kind of childish 'sexual' behavior are immediately called 'molesters' or 'predators', the other children in the play are 'the victims'. There are no other concepts than predator and victim. 'Predators' will get a severe kind of 'treatment', 'the victims' will receive a more kindly form of 'treatment' -- but there must always be treatment if a child has any sexual experience. It is assumed that these children are sick.

There was a problem in a small town in the US, where a lot of children appeared to have played 'sex' or 'marriage' in the local wood. This was a case for the police, but the police had a problem: who were the molesters, who were the victims? The same child appeared in one play session as the molester, in another session as the victim. Nobody was able to imagine that the children simply had played a game with each other -- why should the only play 'cops and robbers', and not 'father and mother'? People was astonished and questioned how the children could have such dirty knowledge. Nobody had ever told them about it. Nevertheless, they knew -- and did.

Known world-wide is the case of the Swiss boy Raoul, who had helped his little sister go to the toilet, and whose neighbor woman had seen this. Immediately, the little boy was 'a molester'. He



was sent to prison for punishment and 'treatment': he was 'a great danger'. The family has fled back to Switzerland -- fled because of the very real and great danger: the US way of thinking and doing about children and bodily matters.

In another case, a two-year boy who ran naked in his garden, was accused of the felony of exhibitionism. The parents were legally obligated to permit an investigation to denounce their, without any doubt, shameful way of bringing up their child. There are plenty of cases known concerning children around the age of ten, who are considered molesters, who have had to be treated and registered.. for life.

### **Levine tells about the case of Tony Diamond (p 45)**

Tony was nine years of age and his sister Jessica was eight. Jessica had told at school that Tony had "touched her front and back". Because of a law from 1974, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, the school had to report any kind of "suspicion of child abuse, even by a child, to the Child Abuse Hotline. So, an investigation started with which the parents were obligated to cooperate. If not, they are viewed as promoting abuse, which would be worse.

The record mentioned all Tony's sexual misbehaviors: at school he had spoken sexual language and had looked under girls' skirts. At four, he lay on top of Jessie in the bath. He had touched his sister's buttocks with a pencil and had poked her there. In the meantime, the testimonies of Jessica changed week after week.

The court decided that Tony, nine years of age, was guilty of sexual abuse of a minor. The report said that Tony was "a budding sex offender".

I quote Levine (p. 46):

Tony was to become one case in a new "epidemic," the "sexualization" of children; a new class of patient, "children with sexual behavior problems"; and a new category of sexual criminal perpetrator, "children who molest."

[...] As young as two, they are diagnosed and treated, and sometimes prosecuted, for "inappropriate" behaviors like fondling, putting things inside genitals, or even flashing, mooning, or masturbating "compulsively."

From the anecdotes I have gathered since reporting on Tony, it appears that sex play between siblings is considered the gravest, though ironically the commonest, species of a grave and not uncommon problem.

In my opinion, as a PhD in the special care and treatment of troubled children, this 'treatment' is no 'therapy'. It is only indoctrination and behavior modification based on the principles of Pavlov's dogs: giving reward or punishment just like animals in a circus.

Children who molest are accused of coercion, though often the "victim" complies willingly, enjoys, or does not notice the "abuse." And while some such kids are aggressive in other ways, such as fighting, stealing, or setting fires, their doctors practice under the assumption that any sexual acting-out is of a wholly different, and worse, order of behavior. So, with little supportive evidence, a new group of self-styled experts has persuaded the child-protective systems that "sex-offense-specific" therapy is necessary for any minor with a "sexual behavior problem."

This all concerns children. There are a lot of institutions with hundreds of programs which 'treat' these young 'molesters' ordered for treatment by the courts. Levine quotes a man who earns a good living by managing such a center: "Frankly," the man said, "it was a business decision." (p. 52)

### **Levine tells also of the case of Brian Flynn (p. 47)**

"[...] who at fourteen in 1993 had been charged with lewd and lascivious conduct and oral copulation with a minor, felonies punishable by three and eight-year terms of incarceration, respectively.

His crime, denied by both alleged participants, was asking -- or, depending on who told the story and when, allowing -- his ten-year-old sister to lick his penis. After much persuasion, Brian pled to the first count, for which he spent more than two years in the state's punitive custody.

When he went AWOL from one of his placements, the county sent a SWAT team: half a dozen squad cars with loudspeakers warning neighbors to beware of "a dangerous sex offender" and a helicopter buzzing the scrubby backyards of his father's community. Brian scrambled up a hill; an officer took chase and pulled a gun. The fugitive jumped a fence into the night. His mother finally, reluctantly, turned him in. "I was scared he was going to get himself killed," she told me.

A boy of ten had grabbed two girls on the school yard and was convicted of double rape. A mentally retarded boy of twelve had 'groped' his stepbrother, eight, in the bath. He had to register as a sex offender, a life-long label.

These days we are seeing that behavior that is quite normal for children is labeled as abnormal, criminal and sick. Schools receive long lists of behavior items which are to be reported and treated if observed (p. 52-53). It is scarcely permitted to even look at genitals, but "touches / stares at genitals" is listed under "Of Concern" and "sneakily or forcibly touches genitals" is under "Seek Professional Help". If children do not do this sneakily but openly, it is even worse.

Research about what is normal behavior for children is scarce. The most well known research was done by Friedrich e.a.[\*]. Friedrich says he wrote his article to prove that much of what is called 'sexual behavior' in children is quite normal.

[\*] Friedrich, William N; Fisher, Jennifer; Broughton, Daniel; Houston, Margaret & Shafran, Constance, R., Normative Sexual Behavior in Children: A Contemporary Sample, in: Pediatrics Vol. 101 No. 4, April 1998, p. e9

However, when I look at that list of so-called 'sexual behaviors', there might be something wrong with that list. I suppose that much of what is called 'sexual behavior' by the authors, is not considered 'sexual' by the children. "Walks in underwear", "Kisses people outside the family", "Stands too close", this kind of behavior. Childish behavior has now been sexualized; one labels as 'sexual' what is not felt or viewed as such by the children themselves. This is what's happening, Levine says.

In 1996, a new felony appeared in the law under the category of "other or unknown sexual abuse": "inadequate or inappropriate supervision of a child's voluntary sexual activities."

"All children, in other words, need to be protected from their own errant sexuality. And parents who take a laissez-faire stance regarding sex play are, by their failure to intervene, 'abusers'." (Levine, p. 53).

"[...] the North Carolina school administration overreacted almost ludicrously when it censured the freckle-nosed first-grader Johnathan Prevette for kissing a classmate. But since then, "zero-tolerance" rules on student flirtation have become more extreme in some places.

For instance, in 2001 the eight-year-old daughter of a Vermont acquaintance had the charge of "sexual harassment" entered in her elementary school record. Her crime: sending a note to a classmate asking if he wanted to be her boyfriend." (Levine, p. 49)

Thus, all lovely bodily exchanges between children is 'sex' -- and sex is always traumatic. Quite simple, isn't it?

### **Back to the case of Tony Diamond and his sister Jessica.**

A psychologist (a scientist, isn't she or he?) was able to explain Tony's sick behavior. He or she

"wrote that Tony had "witnessed" his mother's rape, though he was only months old; thus, he had a history of abuse. Jessica's unwanted glimpse of a penis was added to her list of victimizations. One evaluator wondered whether [mother] Diane had a propensity for substance abuse. And because at the time Diane was more worried about Tony than about Jessica, who seemed okay, CPS decided Diane was "minimizing" the "molest" and judged her incapable of protecting her daughter. Tony was made a ward of the dependency court and removed from his mother's custody." (Levine, p. 50)

### **In my humble opinion...**

... here we see a people and a culture in which one perfectly knows how to handle with weapons - nearly every family has at least one -- but in which one absolutely does not know how to handle these two issues: children, and sexuality. It is a wonder that children still are born since they think sex is so dirty. However, the teenagers will want to keep trying. Clearly, also in the US, nature is stronger than doctrine.

The doctrine or ideology there seems to be Christian, but in my opinion it has nothing in common with Christianity. It has a lot to do with devilish conservatism and with a general intellectual limitation. Schools and education are quite bad in the US. People are scarcely able to find their own country on a world map, and surely one does not know the difference between the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. People are limitedly educated, thus unsure, and trust in the modern gurus with their conservative and limited ideology. In the US, there are a lot of associations, foundations and institutions to lead the people in the right way, mostly subsidized or paid for by the very rich.

It is a neurotic culture that has to maintain its own balance by creating scapegoats. Unfortunately, communism is over, and the gays are also outdated as scapegoats and fiends of the people. The solution is simple, let's take 'the pedophiles' as the next ones, a vulnerable group, and easy to catch.

Levine spends a chapter (# 2) on this subject: "Manhunt – The Pedophile Panic".

I will not comment on it extensively, because the phenomenon is also well known in the Netherlands. It is a witch hunt, a hunt for a non-existing, unreal construction. The peril for children is not 'stranger danger' or the kind male neighbor. The real perils are the parents themselves with their guns and cars, their nearly permanent absence and their lack of contact -- and all those laws and institutions who aim to protect the children from the greatest danger: their own childish sexuality.

The main position of Levine's book is precisely that this kind of 'protection' is the real peril. The result of this 'protection' is ignorance, grief, unwanted children, unjust penalties, treatments that are not therapy and do not cure or heal, and deaths by AIDS.

It is a dangerous culture. By repressing sexuality, one calls aggression to life.

James Prescott has proved this [\*]: cultures that suppress sexuality, especially for youths, are the most aggressive cultures. Cultures who do not suppress this, are far more peaceful. The latter do not search for a fiend, the first need a fiend. Regrettably, the communists are not good fiends nowadays. OK, no problem, let's take the Islamite. After all, we need a fiend.

[\*] Prescott, James A., Body Pleasure and the Origins of Violence, The Bulletin of The Atomic Scientists, November 1975, pp. 10-20

A somber situation.

Let's quickly go to the second part of Levine's book, where we will find solutions and alternatives.

## **Alternatives**

The second part of the book has called up the exceptionally aggressive reactions. Not everyone may recognize the situation sketched in the first part as somber. But as soon as someone pleads for more room for youth and self-chosen relationships, all hell breaks loose, because of the fear of the combination of youth and intimacy.

The same alternative ideas which have invoked such heavy reaction in the US, are here, in the Netherlands, quite common. Here, we act more or less as Levine suggests. Let us behold this.

### **“Good Touch – A Sensual Education”**

... is the title of chapter ten. Touch is good for children and other living beings, lack of touch is not. These facts are well known since research was done in the '40s with hospitalized children.

