

Age Trouble

Diederik F. Janssen, MD, BA
Independent Researcher

December 2005

DRAFT: PLEASE DO NOT QUOTE, CITE, REPRODUCE, DISTRIBUTE

ABSTRACT

In this article I offer a poststructural perspective on paedophilia. I situate this “para”philia in the notion of its “troubling” properties, or potential for destabilisation and denormalisation of categories normally “assumed” and “acknowledged” in the debates over sexual abuse: the erotic, age, and the individual. As a multi-axial problem, paedophilia is an interesting “edge case” for poststructural theory, inviting a rubbing together of queer theory, postdevelopmental psychology, and critical ethnography. In this article I explore the problematic and bluntly absent status of such rubbing. I argue that paedophilia has come to be manoeuvred outside the empiricist model, and that a poststructural view is therefore productive. *Age trouble* parasitizes on the notion of performativity in Judith Butler’s pivotal work *Gender Trouble* (1990) as applied to identitarian concepts of life phases.

KEYWORDS: paedophilia; paraphilia; childhood sexuality; activism; queer theory; poststructuralism; postdevelopmental psychology; Judith Butler; Michel Foucault

What Is This Text About?

This text is about a methodological impasse in child sexual abuse research, an impasse which renders a critical perspective on matters and processes both impossible and unworkably suspect. More interestingly, I think, is the hypothesis that this casus, dark and heavy as it is, articulates problems at a larger radius, problems that have to do with shifting power paradigms (gender, age), the pretences of welfare society, civil entitlement, the Great Necessary Beast of pedagogy, and, at a very basic level, the tragic sides of *truth culture*. To me these are all very interesting subjects, and it is with these in mind that I turn to this ultimate area of cultural convergence.

Although this discussion is (as observed) unworkably suspect, I will try to outline how one might parasitize on the obvious successes of the queer movement. First I outline (twice) how in child sexual abuse matters, the empirical moment was lost to follow up, how it became impossible and unproductive to take empirical data seriously. Secondly, I hint at an adaptation of queer perspectives on gender as they inform a deconstruction of this other overdetermined demographic: age. The implications of this are test-cased twice—first, on the twin doctrine of a “paedophilic” movement/identity that came to be potentialised in the last quarter of the West-European 20th century; secondly, on the tandem fixture of “the” sexually abused child, as it became increasingly “recognised” and “known” (and dare I add, *assumed*).

The End of Empiricism (1)

Inclusiveness of age-disparateness in sexology has in the past provoked opposition from a culture of fundamentalists who wish to un-acknowledge the difference between analysis and apology. This is not to say of course that analysis can ever be virginal of political intention. However, one might care to observe that critics in paedophilia studies are commonly held to be “apologists” to the extent that exercising any elementary level of critique is considered taking up a renegade advocacy role (e.g. Lord, 2003). This diagnoses paedophilia’s special status among the “disorders”, “plights”, “causes” and “identities” it is routinely grouped with: a “para” to the otherwise undefined psychocultural performance of “philia”.

Paedophilia's place in cultural taxonomies is important since such a localisation helps situating the at times absurd manoeuvring of activists to sell their position as one supported by what they take to be scientific evidentiality. In the U.S. (obviously the epicentre of post-1970 global rhetoric over what came to be addressed as "sexual abuse"), this evidentialism informs a well-funded pseudo-secular forum whose moral curriculum has come to rely heavily on research, myth-busting "facts", and stomach-upsetting "truths". The courageous counter-evidential movement, however, although it provokes hilarious self-compromising manoeuvres by the Evidential Front, has major limitations.