Levine also mentions Prescott's research, mentioned here above.

"Anthropologists concur that America is an exceedingly 'low-touch,' high-violence culture" (p 179)

It is well known and proven that families who sleep and bathe together and who are not afraid of nudity, are, in all cultures and times, much better off and more peaceful.

Nevertheless,

"a Syracuse, New York, mother was picked up by the police and briefly jailed after she phoned a local hotline because she was panicked by the slight arousal she felt while nursing her daughter." (Page 180-181)

Parents are doubting every touch. Teachers and youth care workers do not dare touch any child. Men are not allowed to change diapers in day care centers. Fear, fear, fear...

### **Masturbation,**

... says Levine, is the basis of a sexually pleasant life. Nevertheless,

"[...] Republican members of the House of Representatives called for the resignation of Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, whose transgression was to suggest, in response to a question following a speech to sex educators, that masturbation was an appropriate subject for classroom discussion.

This remark, according to one congressman, was part of a social movement that was "killing the moral fiber of America" and just one symptom of a decline also manifested in reckless driving, an indecisive military policy-dubbed "mission creep," and homosexuals in the Boy Scouts." (p. 185)

Masturbation is an absolute taboo in the US. Many adults still think that they are the only ones who do such dirty things.

Do speak about it, says Levine, give names to all parts of the body, teach the children to speak about bodily matters. Respect and accept masturbation by children. Accept sexual games between children. Give a quiet reaction, not hysteria or panic as often happens. Teachers are quick to panic because of the fears of anxious parents. Better to encourage this kind of play, says Levine. Emphasize the importance of friendship and care for each other.

Do touch the children. Don't give them an armor of 'correct behavior'. Let children be children. Do not label everything about the body as 'sexual', including touching or caressing. "Our terror about sex actually 'sexualizes' behaviors that aren't sexual." (page 191). By doing so, we create fear of touching, fear of intimacy -- a bad education to later sex. Listen to the children and respect the knowledge they have about their body and sexuality. They know much more than we think. Respect their privacy, do not over-control the children.

### **“Outercourse”**

This concerns all forms of intimacy except intercourse. The human body has many possibilities for contact and pleasure, so teach the children these possibilities. By doing so, children also learn to communicate about intimacy, they learn about relationships. Outercourse makes it possible to speak with boys and girls in the same terms; for outercourse, there are nearly no gender differences. Outercourse may also be an accepted and encouraged game between boys or girls without fear of referring to homosexuality. Outercourse gives adolescents the opportunity to interact intensively with each other without fear of pregnancy or deflowering. It gives many possibilities.

As we can expect, Levine pleads for an open and honest sex education from cradle to adulthood -- just like we use to do here in the Netherlands. For instance, tell about kissing. "How do you do

that?" is a routine question on web sites on which youth may ask questions. The most uttered question is always "Am I normal?"

Teach the way to safe sex and speak positively about sexuality -- not only about illness, but also about pleasure and safety. Tell the children stories in which sexuality and relationships are normal aspects. Young people have a need for romantic stories and scenes. Tell the story of Romeo and Julia, a classic one in the world's literature. Don't panic if they appear to be able to find porno on the web: they learn a lot by doing so.

Fortunately, there are web sites nowadays to ask questions, with anonymity if wanted -- as long as the schools, libraries or parents do not filter away these web sites. The Web is an unique opportunity to give education about the sexual health of the body and the soul.

Use these possibilities at home and at school, don't be afraid of them, do not avoid them because of the fear of sexuality.

### **What girls can learn (Chapter 9)**

Desire resides in the body. You can feel your body. Listen to what your body has to say.

Girls also have sexual desires.

Fantasy is a way of exploring transgressive desire.

A girl can be both a "sex object" and a sexual subject.

Desire alone does not guarantee sexual satisfaction. One needs also contact, relationship, communication, skills and knowledge.

Even if the desire for a storybook romance is likely to be disappointed, the desire for sex that accompanies such fantasies is neither wrong nor harmful.

Love and lust are not the same thing, and love doesn't always make sex good.

### **What boys can learn**

Boys are more than hormone-pumping bodies.

A girl can be both a sexual object and a sexual subject. So can a boy.

"Dirty talk" need not be derogatory.

Sex causes vulnerability. And vulnerability has its benefits in sex.

Not-knowing isn't unmanly. It can unlock the clues to desire.

### **How to prevent AIDS?**

For us, here in the Netherlands, this is not even a point of discussion: give open and honest education about and possibilities for safe sex and birth control. But the Americans need a whole chapter in a book to argue that this results in safety and health, while always hammering at abstinence contrarily results in unsafety, illness and even death. Youth simply does not follow the abstinence advice, and if one makes love, one does unprotected. Adults are afraid of open education, it might encourage sexual behavior, and adults are afraid of the sexual behavior of youths.

There is still much aversion against and fear of homosexuality in the US culture. The same aversion and fear hinders youth from coming out - the result is sneaky and unsafe sex and avoiding the doctor and the drugstore for contraceptives.

A lot of school drop-outs are hidden gays who worry about their feelings and so give up on school. Many of the homeless youth in the US run away or are sent away from home because of their homosexuality.

There are also many people who have another culture than the 'correct' white and white-collar culture. Many people have an African or a Mediterranean culture -- great parts of the US population are Hispanics. In those cultures, youths are sexually active earlier and people tend to be more open about sexuality. Regrettably, the dominant white culture overrules this.

Levine uses much space to argue to stop dividing people into certain categories and then appoint some of them as 'the risk groups' and to approach them as such. This is the usual way of prevention, but it does not work at all. It does not prevent HIV or AIDS. These illnesses are spread among all groups of the population.

She also argues to respect the choices of people, including choices for sex -- for example prostitutes earning a living in order to survive. In those circles there is knowledge of contraceptives and the practice of safe sex.

Levine makes a plea that appeals to me, a plea for thoroughly reviewing the concepts about sexuality.

"Sex" is, in the US language and culture, simply a synonym for "danger". It is this association that leads to what is called 'sex ed', but not an association with 'pleasure'. The words 'love' or 'real love' are connected with abstinence, not with shared intimacy. However, in a really loving relationship people want to make safe love -- more than short anonymous contacts. The word 'lust' is connected with 'danger', not with 'pleasure'. 'Lust is dirty', that's the association.

Levine also pleads for more community development and the promotion of close friendships. The American community is very fragmented, there is not much community living. One can easily be exiled from these communities. A gay is 'a queer', 'a stranger', an outsider. If there were more community feeling, there will be more motivation to keep the community safe for everybody.

These are the ways to prevent AIDS. Singling out risk groups and exiling them from the community does not work at all. It works contrarily.

### **In her Epilogue,**

Levine expresses herself more clearly

She says that 'youth' in the US by association means the same as "undisciplined, rude, spoiled, and wild" (p. 219). No wonder, because one out of six of the population, including youth, lives in great poverty.

There are a lot of institutions that worry heavily about child sexual abuse, but widely spread poverty is abuse. Scarcely any institution worries about that. One is busy with sex -- better to say, to prevent sex -- not with well-being, food, housing, income or good education and medical care.

A plea for such things is a synonym for political suicide. A plea for stronger and stronger legislation to ban child sexual abuse is a guarantee for re-election and a nice political career.

She rants and raves against the conservatives who defend so called 'family values', but who in fact do nothing more than prevent community welfare and promote tax exemption and freedom to have weapons. If you like high figures, count the victims of that policy. Those so called 'family values' do not give a safe community or world to our children, especially not concerning sexuality. (p. 223)

To repeat a well known story: most sexual abuse of children happens within the family -- especially the poor families, and there are a lot of them. A bit more economic certainty, some more community welfare, a feeling of shared responsibility for all our children would give somewhat more safety, also in sexual aspect.

**"Family values endanger children at home and everywhere else" (p. 223).**

In the US culture, there are quite few relationships outside the family. Contacts with neighbors, shopkeepers and other citizens are quite seldom and are discouraged. Children would benefit from those kind of contacts, but these contacts are prevented because of the fear of sexual abuse and to defend family values. Children are not viewed and approached as citizens, as members of a community. Children belong to nothing, except the family. And there, within the family, is the place where child sexual abuse generally occurs.

Children would benefit from a bit of self-knowledge, knowledge of their own body and feelings, the freedom to express feelings, some appreciation and self-respect, and some acknowledgement of their intuitive knowledge and skills. There is none of that at all.

Healthy food from a safe kitchen, natural green space to play and to make friendships -- there is none of that. Frequently, there is no pavement to walk safely on; only a highway for cars. This is the world that the rich and morally correct people have created for our offspring.

**Her closing words are:**

"Sex is not harmful to children. It is a vehicle to self-knowledge, love, healing, creativity, adventure, and intense feelings of aliveness. There are many ways even the smallest children can partake of it.

Our moral obligation to the next generation is to make a world in which every child can partake safely, a world in which the needs and desires of every child -- for accomplishment, connection, meaning, and pleasure -- can be marvelously fulfilled."

**Back to the Netherlands**

**What might Levine's book mean for us?**

First, of course, it is a warning to not take the same direction as the US culture. We have to stay self-opinionated and defend and hold to our libertarian culture.

The same is necessary about Europe. The conservative policies of, for instance, France, Great-Britain, Ireland and Belgium attempt to force themselves onto us. In the E.U., many plans are cooked up to 'protect the youth', but which are in fact threatening the well-being of all.



So, there are proposals to describe 'a child' as anybody younger than eighteen, followed by proposals to forbid a lot of things to 'children', among which are sex and a healthy sexual development. Following those proposals, half of the European youth will be 'criminal' because they have sex before eighteen or because they make nude photos of each other. In fact, some of this kinds of laws have already passed in the Netherlands.

### **What we all can do**

One thing that we all can do, and to which I am strongly devoted, is to be critical concerning what people say, the words, terms and concepts they use.

Are they logical?

Are the connections logical?

Are there false theories?

Does one blindly believe their convictions?

### **Take for example...**

... the sentence "Sexual experiences are always harmful for children".

What is 'a child': fifteen and seventeen years olds?

What is 'sexual experience'? Making love in the school's bike shed? Trying French kissing?

Exploring how gay sexuality feels? Cuddling of a child? Sharing the bath or bed? Seeing someone naked? Seeing daddy's dick?

What is 'harmful'? Is sex 'too' early? What is 'too' early? What is normal?

What does 'always' mean? Is there any proof?

No, there is no proof. The conviction is only 'generally accepted', but never proved. The contrary has been proved.

The research of Rind et al. mentions a small minority of pervasive harm. Still too much, but not 100%. Where was that harm? It was mostly in girls who had been forced into incest within the family.

More recent research by Rind [\*] concludes that nearly all gay boys have experienced their first sexual contacts during their teenage years, have wanted this and have felt these as positive. The experiences helped to form a positive gay identity.

[\*] Rind, Bruce, Gay and Bisexual Adolescent Boys' Sexual Experiences With Men: An Empirical Examination of Psychological Correlates in a Nonclinical Sample; in: Archives of Sexual Behavior, 30-4, August 2001

### **Be critical, may I ask you**

... to the words, plans and acts of people, especially if they want 'to protect the children'. Usually, this protection does not concern cars, air pollution or radioactive waste, but their own sexuality. Be especially attentive if these people show a certain fanaticism. Be attentive if they point to scapegoats. These people are afraid that a male teacher might touch their child -- not for discipline, but for comfort or caring.

**Please make a distinction**

Make a distinction between a little girl of five and a sturdy boy of fifteen. Make distinction between stroking or cuddling and intercourse. Make especially a distinction between feelings and acts.

Concerning pedophilia, this distinction has already disappeared in public language. "Convicted because of pedophilia", reads the newspaper. As 'pedophilia' is a feeling or desire, this is not possible. "Convicted because of sexual acts" might be correct. 'Pedophilia' and 'sexual acts' are not the same.

Make a distinction, first between pedophilic feelings and acts, and secondly between sexual and not-sexual feelings and acts. By thinking and speaking correctly, the whole story will be less scary. 95% of the people with pedophilic feelings will appear as humans, not as Dutroux-like figures. Dutroux, by the way, was not a pedophile according to psychiatrists, but simply an egocentric man unscrupulously aiming for lust and money.

**Don't use 'pedophilia' as a synonym for 'sex with children'**

This is the common perception, but it is not correct. By doing so, the subject is not debatable. A correct definition refers to a desire or a feeling. How someone acts is a second and separate question. Feeling can never be incorrect or legally forbidden, only acts can. Therefore, make a distinction between feelings and acts. Then, the subject can be debated -- and becomes less scary.

Nowadays, people don't dare speak about these feelings. Because of this, obsession may be called up. Feelings may become bottled-up and become only more heavy and obsessive, thus more dangerous. We may see this at work, having heard of the enormous amount of people who apparently were obsessively downloading certain pictures from the Internet: several thousands, among whom were police officers, judges and priests. All of them secretly busy with their obsession. In a more open society there is no need for this.

In the modern treatment of predators, those feelings are declared as sick and forbidden, just as are fantasies and practically any contact with children. By doing so, the obsession becomes even more heavy. A vicious circle is maintained.

**At least I may ask: make distinctions and nuances**

Make a distinction between feelings and acts, between sexual and non-sexual feelings and acts. By doing so, one may speak more openly and honestly, and obsessions and depressions will diminish. In a more open minded society, such feelings need not grow into obsessions. That creates a more attractive and safe environment for the children.

According to Levine: combating the sexuality of children and youths is the real peril to minors.

## **Book Review, by Bruce Rind**

Archives of Sexual Behavior, Vol. 31, No. 6, Dec. 2002, pp. 543554}

### **Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America. By Philip Jenkins.**

Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1998, 302 pp., \$35.00.

Sex between adults and minors, generally referred to as child sexual abuse (CSA), is widely seen as uniquely psychologically destructive. A vast establishment of social workers, therapists, and law-enforcement is currently dedicated to treating and preventing CSA with a priority that far exceeds related issues (e.g., physical abuse and neglect). Legislators have focused on CSA as a crime in a league of its own, passing community notification and indeterminate involuntary commitment statutes that do not even apply to homicide.

Are these beliefs about CSA realistic and responses to it measured or is this a social hysteria? Jenkins, a historian, has done an outstanding job in attempting to answer these questions.

Jenkins begins his book by listing common stereotypes that have grown up around CSA (e.g.,

- it invariably causes lasting damage;
- it is transmissible from adult to minor like a vampire's bite;
- offending is a compulsive pathology resistant to cure).

He rushes to add that, even if any of these stereotypes is objectively true, none should be accepted as demonstrated fact because they all developed virtually overnight a quarter century ago from advocacy, not science.

He explains this dramatic shift in thinking using the social constructionist framework, wherein modern concepts of sex offences and offenders are viewed as constructed realities reflecting social, political, and ideological influences. As he notes, the utility of this approach is evident in recent times, the past, and other cultures where conceptions of normal and acceptable sex varied widely according to other prevailing social beliefs and concerns.

Jenkins identifies the key players in the current construction:

- psychiatrists and therapists,
- women's groups,
- moral traditionalists and conservatives,
- a sensationalizing media, and
- criminal-justice administrators and politicians.

He characterizes response to the sex crime problem as a "moral panic," borrowing from British sociological moral panic theory, which holds that a wave of irrational public fear exists

- \* when official reaction is out of all proportion to the actual threat,
- \* when "experts"

-- perceive the threat in all but identical terms and

-- speak with one voice of

- rates,
- diagnoses,
- prognoses, and
- solutions,

\* and when media representations universally stress sudden and dramatic increases in the problem that far exceed sober appraisal.

He spends the remaining chapters detailing these panic characteristics, which occurred in three distinct periods in the twentieth century --

- at the beginning,
- middle,
- and end.

### **In Chapter 2,**

Jenkins describes the rise and fall of the first moral panic during the "Progressive era" (1890-1934). He notes that morality laws up to the late 1800s forbade, with threat of severe punishment, a wide range of sex acts, because they were regarded as grave sins.

Age of consent was generally 10, predicated on protecting economic interests (keeping girls from becoming "damaged goods" with respect to marriage), not psychological health. Following the lead of English moral crusaders, feminists and religious reformers in the 1880s campaigned to raise the age of consent, decrying the trafficking of young girls and spread of venereal disease.

Medical writers reformulated sex offending as a biological defect rather than just an act. Legislatures, galvanized by a wave of journalistic accounts of sex crimes and killings, substantially increased ages of consent and introduced castration statutes. This "progress," Jenkins notes, "included a substantial dose of sexual and moral repression" (p. 45), wherein legislatures passed sweeping laws based on flimsy "science."

Jenkins attributes the decline of this first panic to the fragmenting of political feminism, the discrediting of moral activism due to the Prohibition fiasco, and a shift in media attention to other issues, such as Prohibition gangsterism.

### **In Chapters 3 and 4,**

Jenkins describes the second panic -- the "age of the sex psychopath" and the sex psychopath statutes (1935-1957). As in the Progressive era, well-publicized sex killings shaped the public image of the sex offender, casting him as violent and a potential child-killer.

Media sensationalism was accompanied by law enforcement hyperbole. Psychiatry and psychology gained in numbers and prestige from assisting the government in attacking the "menace," increasing the medicalization of sex in the process. Legislators profited politically through increasingly aggressive legislation, which proceeded apace despite government commission findings of vast exaggeration of the problem. Sex psychopath statutes, an "ambitious experiment in the integration of therapeutic and criminal responses to deviancy . . . [with] instructive parallels to modern laws against sexual predators" (p. 76), aimed to close the "revolving door," retaining sex offenders even after their sentences expired.

Sex psychopath legislation continued into the 1960s, but met growing criticism regarding the "prostitution of medical terminology . . . as a basis for social policy" (p. 91) and the sacrificing of individual rights to "therapeutic fads and jargon" (p. 92). Soon thereafter, these laws were abrogated, becoming a byword for incompetent panic legislation.

### **In Chapter 5,**

Jenkins discusses the "liberal era" (1958 - 1976), which was in part a reaction to the public hysteria of the previous period, dismissing stereotypes of the "lethal sex criminal" as a product of media sensationalism abetted by cynical law-enforcement bureaucrats.

He traces various social changes that facilitated this reaction:

- liberal revulsion at southern "justice," persecuting Black men based on trumped-up charges of sexually violating White females;
- the youth culture and sexual revolution, occurring in the context of a broader revolt against the status quo;
- changes in the legal environment fostered by criminology's recasting deviance as an artificial by-product of labeling, used by power holders and special interest groups to invent rather than discover deviance;
- increasing hostility to psychiatric pronouncements of pathology, seen as ideological and self-serving.

In this climate, with greater concerns for individual rights and due process, and a general liberalization of sex laws, sex psychopath statutes fell.

In the second half of his book, Jenkins details the third panic-the current one.

### **In Chapter 6,**

he describes the "child abuse revolution" (1976 - 1986), showing convincingly that current conceptualizations of sexual abuse are largely social constructions erected by special interest groups. Increased interest in physical abuse led to the 1974 Mondale Act, which funded state programs to curb this problem. Feminist campaigns against rape and associated male "oppression" shifted to incest, using rape concepts and rhetoric to frame the issue. CSA became equated with incest, and soon, even in its lesser forms, came to be seen as ruinous.

This dogma was amplified by moral conservatives. The media enthusiastically sensationalized the issue, creating a sense of national urgency. Legislators responded, taking the stance that "no policy would be seen as too severe in combating a vast and unqualified evil like child abuse" (p. 143). By 1977, the chief focus of the child abuse establishment, originally physical abuse and neglect as prescribed by the Mondale Act, had become CSA.

### **In Chapter 7,**

Jenkins discusses the crucial role that child pornography and "pedophile rings" played in redefining sexual abuse. The palpability of the former and vividness of the latter gave advocates extra leeway in exaggerated claims-making.

### **In Chapter 8,**

he documents some of the more blatant manifestations of the panic: Satanic ritual abuse in day care, the proliferation of multiple personality disorder diagnoses, and recovered memory therapy.

## Chapter 9

details the legislative response engendered by these and related manifestations: community notification laws and the revival of sex psychopath statutes, now called sexual predator statutes. As in earlier panics, this response was sparked by notorious sex killings sensationalized by the media. In this atmosphere, a

"sex offender, however nonviolent his crime, was felt to cause a far more immediate menace than the mugger, robber, murderer, confidence trickster, or corporate polluter, who were not subject to like restrictions" (p. 200).

### In his final chapter,

Jenkins effectively pulls together the three moral panics, coherently summarizing common themes to identify advocates' motivations in creating and maintaining them.

- Psychiatrists, therapists, and social workers, often allied with law-enforcement interests, gained considerably in numbers, opportunities, and prestige from the sexual threat.
- Feminists gained in their campaign because this advanced their more general struggles against perceived victimization and oppression.
- Politicians benefitted by appealing to constituent sentiments of "law and order" or "protecting the weak."