Allow me to illustrate. In late September 2005, Haworth Press Inc., after announcing the cancellation of a promising edited monograph on "Greek Homosexualities", eventually decided to proceed with publication conditional to throwing out a politically inclined contribution by Bruce Rind. In an early press release, Haworth's Rebecca Browne offered the (too euphemistically phrased) explanation that the Rind chapter "could be interpreted as advocating adult and adolescent sexuality".¹

My interpretation of this event is that the ban call (claimed by the arch-conservative WorldNetDaily.com in an apparent attempt to market a book written by its Managing Editor and "whistleblower" David Kupelian)² was occasioned more by Rind's decade-long appeal to empiricism, rather than by the content of his advocacy *per se*. Indeed this claim is suspect, where he offers "An Integration of Cross-Cultural, Cross-Species, and Empirical Data". In his preview abstract he proposed to knit together "a vast array of cross-cultural data", "a wealth of cross-species data with important parallels", to argue that what he calls pederasty, contra "highly inadequate" feminist and psychiatric models,

"can benefit the adolescent when practiced according to the ancient Greek form".³

This apparently evolutionist, positivist, functionalist, eclectic, and above all naive synthetic-comparativist agenda justifiably invites criticism, since it seems to rehearse the entire history of outmoded anthropological models right down to the 19th century armchair evolutionists. Beneficence, adolescence, praxis and formality are crucially disparate foci when comparing "the" Greek (a lot of controversy even then) and "us". In any case Rind's grasp of "Greek Homosexuality" registers with politically

aggressive parties that defend a truth against what they recognise as rival truth-claims. “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20).

However this debate seems to deny some thirty years of poststructural thoughts on sexuality, from which it can be argued that “paedophilia” is a textbook example of Foucaultian discourse formation, a contemporary crux of policing “too young” and “significantly older” bodies as such, *especially* through a rhetorical pretence of abuse “realities”, linear models of cultural victimhood, binary meritocratic evaluations (loss/benefit), comparable and reclaimable histories down to the proto-human, mistaken feminisms, and evidential meta-reviews. Rind, in an unfortunately persistent way, joins a substantialist position that has been elaborated by the marketing orgy of therapy and survivor culture, a steady propaganda of “fact sheets” and “evidence based” psychiatry, the cultural domain’s expectable appropriation of grim plots and inescapable sufferings⁴, and the international industry of child rights.

The ease with which this mainstreamed case is versed against positivistic apologists, from grandpa Edward Brongersma (1990) to more recent work is only characteristic of a science culture that clings to a reductionist paradigm of truth, a paradigm that has received duly severe criticism in social science. The popular traumatology of paedophilia⁶, I would argue, is one of many enduring fictions that hurt the most where and when the assumption is made that its effects are or can be rooted in a pedagogical *routine* vis-à-vis which there would be, empirically and evidentially, no legitimate possibility of dissent. Please, please note that I am saying this from what can be called a *hard* (as opposed to *weak*) constructionist framework, which considers fictional all opportune claims to non-contingency. Fictions are the fabric of the good life, not the lamentable or avoidable delusions that put it in jeopardy.

Now, evidentialists are numerists who pride themselves on the significant and the generalizable, but they shy away from process, context and exception. This is all too well known in the more negotiable areas of human interest. The fact that we live in an evidentialist culture in which individuals are policed by the “generally true” has led apologists to opt for contestation of evidence, rather than an analysis of the micro-cultures that invite, produce and digest pedagogically hegemonic routines as

scientifically sound protocols. In other words, counter-evidentialism in paedophilia activism neglects the opportunity to engage in a critical ethnography of “sexual abuse” as a contemporary social plot. More specifically, evidentialists deprive themselves of an *ethnomethodology* of sexual abuse, focussing on the actual, real-time, moment-to-moment re/production of pedagogical truisms. With this, they are depriving themselves of what Western society has been depriving itself of for a quarter of a century (and I mean to say that this has been more of a project than of blindness). The question is not why what is *a priori* called “abusive” is actually “beneficial” in some cases, but why it so sporadically escapes the victim discourse, and why this discourse is so successful in effecting real, lasting symptoms.