This issue gave moral conservatives a rock solid front to press for wider morality enforcement. The media enhanced ratings and profitability through their crusading stance.

Inimical to sex panics, Jenkins argues, are countervailing ideologies of libertarianism, sexual freedom and experimentation, and distrust of the state and its agencies—precisely the conditions that obtained in the 1960s and 1970s. He speculates that the current panic will be enduring owing to its meta-narrative power to explain all social ills and because of irreversible social changes:

- women's much more influential roles;
- the institutionalization of the child-protection idea in social welfare and psychiatry;
- law-makers' bidding war to impose harsher penalties.

He concludes by noting the scapegoat status of "predators, psychopaths, and pedophiles," who represent "a very minor component" of real threats to children, yet have attracted a vastly disproportionate share of official attention simply because they are the easiest targets (p. 238).

Jenkins' well presented social constructionist approach

offers a fresh perspective on current beliefs and policies concerning CSA. It persuasively challenges the integrity and wisdom of these beliefs and policies, demonstrating that they have been built on advocacy unrestrained by serious concern with objective reality and rational solution.

### Its central message

is that we are in a state of panic over CSA, as we were twice before in the twentieth century, because various constituencies with vested interests have used this issue to their advantage, creating a spiraling mythology. Its central implication is that social scientists should critically question basic assumptions and skeptically reevaluate extravagant claims-making, and policymakers should learn a lesson from history, lest they repeat it.

## IS IT CHILD ABUSE, GAY PORN OR OUR LITERARY HERITAGE?

by  
emu Nugent<sup>1</sup>

Was it only last century that the very reverend gay icon, Boyd McDonald, published a series of magazines and books about the true life experiences of gay men? With such wonderfully inflammatory titles as *The Manhattan Review of Unnatural Acts*, *Straight To Hell*, *Meat, Flesh, Cum...* they raged against the Festival of Light and other right wing, anti-sex bogies horrifying the timid, even amongst his gay readership, with their bold honest stories of sex between males.

"The biggest score of the month never got near the sports pages. Male cheerleaders who write sports stories can't be sniffing a guy's jock one day and exposing him as a 'fag' the next. The score: 52 counts of 'sexual abuse, sodomy, and various sexual acts' between seven boys aged 11 to 18, and coach B.F., aged 28. B.F., a football coach of the junior varsity at a N.Y. state high school, was arrested.

Evidently some of the little motherfuckers are 'fuck and tell' types, and after enjoying their unorthodox post-practice pleasures with the coach, ratted on him, playing 'victim' roles. Having sex with boys on the team is definitely breaking training rules, and though the kids had strictly Little League pricks, B.F. was unable to resist their hot little asses - nor they him.

The reason boys go through the masochistic tortures of athleticism is to avoid being 'queer.' But often their desire to have fun outweighs their desire to have respect.

Some coaches, like some scoutmasters, are similarly torn by conflict. They get caught in a vicious circle. To show they're 'straight' they enter a career that is the straightest, but also, at the same time, the most insanely erotic, with boys constantly pulling off their jock straps and shorts.

Many jocks are America's true homosexuals. They show contempt for 'broads' and 'fags' and save their affection for each other. It's a negative love based on fear of bullying but a deep love nonetheless. Homosexuals have comparatively casual sex; these jocks *crave* each other."<sup>2</sup>

This is not one of his sex stories, but a piece of McDonald journalism.

Now his books are likely to be banned in Australia because of their unapologetic mention of (amongst other things) under-age males.

Australian Customs have seized copies of two of Boyd McDonald's books, along with other titles, and are holding them pending prosecution. Two men in Western Australia are currently before the courts for importing this kind of so called 'child pornography'. A third has already been sentenced. I suspect there are more men who have quietly pleaded guilty. The charge of being a 'child pornographer' is hardly something that anyone stands up to shout about.

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<sup>1</sup> emu Nugent is a long-time gay activist and storyteller. He is one of the men charged by Customs with importing 'child pornography' into Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Boyd McDonald PLAYING WITH PLAYERS in *Meat: True Homosexual Experiences From S.T.H.* volume 1, Gay Sunshine Press 1981. Boyd McDonald died in 1993. Later printings are bowdlerised.

But if the prosecutions continue to go unchallenged, it is possible that all gay books that dare to talk about sex between adults and under-age males will be liable to a restrictive classification and banning. There is no 'R' certificate for books (or films) that mention under-age sex.

The law says that any depiction of a child under the age of 16 that 'offends a reasonable adult' is child pornography and must be banned.

No reasonable person would defend the abuse of children in the making of pornography, although there might be a more affective way to prevent this abuse rather than by the dubious method of book burning. The issue here, however, is whether these books are pornography and whether any child is being abused. Is Australian Customs, in fact, interpreting the laws to bash the readers of mainstream gay literature? Perhaps. Although it seems as likely that they are flexing their muscles, and the muscles of a fairly new and authoritarian law, by targeting particular publications; those most likely to offend a straight audience, and which better than those about gay youths. No jury is likely to acquit a 'child pornographer'. What is certain is that Customs have been encouraged by a not always educated, sometimes hysterical, and almost always homophobic approach within Australia to the public discussion of children's sexuality.

Notwithstanding gay law reform, let us remember that it is still illegal for *anyone* under the age of 16 to have sex *anywhere* in Australia.<sup>3</sup>

The recent banning of BAISE MOI from Australian cinemas is only one example of the way the right wing has taken over the debate and control of censorship in this country. Senator Brian Harradine and co.'s past manipulative stranglehold on the Upper House of the Federal Parliament<sup>4</sup>, along with the frightened Christian leadership of both major parties, has allowed some strange laws to slip into being. The 1995 censorship laws amongst them.

Twenty years after gay community leaders (whoever they might be, and with whatever mandate?)<sup>5</sup> decided to scotch any discussion of intergenerational sexual encounters, in favour of appeasing homophobic governments for a limited accession to 'gay rights' and HIV/AIDS funding, it is high time we looked again at an issue that has perpetually dogged any Western view of homosexuality.

And no wonder. The theme of man-boy love has occupied a major place in gay male writings from antiquity to the present. If we see that as a crime, then we are condemning a large genre of Western literature and art to the censor's bonfire, for hardly any writer on male homosexuality since Plato has not dealt with the subject of man-boy love.

A quick look through THE PENGUIN BOOK OF INTERNATIONAL GAY WRITING shows Plato, Petronius, Boccaccio, Cellini, Ameng of Wu, Ihara Saikaku, Marquis de Sade, Balzac, Flaubert, Fyodor Sologub, Robert Musil, Sigmund Freud, André Gide, Thomas Mann, Sandro Penna, Umberto Saba, Costas Taktis, Yukio Mishima, José Lezama Lima, Gerard Reve,

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<sup>3</sup> And only legal since September 2002 for men between 16 - 21 to have gay sex in Western Australia, this is red-neck country.

<sup>4</sup> See David Marr's *Dispatches From The Republic Of Salo* in THE HIGH PRICE OF HEAVEN, Allen and Unwin, Australia 2000.

<sup>5</sup> See Adam Carr's rationale of the demise of the 'pedophilia' debate in QUESTIONS OF CONSENT, OutRage March 1997, and his queer use of quotation marks. Also at [www.adam-carr.net/004.html](http://www.adam-carr.net/004.html).



Augustín Gómez-Arcos, Evgeny Kharitonov, Tony Duvert, Michel Tournier, Giuseppe Patroni Griffi and Roberto Calasso have all had a go.

And this list does not include such Queens of literature as Jean Cocteau, Roger Peyrefitte, Mary Renault, Edmund White or Margerite Yourcenar. Nor our own Australian writers Matthew Goldenberg, Sumner Locke Elliott, Kieren McGregor, Seaforth McKenzie, Bron Nicholls, Ian Roberts, Sasha Soldatov and so on. Are we to condemn them all?

Photographs, paintings and sculpture present an even more illuminating display of undressed adolescents; they have often been created by avowed lovers of boys. All those rude Greek vases and monuments, Caravaggio's<sup>6</sup> wicked oils (the ones which are not coming to Australia in the ITALIAN MASTERS exhibition); the innumerable Ganymedes and Davids, especially Donatello's sculpture<sup>7</sup>; von Gloeden's posings of Greek youths; "Zack's" raunchy comics<sup>8</sup>; Donald Friend's sketches; Will McBride's sculpture and photography, to mention just a few.

This overwhelming preoccupation with the subject of man-boy love might well beg the question why? Are gay men really more perverted than everyone else? Or, do gay men have a tradition of having to scrutinise our sexual desires, and celebrating them in a way not required or possible by heterosexuals? A tradition that needs to be urgently defended, not just from prudes on the political right but also from those timid souls who have misunderstood the last 20 years of revelations about sex between adult and under-age males.

The publications that Australian Customs have currently targeted include Kevin Esser's novel STREETBOY DREAMS<sup>9</sup>, the now defunct journal PAIDIKA, the Dutch magazine KOINOS, Fidelity Publishing's SCUM, Gay Sunshine Press' FLESH, and Alyson publication's MY FIRST TIME. All of which (apart from Koinos) have been readily available in bookshops in Australia and grace many of our own bookshelves.

These publications do look at sexual relationships between men and under-age males. But describing, depicting, writing about or discussing a relationship is not necessarily the same as "promoting"<sup>10</sup> or condoning that relationship. Although even that should not be illegal. In Australia we have a constitutional right (of sorts) to freedom of political expression.<sup>11</sup> This should include the right to discuss our sexualities in a positive way, and to call for the abolition of pointless anti-sex laws. And by this, I include "age of consent" laws, which are arbitrary, impractical and obviously do not protect children from rape.

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<sup>6</sup> See Peter Robb's impressive M, Duffy and Snellgrove 1998.

<sup>7</sup> See James Saslow's Pictures and Passions, Penguin 1999. A book that is stuffed with combustible material.

<sup>8</sup> In MEATMEN vols 22 and 23, "Zack" is always careful of course to give his boys an 18th birthday party.

<sup>9</sup> Voted 53rd most popular gay book on the Association of Lesbian and Gay Men's Publishers web site, see [www.publishingtriangle.com](http://www.publishingtriangle.com)

<sup>10</sup> It is an offence under the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations to promote paedophilia.

<sup>11</sup> From [www.Butterworths.com.au](http://www.Butterworths.com.au): "The Commonwealth Constitution ss 7, 24, read in context, require the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives to be directly chosen at elections by the people. This requirement embraces all that is necessary to effectuate the free election of representatives... Integral to the system is a freedom of public discussion of public affairs and political and economic matters among all members of the community."

We are burying our heads in the sand if we try to pretend that loving, gay, intergenerational relationships do not occur. Unfortunately, it has been a tactic of the child-abuse industry to suppress any discussion that opposes their own rigid analysis of young people's sexuality. But, as is clear to anyone who has been abused, burying a problem will not make it go away. Ask any child.

It is not just young people who are banned from reading or seeing many books, films, video's and magazines. All Australians are living in a nanny state, where our rights to self-determination are increasingly abrogated in the name of creating 'safer' communities. Successive Australian governments in a fervour of right-wing triumphalism are getting away, unchallenged, with using the Australian Customs Service and the Office of Film and Literature Classification to encroach upon people's ability to even find, let alone "to read, hear and see what we want"<sup>12</sup> in the way of good books, films, or whatever. And we must resist them.

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June 2002

## **BAGGY-PANTS THUGGERY & HIP-HOP BURLESQUE: CLOTHING AS SEXUAL POLITICS IN AMERICA**

**By Kevin Esser**

Do gay guys wear tight pants so other guys can check out their butts?

That's what some teenaged boy wanted to know in a 1996 film documentary dealing with gay issues in the classroom. How else could he think? What else could he wonder given today's dress code of Hetero Correctness? His question has been answered by many dismal years of American males in oversized, baggy clothing—men and boys hidden from one another, hidden from themselves, hidden from the dangerous reality of their own bodies.

An otherwise sensible gentleman confesses to watching these boys in their baggy clownshirts and clownpants, to finding them actually attractive. Room enough, he jokes, to climb in there with them and play around. Nothing but a laugh to him, this situation, nothing to contemplate beyond the boys themselves and the disheveled, butch excitement he finds in them. Of course, boys in Nazi scouting regalia might also have seemed cute as teddy bears—those sporty shorts, those jaunty neckerchiefs—but no one should be so oblivious as to ignore the brutish agenda behind the attire. Not then, not now.

### **When did this start?**

How did this stylized disfigurement of an entire gender become the norm? It's a discussion that begs to be illustrated: here a boy in "shorts" that reach comically to his ankles; here another in pants with a crotch that sags to his knees; here yet another dressed for the beach, a foolish spectacle in swim trunks that might have come from Bozo's closet. No bare thighs or knees. No evidence of hips or buttocks. Nothing now but a sad-sack army of anonymous males, shapeless

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<sup>12</sup> from the rather cynical first principle of the National Classification Code, in the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1975.

and identical, shorn and shrouded like so many ritual mourners, like prisoners of war, like refugees from some battle fought and lost.

To understand what's happening now, go back to a time when that battle, that war, seemed to have been fought and won. Go back, let's say, thirty years. Startling now to see movies or photos from those days—from the Sixties, the Seventies, right through the mid-Eighties.

Boys in mini cut-offs and bare-tummy T-shirts, in mesh tanktops and knee socks and the scantiest of gym shorts, the clingiest of sweatshorts, often with no underwear, more provocative that way, nothing to confine the bulge in front or the cheeks in back. Full and frank display. Startling now, yes, but not back then. Young males were *expected* to look that way, just a natural aspect of their whole cocky, rude, show-off persona. But what explains that nonchalant acceptance? What explains those fleeting years of erotic flamboyance? And what happened to bring doomsday to Eden?

It's useful to remember, as historical context, that males have always determined and governed the rules of modesty—both for women and for themselves. Men have always decided, in this and every other culture, how the body will be displayed, and where, and to what effect.

A hundred years ago, even in America, the unclothed male form was not an unusual sight, regardless of what we might think today about Victorian prudery or Edwardian stuffiness. Boxers of that era commonly fought in miniscule trunks that left the buttocks mostly bare.

(Take another look at the George Bellows painting, *Stag at Sharkey's*. Or ponder the image of "Gentleman Jim" Corbett nearly naked in his 1897 bout versus Robert Fitzsimmons.)

Young boys, even teenagers, routinely swam nude in public—given the evidence of archival films and photographs—no shock at all to see them skinny-dipping from city docks and piers or splashing naked in the municipal fountains of crowded city squares, in full view of urban passers-by and onlookers. Swimmers at male-only YMCA pools and school pools and community pools were expected, often obliged, to swim nude.

The culture was guided by the Greco-Roman ethos of the gymnasium (a word that means, don't forget, to exercise naked), masculine physicality unblinkingly accepted in all its uncouth dynamism of muscle and gristle and sweat. Only much later in the century did this casual acceptance give way to a more suburban, middle-class code of modesty that we've come to associate with the 1950s and with Eisenhower-era conservatism. The male form gradually disappeared in this country as an object of public spectacle. Years would pass before new sociocultural developments spawned its return.

### **The so-called Sexual Revolution**

was this momentous rebirthing force. Boys and girls both were suddenly happy and eager to shed their conservative drag, to exhibit themselves, to flaunt themselves more and more boldly, more and more immodestly. Woodstock Nation. The return to nature. Back to the Garden.

Hell, why not go all the way and strip bare? Remember streaking? Largely, no surprise, it was a male phenomenon—ritualized exhibitionism, flashing as a fad, what you'd expect from boys with all inhibitions erased.

*Hair* and *Oh! Calcutta!* brought this frolic of youthful nudity to the stage. At the movies, Franco Zeffirelli created a *Romeo and Juliet* in 1968 that epitomized this Age of Aquarius sensuality, his young men and boys voluptuous in their hose and codpieces, his puppyish teenaged Romeo shown frankly and delectably naked.

For roughly twenty years, this male riot of bodily display would equal or surpass anything enjoyed by females, boys often more skimpily and seductively attired than girls, packs of them prowling the malls and the arcades like half-naked catamites, denim shorts so tight they wouldn't zip.

**And yet, call it a paradox,**

this lusty romp thrived in a milieu of sexual naiveté, the revelers themselves all gleefully anarchic in a juvenile sort of way, like children first discovering their own bodies, fascinated and giggly and eager for new sensation..

The original Flower Child exuberance gave way, in the Seventies, to the feral excess of punk and glam, a carnival of hedonism and sexual ambivalence featuring the likes of Queen, Lou Reed, Iggy Pop, David Bowie. Long hair on girls, long hair on boys. Short-shorts on girls, short-shorts on boys. The teen idols from these years—tender boytoys such as Davy Jones, David Cassidy and his brother Shaun, Leif Garrett, Tony DeFranco—were the perfect avatars of this new androgyny.

There was a unisex worship of the id, a unisex celebration of the Body Erotic that reached its heyday with disco, with *Village People* and *Frankie Goes to Hollywood*, with macho men doing the milkshake and having fun at the YMCA. Suddenly, remarkably, gay and mainstream were one and the same, no segregation, no distinction between queer and straight, an entire culture cheerfully and unwittingly homo-eroticized. The hetero aesthetic and the homo aesthetic had become indistinguishable among young males—in matters of music, hairstyles, and, yes, clothing—no thought or care given beyond looking good and feeling good.

This twenty-year idyll of naïve flamboyance burned brightest at the end. Michael Jackson, Duran Duran, Prince, Wham!, Menudo—the biggest male pop stars of this *fin de disco* era all were icons of sumptuous androgyny. Break-dancing provided the fiercely libidinous backdrop with its brash accoutrements of chains and tight leather, of rising-sun muscle shirts and samurai headbands. Francis Ford Coppola, with his 1983 film of *The Outsiders*, contributed a melodrama of sultry teen fellowship that gave us characters named Johnny and Sodapop and Ponyboy swooning prettily in one another's arms. On the radio, a song called *Let's Hear It For The Boy* became the fitting anthem for this gaudy and rambunctious eve of destruction.

Then, as gradually at first as someone waking from contented dreams, this culture of androgyny and lush playfulness began its sad metamorphosis.

Two powerful sociopolitical forces were already lumbering towards collision by this time, namely the mid-Eighties, with young males trapped between as unfortunate casualties.

- Repressive demagoguery from the Right,
- lamorous identity and advocacy politics from the Left.

One without the other would have been the hammer without the anvil; together, these counterforces met head-on and obliterated twenty years of high-spirited masculine display,

twenty years of young men and boys flaunting the beauty and sexiness of their own bodies. That type of “gay” behavior, as it now seemed, became anathema, intolerable.

### **It’s tidy and convenient and largely accurate to pinpoint 1980**

as the fateful turning point, the year of Reagan’s election and the political ascendancy of his right-wing coalition—even though the full seismic shocks went unfelt for several more years. These dour neo-Puritan champions of so-called “family values” quickly took up arms against a sea of perceived indecencies.

The White House itself led this crusade, Reagan’s Attorney General Ed Meese issuing his report on pornography in 1986. Congress passed its own draconian *Child Protection Act* of 1984 as a sop to the psycho-sexual hysteria being generated by the Christian Right and by the new industry of abuse and victimization that blossomed at this time. Regressive hypnotherapy and its windfall of recovered memories, later discredited, fueled this boom industry. Police and prosecutors throughout the country, with gleeful media complicity, were suddenly awash in cases of alleged pedophile rings and ritual Satanic abuse, the vast majority of which proved to be unfounded and were never even brought to trial. Jerry Falwell and his Moral Majority, Phyllis Schlafly and her Eagle Forum—these and other demagogues had moved from the sidelines to the establishment center, bringing their potent arsenals of hate-mongering and humorless conformity with them.

### **At this same time,**

charging from the opposite ideological direction, came the aggressive activism and rhetoric of Gay Identity Politics. This is not to say that gay activism was an invention of the 1980s. Homosexuals had been politically strident for many years, the Stonewall Riot of 1969 just the most notable event in a tumultuous history. But that earlier activism had been a desperate struggle for basic civil liberties, for freedom from police harassment, for the right to assemble, to fraternize, to exist. This new radicalism was something altogether different, nothing less than a full-scale assault on the American mainstream in order to establish, forcefully and permanently, a distinct gay identity and a powerful political presence. The struggle for basic rights and minimal tolerance had now given way to a demand for total recognition and total acceptance.

### **The catastrophe of AIDS,**

more than anything else, inspired the zealotry of this movement. By 1982, the health crisis was already being featured in *Time* and *Newsweek* and other mainstream media outlets. The sensuous frivolity of disco and its early-Eighties denouement was now being replaced by a type of left-wing gay activism just as grim and humorless as its right-wing counterpart. Understandable, given the deadly stakes, no time or energy to waste for those engaged in this ghastly struggle for survival. Rock Hudson became the AIDS poster boy in 1985, bringing unprecedented publicity while also personalizing the murky gay identity for hetero America. ACT UP and Queer Nation, among others, further fanned the flames of publicity and national awareness. More and more, there was this very real prominence of homosexuality as an “alternative lifestyle” and a distinct subculture or other-culture apart from the hetero mainstream. That twenty-year idyll of naïve and flamboyant androgyny had truly and thoroughly ended.