The assumptive regimen of truth obviously includes Rind’s oeuvre which is premised on the idea of incontrovertible contra-evidence. Over the past decades this routine has been consolidated by legal imperatives that make it seem impossible not to partake in hegemonic truth-abiding. And indeed a 1998 writing first-authored by Rind has invited an epoch-making and truly alienating response by both the American Psychological Association and the U.S. Senate.⁷ Again, in my view, this mainstream register informs a politics over truth, but bizarrely up to the point that the truth is said not to be able to handle a dialectic model of controversy. This officially ended the scientific era of paedophilia by American definitions (an era which *de facto* had been closed after the 1980s) and this opens up the way for alternative paradigms of research.

The End of Empiricism (2)

Since the foregoing critique strikes me as pivotal, and since it seems to me that I cannot afford to be mistaken here, allow me to deliver it in another way.

If we are to use ethnology (as Rind does), we might say that the ethnohistorical standard of child betrothal and age disparate cohabitation coinciding with a girl’s first menstruation (Janssen, 2003, I, *passim*) has been replaced by consent-based legislation (e.g. Bullough, 2005) which obviously operates under ethical imperatives other than that of the visible body, the lineage or the tribe. The menarcheal body, as that of the warrior, which used to be either a cosmologically accomplished or cosmologically compromised body, became the experiential object, in fact *an effect* if

not, indeed, *the product* of expert surveillance and biomedical routine. The patrilinear and gerontocratic jurisdiction over the specific bodies and acts of specific initiates is now a medicolegal consensus over what “the child” needs, thinks, feels and wants. This “any child” is an invention, a necessary and necessitating fiction.

The measurability of “the child” as such historically coincides with the measurability of experiential sex (Janssen, 2005^d). Developmental psychology has produced a textual order in which “childhood experiences” (of sexuality, of abusive sexuality) are held to be measurable, preferably by retrospective clinical questionnaires, extramural follow-up, and strategic parental monitoring. Memories, also, are held to be referential (other than mythopoetic). If anything, this measurability is the key pretence of American sexology (other than in the ancestral German *Sexualwissenschaften*, where the pretence was rather an analytic one).

The problem here is of course that this industry of objectivity is bound to methodological problems instantiated by its technological imperatives and discursive embedding in the society it aims to rationalise. As the late Foucault has argued, the apparatus of knowledge is coterminous with *and generic of* its project, its micro-praxis and its referents, as it manufactures its own plot. As others have confirmed, a lot of discursive investments are productive of that what they speak of. The quarter-of-a-century corpus of literature on child sexual abuse seems to be, if anything, the pivotal test case for this Foucaultian rendering of “the sexual” (he himself provoked angry feminist commentary on his dealings with this very subject).⁸ Question is, *how can we measure what is immanent to its being measured?*

For some, this anti-positivist framework for what seems to be the holiest of testing grounds for “our” postfeminist morality, “egalitarianism”, will be unthinkable, and, it must be said, this unthinkability possibly is the most profitable and for some in fact economically necessary option.

If we are going to hunt after reality here, we might want to invest some stamina in the thesis that “an experience”, however neurophysiologically and experientially “real”, emerges within a biographically realised, narratively accomplished and performance-based flux of events the assessment of which is the terrain not that of the clinician, but of the culture critic. This may include the critical ethnographer, the *ethnomethodologist* and (per Foucault) the social genealogist (consider Haug, 2001). As is well-realised in the scene, child sexual abuse is exceptionally well researchable by numeric survey, but resists critical ethnographic

inquiry (Janssen, 2003, II, ch.14). Illustratively, “paedophilia”, an archetypically betwixt-and-between creation born from 20th-century Euro-American sexual politics, miraculously proves to be a non-topic in anthropology departments, notwithstanding the discipline’s once pivotal “incest” fixture and elaborate post-1970 interest in local “homosexualities” and “Other” (e.g. trans-) erotics. Also, while critiques of developmental psychologists rarely comment on sex, queer theorists rarely address the issue of social age stratification. If they do, they lament that “confused” or confusing public digestion of paedophilia is threatening the civil ascent of the queer.