### **So what exactly took its place? What was happening by the late Eighties? By 1990?**

The onslaught of right-wing orthodoxy and its conformist agenda had proven itself ruthlessly effective. Intergenerational sex had become demonized in new and sensational ways. The age of consent was being revised and raised nationwide, state by state, to redefine the very nature of childhood. Anti-pornography hysteria and litigation (with the wrongheaded support of radical feminists and lesbians) continued to thrive, from Cincinnati art galleries to the Sears catalog, a chilling wave of censorship and intimidation soon exported by America Prime to its far-flung imperium (Western Europe, the Philippines, Thailand, etc.). Robert Mapplethorpe's and Sally Mann's photographs, Michelangelo's *David*, Isabelle Holland's *The Man Without A Face*—all were attacked as obscene, as perverted, as inimical to Americans and Christians everywhere. A film such as *Papi*, rated "G" upon its original release in 1969 despite several scenes of pubescent male nudity, now would have met the legal definition of obscenity in most American communities. The giant retailers, led by Sears and JCPenney and Montgomery Ward, even stopped using live models in their ads for boys' underwear, the national psyche attuned by this time to seeing scantily-clad young males solely in terms of homo-eroticism and kiddie porn.

The gay-rights movement itself shared responsibility for this upheaval of sexual fear and loathing. Its AIDS-fueled militancy had been successful in gaining a token seat at the noisy multicultural table, but the response from hetero America was something close to panic. Like intoxicated libertines suddenly waking in some stranger's bed, heterosexual males suffered a traumatic morning-after of revulsion and self-disgust, frantic to distance themselves from both the literal and figurative contagion of homosexuality. Gay Identity Politics had met head-on with the inevitable "equal and opposite reaction" of Hetero Identity Politics. Left-wing zealotry had collided with right-wing zealotry to create a profound cultural schism, forcing the public to identify with one sexual camp or the other—gay and proud over here, straight and proud over there.

Once begun, this sexual divergence became an unstoppable duel of force/counterforce. Gay Pride Parades and Christian counter-rallies competed on the evening news. We're here and we're queer! God hates fags!

For the first time, certain images and iconography were being openly identified and celebrated as gay. For the first time, boldly distinctive ways of *looking* and *dressing* gay were being publicized for the whole world to see. Those same ways of looking and dressing which an entire culture had joyfully shared for so many years now became the unique style of a queer other-culture. Straight males, conditioned by the new right-wing orthodoxy and its "family values" homophobia, began looking in the mirror to find themselves, much to their squeamish amazement, dressed like faggots, dressed in the kind of short, tight clothing that only girls or queers would wear. Being sexy and displaying the body, from now on, could be for homos only, not for real men.

### **But if short-and-tight was now gay, then what was straight?**

If skimpy-and-sexy was now improperly homo, then what was properly hetero? How should this new culture of Hetero Separatism and Hetero Correctness express itself?

This conundrum had never existed before. In the days before Gay Identity Politics, there had been a naïve disregard for sexual orientation, a simplistic credo that maleness always meant heteroness. Sure, queers existed, but somewhere else, maybe in Greenwich Village or some offbeat locale like San Francisco. They were invisible; they were irrelevant. However males

chose to look or behave or dress was, ipso facto, properly and appropriately heterosexual because, after all, what else *could* it be? Nothing can “look gay” when there’s no gay way to look, no gay identity, no gay anything. Boys in Speedos? Hetero. Boys in short-shorts? Hetero. Only when gays asserted themselves to become a conspicuous and distinctive subpopulation, a distinctive demographic Other to the hetero Us, did a way of looking gay and dressing gay emerge.

Aggressive self-promotion of this gay identity, coupled with the equally aggressive counterattack of Hetero Separatism, forced young men and boys everywhere to start dressing themselves not just as proper males but, for the first time, as proper *straight* males.

This was something new in the history of Western culture. Male attire had always, more or less, been specific to gender, but never to sexual orientation. The naughty unisex protocol of the previous twenty years had been replaced by a stern protocol of dualism. Girls and queers had laid claim to short-and-tight, to skimpy-and-sexy, so boys, not wanting to be seen as sissy or gay, began a frenetic scramble to establish a new and exclusively hetero male protocol that would mark them as separate, that would proclaim their own straight, macho identity. By the rule of opposites, this new uniform of Hetero Correctness replaced short with long, tight with loose, skimpy with baggy, sexy with shapeless.

### **A new anti-gay aesthetic had been born.**

Not all of this happened overnight. The metamorphosis was gradual but relentless. On the basketball court, as early as the mid-Eighties, Michael Jordan was showcasing an original way of looking macho in shorts that were longer and baggier than any worn before. In college basketball, Michigan State and some few other schools became early converts to this new and still slightly odd style of covering up to display manliness, covering up to be cool.

Not surprising that a game dominated by African-Americans should be the trendsetter. Young blacks, long at the cultural forefront, were now using their innovative prowess to undo what they themselves had helped to create over the previous twenty years. This urban culture of rap and hip-hop would become the dominant force of the Nineties—more than just a way of dressing, actually a new lifestyle of Hetero Extremism, a street religion of cartoonish and exaggerated heterosexual behaviors and attitudes, beliefs and taboos.

What Michael Jordan had first popularized on the basketball court was now adopted and adapted and embellished by this culture of hip-hop into an extravagant caricature of sloppy, goonish virility. Of course, hip-hop is just an easy label for the new way of thinking and behaving which has come to define maleness. It’s a huge catchall of mannerisms and music and language and, not least, fashion. It’s a manifestation of Hetero Separatism, but not the cause. Simply ascribing the current burlesque of male bagginess to “hip-hop fashion” is to mistake the symptom for the disease.

Early on, in fact, a Seattle-born movement of music and attitude called “grunge” vied with hip-hop as the prime pop-cultural force among American youth. Nirvana and Pearl Jam exemplified this genre of neo-punkish, suburban angst. But whether the offshoot is grunge or hip-hop or some other subcultural variant such as Goth or gangsta or slacker, the aggressively hetero taproot remains, each style identical in its gross contempt for the male body, the idea now not only to cover and conceal but actually to disfigure and uglify as a proclamation of gender integrity.

Buffoonishly oversized clothing is worn in protective layers, like sexual camouflage, to obliterate any trace of the body's shape or contour: baggy jackets over baggy shirts over baggy pants, the pants themselves with low-sewn crotches specifically designed to make the fabric sag and flatten in front and at the seat, eliminating once and forever the unsavory homo spectacle of hips and bulges and buttocks. Boys end up looking freakishly elongated and misshapen, like figures distorted in a funhouse mirror.

Much was made, at first, of this bagginess as just another youthful fashion trend, just kids being kids, just the latest way of looking cool, defiant, outrageous. Teenagers themselves, mostly boys but also some girls, could offer no deeper insight or self-perception, usually describing their own bizarre wardrobe as comfortable, simply comfortable. This profoundly significant mode of expression was dismissed as something merely frivolous, few people if any fully understanding the deeper, more insidious explanation for their own appearance.

Soon enough, girls stopped having anything to do with this new way of dressing, never more to them than a whimsical fashion fling, a brief foray into the outlandish, like playing dress-up at Halloween. They left baggy clothing to the boys and happily claimed for themselves a monopoly of the Body Erotic.

**For the boys, there was no choice, no alternative.**

What girls were free to choose or discard as just another style, no more permanent than platform shoes or tie-dye, boys were forced to continue wearing as a self-imposed and mandatory uniform. Whether packaged as hip-hop or grunge or some other pop-cultural curiosity, baggy clothing was now the centerpiece of a rigidly enforced dress code, the outward and immutable expression of male anti-gay solidarity. Once established, this dress code of Hetero Correctness made any retreat impossible, appearance linked inextricably to sexuality from now on.

**In other words, this fashion is not a fashion. This style is not a style.**

Baggy clothing is now a permanent and essential weapon in the defense of proper, hetero masculinity. Boys announce to themselves and to the world, every time they dress this way, their own witless self-loathing, their own dull and knee-jerk acceptance of male grossness, male brutishness. Young men and boys, who once displayed themselves in clothing that was all about being frisky, playful, affectionate, sexy, open, unique, beautiful, joyous, now shroud themselves to appear grim, dark, covered, sullen, thuggish, hostile, ugly, shapeless, anonymous.

This new regime of male self-abhorrence should be plain for everyone to see, for everyone to understand. Men and boys are declaring, loudly and belligerently and unmistakably, that females and only females are attractive and sexually alluring; that only females may dress seductively and flaunt their sexiness; that only females may be viewed as exciting, erotic beings.

That, furthermore, as healthy heterosexuals, males themselves must feel not just a positive attraction towards females but an actual revulsion for other males, and must display this revulsion, this manly self-contempt, by disfiguring themselves, by covering themselves, by sparing themselves and one another the unpleasant sight of their own bodies. Boys are *not* physically attractive; boys are *not* sexually alluring; boys must *not* be viewed, by themselves or by others, as exciting, erotic beings. The clownish, baggy clothing they wear is the uniform of this proud Hetero Manifesto of mutual loathing.



**But how is this current uniformity any different from the behavior of previous generations of teenagers?**

Haven't young people *always* craved the security of the pack? Weren't boys just as mindlessly conformist twenty years ago in their tight short-shorts and knee socks as they are today?

Yes, they were—the adolescent herd mentality never changes. But yesterday's conformity, to call it that, was actually a collective celebration of each boy's uniqueness. Today's identical bagginess is designed to hide the body and to make everyone appear drably the same, shapelessly and sexlessly anonymous; yesterday's aesthetic of short-and-tight was designed to achieve the very opposite, to show the body and to display each of those bodies as unique, to display each and every boy as unique, each form, each figure, each shape beautifully different, beautifully distinct.

Yesterday's style also was just that: a style. It arrived, it thrived, it eventually expired. Never, even during its heyday, was it the sole and only way for males to dress. Young men and boys might have reveled in the freedom of that sexy clothing, but other choices certainly existed. Today, those choices are gone. All clothing for young males is more or less baggy. Any boy who might, in some rebellious mood, desire to wear something tighter or shorter is simply out of luck. That type of clothing is no longer manufactured by major labels or sold by major retailers. Bagginess is not a style; bagginess is not a choice; bagginess is a strict and uncompromising code of heterosexual propriety.

Even within the gay community itself, of course, baggy clothing has now become the norm. But this should surprise no one. The same political activism which first brought a startling new gay identity to the national consciousness eventually won homosexuals an uneasy measure of acceptance and respectability from the socio-cultural mainstream.

Once inside the master's house, these former pariahs became eager to consolidate their newfound status by blending in, by stressing sameness over difference, by showcasing themselves as "normal" members of the diverse American family. This sheepish compliance has bred a conformist mentality no less rigid and dull-witted than the regimentation of Hetero Correctness itself. Gays now prove their "we're just like you" normality by aping the conventions of the straight mainstream, which means looking and dressing like every other "normal" Tom, Dick, and Harry. The edgy symbiosis has come full circle; homo and hetero have once again become largely indistinguishable; only this time, today, it's the straight aesthetic of shapeless anonymity providing the insipid template.

So, given the absence nowadays of an urgent gay threat, the absence of a flamboyant queer nemesis, why do heterosexuals persist in their own aggressively separatist dress code? The answer has already been given: Once established, this dress code makes any retreat impossible. Once a "hetero look" has been prescribed, there's no renouncing it without renouncing your own sexual orientation. Abandoning it would equal a declaration of gayness.

Never mind the craven eagerness of homosexuals themselves to assimilate; the stereotypical "gay look" remains vivid in the cultural memory and can never again be allowed to contaminate straight males. No clothing must ever again be too tight or too short—in other words, too gay. No boy must ever again show too much bare skin or display himself in any way that might *acknowledge* the beauty of his own body or *encourage* the world to look at him, to desire him—because that would mark him as a sissy, a deviant, a fairy.

Sure, gays might be good campy fun these days, quaintly and comically entertaining in *The Birdcage* or on *Will & Grace*, maybe even worthy of pity as the tragic victims of AIDS—but no one should want to be *like* them, no one should want to be *mistaken* for them. They're OK, but still, after all. . . they're *gay*, forever the Other, forever the Opposite.

Any glance around the cultural landscape will confirm this state of hopeless, no-retreat intransigence. What began as a random and spontaneous consequence of gay radicalism colliding with hetero orthodoxy has become institutionalized and commercialized and vigorously marketed by corporate America, not only in this country but throughout the entire Americanized world. Watch any TV show from Venezuela, from England, from South Korea—pick a country, you'll see the same baggy male clothing, the same unwitting emulation of America and its hip-hop burlesque of Hetero Extremism.

**Every aspect of male life betrays this style that is no style, this fashion that is no fashion.**

Sports, due to Michael Jordan's early influence, were first to convert and transmogrify, basketball especially susceptible to this grotesque imperative of the thuggish, of the buffoonish. All other sports quickly and slavishly followed, an identical evolution from short to long, from tight to baggy. Soccer shorts and gym shorts, track shorts and tennis shorts and boxing trunks—all underwent this same transformation. Wrestling singlets also were lengthened to eliminate the inappropriate display of bare thighs.

Even beyond athletics, this rule of long-and-baggy forced the redesign of everything from scout uniforms to clothing for infants and toddlers. But only male scouts, of course. And only male infants and toddlers. This supposedly teen fashion, just kids being kids, has altered the appearance and character of an entire gender, no regard to age or race or any other demographic factor that might normally determine a style's popularity.

No spectacle more vividly betrays the true prevalence and permanence of this heterosexist über-protocol than males, young and old, in baggy swimwear. How could a mere fashion of the streets force such exaggerated body phobia at the beach? At the pool? Why would six-year-old boys and sixty-year-old men show identical subservience to something which is no more than a silly teen fad, an insignificant hip-hop whimsicality, even to the extreme of covering themselves where uncovering has always been the happy-go-lucky custom.

Swim trunks for males are now baggy swim pants, some nearly ankle-length, the farcical antithesis of everything you'd expect to see at the beach or the pool, those traditional havens of carefree and immodest display, even nudity. The pretense of bagginess equaling comfort finally crumbles in this context where nakedness, let's face it, is the ideal. As clothing is added, comfort is reduced; as skin is covered, pleasure is diminished. Swimming is also called bathing, after all—and there's a certain lunacy to bathing in baggy pants. Yet men and boys do just that and do it willingly, a blatant example of senseless and counterintuitive behavior that can be sustained only through persistent conditioning and aggressive marketing.

No one would *want* swimwear which is designed to be heavy and hot and uncomfortable unless they've been convinced of its overriding necessity, its deep importance as symbol and totem, its value and its virtue as a uniform of hetero identity, hetero allegiance, hetero belonging. This is institutionalized "street fashion" and "counterculture" at its most corporate, its most commercial, its most relentlessly cynical.

## The body phobia

produced by roughly fifteen years of this protocol and its unyielding dress code is real and drastic, an entire generation of boys trained to despise their own physiques, to look at themselves with debilitating shame.

Such an assertion might be dismissed as hyperbole, as paranoid rhetoric, as shrill alarmism—except for testimony from corporate insiders such as Stuart Isaac, vice president of sports promotions for Speedo, the company responsible for developing the new Fastskin swimsuit. This full-body suit has helped to rekindle interest in competitive swimming among young males. Why? According to Isaac himself, in an interview with the *Chicago Sun-Times*, boys have been “turned off” from swimming in recent years because of “their reluctance to wear a tiny suit in public.” But now, even for those kids unable to afford the full Fastskin bodysuit, Speedo and other companies have come to the rescue with a modified version, with trunks similar to bicycle shorts which are long enough—again according to Stuart Isaac—to help “alleviate concerns.”

That’s right: Boys can now stop worrying that anyone might ever again see them improperly exposed in those “tiny” suits, thanks to corporate America and institutionalized Hetero Correctness. The cardinal sin of those tiny suits, let’s not forget, being their inherent gayness. Always that equation now between showing off the body and being queer.

A recent PBS show called *Shore Thing* offered its own wry confirmation, wondering how best to distinguish a gay beach from its straight counterparts, then answering, “Well, the suits are smaller and tighter here. . .” Of course. Or take this definitive summation from yet another *Chicago Sun-Times* article about male swimwear: “Anything tight on a guy—regardless of physique—is unattractive. Loose is better. For men, loose should be the only way to go.” OK. Enough said. End of discussion.

Recently, it seems, even mainstream media have recognized something oddly pathological about these current male attitudes and behaviors, coining the term “Rude Boy culture” in an attempt to make sense of the senseless. Consider an article from the February 5, 2001 issue of *Time*, which observes that

“Rude Boy culture has a determined self-loathing streak”;  
that this Rude Boy culture  
“treats women as sex objects while implying that men are morons”;  
that, indeed, there is  
“even a root uneasiness with maleness itself in some Rude Boy culture.”

All obvious to anyone who’s been paying attention. Males have abandoned the Body Erotic to females and adopted the role of gangster, of thug, of sideshow psycho, trapped in this dysfunctional persona of their own creation with no hope for escape.

In a fever of overcompensation, these predatory Rude Boys have hyper-sexualized females into what can only be described as sluttish prey. Females themselves have responded with avid complicity, smugly content in their monopoly of all things erotic and seductive, showing off more and more of themselves while males show less and less.

What’s popular now with girls, as the *Washington Post* and other sources have reported, are salacious items such as “booty shorts” that leave the body as bare as possible, a vogue known

among designers and retailers as the “nude look.” The resulting confluence of these baggy boys and these next-to-naked girls—in any music video, for example—can be a jarringly surrealistic sight, like the freakish dalliance between some gang of deranged circus clowns and their hooker consorts.

**In all this cultural debris,**

does any trace remain of that effulgence of male display from the Sixties, the Seventies, the early Eighties? There does, yes, but only those bits and pieces that pose no threat to the strict tenets of Hetero Correctness.

A harmless vestige of the Eighties such as *People* magazine’s “Sexiest Man Alive” is one high-profile example. Soap opera studs and *Baywatch* hunks are another, their type of bare-chested manliness still perceived as safely orthodox, their above-the-waist mode of display still acceptable. Below the waist, of course, would stigmatize them as queer—which is why *Mad TV*, *Saturday Night Live*, *Late Night with Conan O’Brien*, *The Drew Carey Show*, etc., all have portrayed “gay” characters wearing tight short-shorts or tiny Speedos for quick and easy audience recognition.

One intriguing exception to this otherwise hard-and-fast rule is professional wrestling, where many performers still compete in the scanty spandex trunks of a bygone era. This is allowed, perhaps, because of the cartoonish and fantastical nature of the wrestlers themselves, as if these ersatz superheroes and villains have been given some special license to play dress-up, to create their own alien extravaganza of brawling beefcake.

Fascinating, therefore, the enormous popularity of this spectacle throughout the culture at large, and among teenaged boys in particular. Is the bizarre homoerotic subtext itself part of the attraction? Is there a yearning, especially in the male psyche, for something lost and irretrievable? Maybe professional wrestling functions, on some deeply unspoken level, as a boisterous guilty pleasure for a culture demoralized by years of hetero orthodoxy and regimentation, a culture hungry for that type of uninhibited male flamboyance now taboo in everyday life.

And maybe, while rummaging for clues and subtext, we should ponder, just briefly, the head-to-toe veiling of fundamentalist Muslim women.

Is there some analogy between that tradition of the *hijab* and what’s happening now throughout America and its cultural colonies? Are young men and boys wearing their own hip-hop version of the Iranian chador and the Afghan burqa?

There’s much of the same self-loathing in these seemingly disparate situations, the same body shame and phobia, the same fanatical control of public bodily display by an overseer establishment, the same mortifying submission to one’s own depersonalization.

It’s most intriguing, though, to remember that those Muslim women are veiled, according to doctrine, as a means of blunting male desire. The female form is regarded with a sort of superstitious reverence and trepidation, as something precious that must be protected but also as something dangerously provocative that must be kept covered and suppressed.

- Have American males turned this same type of custodial fanaticism against themselves?
- Are boys, in this country, the forbidden temptation that must always be jealously hidden?
- Are boys the intoxicating provocateurs who must be kept covered and suppressed?

- Are men and boys cowering from their own treacherous bodies beneath those layers of baggy clothing?
- If so, what a demented saga of inverted sexual repression and longing and self-denial these last fifteen years have been.