Here we need to observe that we have a clinical hegemony only because we have a social scientific silence.

The problem is this: as much as one cannot assess the psychohistorian’s allegations of pedagogy’s historically ubiquitous “sexual abusiveness” (e.g. deMause, 1991) without an avoidance of evolutionist moral centrism, we cannot begin to assess the status and corollaries of sexual abuse *incidents* without referring to a *culture* of ubiquitous sexual abuse rhetoric, a “culture of child molesting” as Kincaid (1998) brilliantly observed. Why this culture, this paradigm (Satter, 2003)? What decades of numeric and meta-analytic surveys fail to express is the cultural necessity, the microcontextual dynamics, and the plot’s social dialectic, the status of which is so obviously ethnohistorically contingent, that it is almost madness not to centralise it as such.

Now, what has been happening in the past 25 years is a frenzied cross-numerification of *demographic* contingencies and parameters (age difference, victim gender, victim-molester affiliation, disclosure modus, ethnicity, maternal support, and so on), without a reflection on the imperativeness of moral verdict, its immanence in the process of its genesis, the rooted nature of research and of researchers (funding, publication, careers, institutions), and the *cultural* impossibility to address a procedurally non-judgmental view other than *as such*: a morally impossible critique of moral necessity. This, then, may diagnose the impasse of contemporary sexology (as of pedagogy), which very definitely is a perennial one: the evasion of a critical ethnographic responsibility in the face of massive moral consensus, the neglect to dig deep into its mythopoetic moments, into its real tales, into how its workings work.

Age Trouble

Parasitizing on Judith Butler, *the very suggestion* of non-traumatic reception of paedophilia amounts to “age trouble” insofar as it problematises notions of “natural” age stratification. This notion is a matter of irritation: it itches the great tragic moment of the West, where the “who” of tribal society is replaced by the “how” of categorical science. *Who* (the person, the context, the charisma) turns to *how* (medicolegal administration, pop psychology, the demographic). “How” is this tragic? Because it bypasses and *dividuates* (indeed: *calculates*) the one thing that it promised to keep intact: the individual. As an academic agenda, *age trouble* means that we might look whether we can do with age what Butler does with gender.

For this, we need a critical ethnography of young sexualities. The grounding work for this was delivered in a book by Gubrium and Buckholdt (1977, as cited in Janssen, 2005^c) which however notably left out the question of psychosexual maturity. Taking a performative stance on development, the authors argue that maturity is less a result of “social negotiation and accomplishment” than immanent in the processes that occasion the claim of such as result. Current ethnographic research indeed points out that children continuously negotiate their maturation status, which is always under threat and never established. When I say “always under threat” I do mean to say that a paedophilic encounter (in the post-industrial West) is just this: yet another threat to unitary and hegemonic notions of maturity. This, in my estimation, is not a naturalisation by trauma (as may be argued), but a queering of its contingencies.

This is important: the notion of trauma is exceptionalising and exclusionary in public discourse, while it more productively can be thought of as ultrastructural to social life. Clinical genres of traumatology that cater to mass populations for economic or ideological reasons tend to downplay the political nature of the diagnostic moment. Diagnosis is a traumatic intervention among traumatic interventions. It feeds the cultivation of naivety consisting of a dependency on fragile notions like objectivity, biology, therapy, and amoral psychology. More specifically, it requires a total and totalising consensus on notions of trauma, trajectory, intervention, eventuality, normality and disruption.

Psychosexual milestones are just that only *as*, *how* and *when* they are claimed, narrated, or negotiated as such. In other words: maturity does not exist other than in

the routines, protocols, or texts by which “it” is claimed. Hence, sexual lives and their traumas are as much recounted, remembered, recited, narrated, or collected, as criminological interviews are co-performative of the (occasional, stage-acted, implicit, tacit) consensus that they could be thus referenced. Maturity is not a status quo, it is not even work-in-progress—it is enduring work on the assertion of progress. In pop psychology these claims of propulsion amount to a zoo of metaphors, but only to instrumentalise the tactic of closure. Take a pick: survival, healing, development, acceptance, recognition, situating matters, overcoming matters, and so on. What we have here is re-narration, not curation; here we have emplotment not reparation.