**That must be the answer.**

That metaphor of the *hijab* must finally explain the tenacity of what might have been and should have been nothing but a passing folly. The spell of hetero allegiance continues to exert its own powerful hold, of course, any retreat from bagginess now tantamount to gender betrayal—but put aside even that. Put aside also those tunnel-visioned explanations of bagginess as an outgrowth of the urban crime-scape, as merely a bizarre expedient for hiding weapons and drugs.

**Here's the truth:**

Boys are beautiful, every bit as beautiful as girls, therefore boys must be kept covered. Bagginess is necessary for hiding the reality of that male beauty. The indisputable visual evidence of that beauty, quite simply, must forever be kept under wraps. How else to preserve a strong and united hetero front? To keep the faithful in thrall? How else to perpetuate the fallacy of masculine ugliness? To maintain the illusion of males as somehow aesthetically and erotically inferior to females? Only one way: Keep boys covered in baggy hip-hop chadors. Keep their bodies and their beauty carefully concealed. Otherwise, the hetero protocol collapses.

**But why search for meaning or understanding?**

After all the fuss and bother and overwrought analysis, aren't we just dealing with silly trivialities of dress and appearance? Why worry about such things? Why care? So much easier to play along, to join the pack, to scoff at anyone who might differ or question. But that old Socratic maxim holds true for cultures as well as individuals: The unexamined *cultural* life, you could aptly paraphrase, is not worth living. Like it or not, there *is* significance to the way people dress themselves. Deep significance, for example, to the corseted primness of Victorian females. Deep and age-old significance to military and paramilitary uniforms, to clerical vestments, to the black garb of ultra-Orthodox Jewish males, to those Iranian chadors and those Afghan burqas. And deep significance, for those willing to see it, to the bagginess of today's men and boys.

**Clothing has meaning.**

Clothing sends powerful messages. There's a way to dress that enhances and flatters the body, that proudly exhibits the body; there's another that disrespects and debases the body, that announces shame. There's a way to dress that shows off, that displays, that expresses self-respect and a joyous pride in one's own beauty and strength and worth; there's another that conceals and hides, that uglifies, that expresses self-loathing and hostility and a gloomy contempt for one's own worthlessness.

A way that says my body is good and should be celebrated; another that says my body is bad and should be despised and covered. Ignoring these meanings and these messages is the worst kind of intellectual corruption, something cowardly and gullible in the easy denial of the utterly obvious, in the surrender to blindness and conformity with never a word of protest or challenge, such an undignified embrace of the hateful, the stupid, the oafish.

But if there's any conspiracy to be found in all of this, it's one of silence. Men and boys seldom if ever have understood or verbalized the motives behind their own foolish appearance, no need for pronouncements or tirades.

Once the protocol of Hetero Correctness was established some fifteen years ago, complete with its aggressively anti-gay dress code, nothing but its own momentum was necessary to carry it forward. Always a visceral and intuitive entanglement of behaviors, this protocol requires no list of instructions or explicit marching orders. It's a protocol and a manifesto of the heart, not the head. And now, after these many years, no one even notices or wonders about the strangeness of it all.

This style that is no style, this fashion that is no fashion has become the natural order, the dreary status quo. Girls are pretty; boys are ugly. Girls are sexy and seductive; boys are goonish and repellent. Girls are prey; boys are predators. Their clothing proclaims this gospel to a world long since converted and transfixed.

### **So what's the answer, finally, to that puzzled boy's question?**

Is it true that gay guys wear tight pants to let other guys check out their butts? Sure, some of them, it's a sensible enough strategy—but only those heretical few who've not yet camouflaged themselves in the bagginess of straight anonymity. For the most part, that boy need not worry; guys in tight pants are little more than a memory these days. Young males, in fact, might have no memory of them at all, might have trouble even *believing* that their fathers and uncles and older brothers once dressed, oh my god, like queers.

Nearly impossible now to make anyone understand how that once-upon-a-time loosening of inhibition and social restraint gave birth, however briefly, to an American heyday of honest desire, honestly expressed. Nearly impossible to imagine how that genie could have escaped the bottle for roughly twenty years, somehow allowing this American culture its heady fling of Boy Worship before the guardians of hetero orthodoxy were awakened to action.

More than just odd or charmingly old-fashioned, those pre-1985 filmic and photographic images of young males now strike the eye something like anthropological curiosities, like images of some lost branch of the human family tree. Or like some third, unique gender now gone extinct. The lost Boy-nymph. The vanished Boy-coquette.

Inconceivable that those exotic, come-hither creatures in their itty-bitty shorts and crotch-bulging jeans could have evolved into the baggy, shapeless clown-thugs of today. There's an aesthetic discontinuity between them that should make anyone dizzy, those immodest show-offs from yesteryear surely some alien species or gender that mysteriously came and went, victimized by one of those cataclysmic extinctions that leave nothing but tantalizing relics and a rumor of decadent splendor.

Any other explanation is too unsettling, any serious assessment of the truth too bitter, too harsh, difficult even to contemplate a culture that would turn against itself so viciously, that would destroy some rare and beautiful part of itself simply out of hatred and ignorance and sexual hysteria. It's a loss that everyone secretly must sense, secretly must share. Like music gone silent. Like laughter cut dead.

## Documentation List - February 2003

[Missing numbers are Dutch items]

03-006 @ 1Kb	Nearly 40% of Italian male teenagers had their first sexual encounter with a prostitute, a survey reported in Rome's La Repubblica newspaper says.
03-007 @ 263 Kb	European Parliament - Report on the Proposal for a Council Framework Decision on combatting the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography - Anna Karamanoun - 31 May 2001 - PDF file
03-008a @ 26 Kb	Enquête Parlementaire sur la manière dont l'enquête, dans ses volets policiers et judiciaires a été menée dans " l'affaire Dutroux-Nihoul et consorts" - RAPPORT - FAIT AU NOM DE LA COMMISSION D'ENQUETE (1) PAR M. Renaat LANDUYT ET MME Nathalie DE T'SERCLAES Introduction et Table des Contents
03-008b @ 541 Kb	Idem: RAPPORT
03-009a @ 14 Kb	<p>Petition</p> <p>Wir fordern ein bundesweites gesetzliches Verbot gegen die Gründung und Aufrechterhaltung von Vereinigungen, die den Zweck verfolgen, sexuelle Handlungen von Erwachsenen an Kindern gleich welcher Art zu fördern oder eine Legalisierung verbotener sexueller Handlungen von Erwachsenen an Kindern herbeizuführen.</p> <p>Wir fordern ferner ein bundesweites gesetzliches Verbot gegen die Verbreitung von Äußerungen, die pädophile Gedankengut beinhalten oder die Folgen sexueller Handlungen von Erwachsenen an Kindern bagatellisieren.</p> <p>Kontakt- und Informationsstelle für Opfer von seelischer, körperlicher und sexueller Gewalt in der Kindheit und Partnerschaft e.V.</p>
03-009b @ 6 Kb	<p>PRESSE – ERKLÄRUNG: Bürger fordern Ausweitung des Gesetzes-Schutzes unserer Kinder vor pädophilen Sexualtätern - Übergabe von 50 000 Unterschriften an den Bundestag</p> <p>Der Verein Schotterblume e.V., Nassau, übergibt am Freitag seine Petition für den Petitionsausschuss des Deutschen Bundestages. Rund 50.000 Unterschriften für die Petition zeigen die gesellschaftliche Bedeutung und signalisieren Handlungsbedarf beim Gesetzgeber. Die Übergabe ist mit einer Demonstration in Berlin verbunden.</p> <p>Pädophile, deren Ziel es ist, sexuelle Handlungen von Erwachsenen an Kindern zu verharmlosen, möglichst gar zu legalisieren, versuchen immer wieder, Vereinigungen oder eingetragene Vereine zu gründen, nutzen ungehindert das Internet als freie Plattform, um sich „auszutauschen“ und auf ihre Position aufmerksam zu machen, nicht selten unter dem Deckmantel der „Kinderliebe.Sie setzen sich auch für eine Gesetzesänderung ein, „dass in Zukunft einvernehmliche und schadensfreie Sexualekontakte zwischen Erwachsenen und Kindern nicht mehr strafrechtlich belangt werden können und dass zur Beurteilung der Einvernehmlichkeit allein der unverfälschte Wunsch und Wille des Kindes ausschlaggebend ist.</p> <p>Um den Schutz von Kindern vor Missbrauch durch Pädophile weiter zu verbessern,</p>

	hat der bundesweit tätige Verein Schotterblume im März diesen Jahres zu einer Unterschriftensammlung für eine <b>Petition</b> an den deutschen Bundestag aufgerufen.
03-010 @ 160 Kb	Pedophiles - C-Logo pamphlet - PDF < <a href="http://www.clogo.org/pamphlets.htm">http://www.clogo.org/pamphlets.htm</a> >
03-011 @ 21 Kb	New sex laws in the U.K.
03-012b @ 3 Kb	The German Ireen & Soelaas: [.]Gabriel Gawlik of CareChild e.V., ook geschreven als <a href="#">C@reChild</a> . This association ("e.V.") spies along the Internet for pro-pedophilia opinions, including those with nuances. If one finds someone, one informs the provider and claims to remove the site. [.]The association uses search engines to have more information about the authors. If one find a employer, one informs the employer. If one finds a profession, one informs the professional association.
03-012c @ 31 Kb	Sechs Dateien über CareChild e.V. (im Deutsch)
03-013 @ 17 Kb	Sexualstraftäter - Legalbewährung und kriminelle Karrieren - Ein Forschungsprojekt der Kriminologischen Zentralstelle - Ansprechpartner: Prof. Dr. Rudolf Egg, Jutta Elz < <a href="http://www.krimz.de/projekte/laufende/sexualstraftaeter.html">http://www.krimz.de/projekte/laufende/sexualstraftaeter.html</a> >
03-014 @ 4Kb	Explanation of the German KP Law (in English)
03-015 @ 22Kb	- Virtual child pornography becomes punishable [in the Netherlands] & - Virtuele kinderporno wordt strafbaar
03-016 @ 4 Kb	Gay Sheep May Help Explain Biology of Homosexuals - Nov 4, 2002, By Maggie Fox, Health and Science Correspondent Gay sheep that mate only with other rams have different brain structures from "straight" sheep, a finding that may shed light on human sexuality, U.S. researchers said on Monday.
03-017 @ 54 Kb	Gerald Moonen v. The Film and Literature Board of Review - Tuesday 26 November 2002 - An Artist's response to "just criticism" of the State. Decision of 26 November of the Film and Literature Board of Review. The review was called to establish artistic aspect of my work and as I apply them to my arts. This hearing is based on paragraph of Moonen (No 2) in the Court of Appeal.