Life experiences do not *produce* maturity, they are the *performance* of the claim of its production. As Butlerian gender, life phases have no “ontological integrity”. As O’Neil (2000, p. 164) concludes, “It is only through acting one’s age rather than as a reflection of some actuality that age gains its spectre of substance”. Obviously this observation compromises the hegemony of objective psycho-traumatology which is rooted in untenably objectivist and a-cultural ideas about age-appropriateness, psycho-endocrinology, and “developmental needs”. Every conscientious anthropologist would rebel against these ideas this if s/he had a motive (and a grant, and the guts) to do so.

With Butler we can (rhetorically) ask, is “the child” an eternal universal category? Do narratives of “the child”, as of “woman”, provide

“a false sense of legitimacy and universality to a culturally specific and, in some cases, culturally oppressive version of ~~gender~~ [age] identity”?

Age is not a primary category, but an attribute, a set of secondary narrative effects. In common usage, age has been that blunt, dead demographic easily exchangeable with other forms of social calculus⁹, and as such a depthless factor in psycho-social normality, particularly gender normality. As a chronometric parameter, age, on the other hand, also translates to a heavily politicised, academised and conventionalised plot, “development”, which proves resistant to the “new humanities”. Age is a bureaucratic fixture in a culture that heavily invests in chronometric evaluations (Chudacoff, 1989), in what Morss (1990) identifies as the biological naturalisation of life phases, and in “developmental” stages rather than the earlier medico-hygienist desiderata of regulation, firmness and discipline (Turmel, 2004).

Here's the thing: Where Jonathan Ned Katz historicises the “occassionality” of the heterosexual (1995), one might historicise the ascent and reactivity of “adult sexuality” as a norm that retroactively was to contain and border Freudian claims to the infantile and the regressive. There he (predominantly: he) was: the fully responsible adult, all normally engaged in all normally adult matters, protecting children of the hazardous realities he embodied. The pivotal moment lies with Von Krafft-Ebing, who first and simultaneously catalogued both the “paradoxic” child (Janssen, 2001) and the Paedophile in a contemporary sense. These issues however remained latent until after the second feminist wave, and —as observed— were heavily short-changed by all the good stuff of the third wave (poststructuralism, queer theory, critical theory).

While age faded in as gender faded out as the organising momentum of medicolegal sexology, age never entered queer studies, which continued to exercise a gender paradigm on the erotic. This is an anachronism (cf. Angelides, 2005, p. 273; cf. Angelides, 2004^{a,b,c,d}). In his hint at Australian gay activism's experience with paedophilia (2005), Steven Angelides centralises its “homophobic” utility by observing the conservative confusion of abject gender preferences with abject age preferences, and more generally its usage in the opportune “recuperation” of hegemonic masculinity. This genderist framework, however, would make paedophilia just another gender dynamic. It may be more productive to state that the conservative front has always confused everything abject and everything sexual when deemed opportune. I think Angelides is more on the mark when observing that “The discourses of paedophilia and sexuality have undergone profound transformations, and it is the axis of age, and the distinction between child and adult sexuality, that [contemporarily] is of utmost social, community and parental interest and concern”.

This shift was paradigmatic, and Angelides' point may be stated in a converse fashion: the post-1970 *decursus* of homosexuality was already another instance of the new age-appropriateness ethic, of a stratificationist project in an otherwise happily queered, egalitarianist culture. The depsychiatrisation of DSM-II homosexuality *as such* shifted medicolegal priorities to age-delimited child-informing issues of gay parenting and adoption, consent age, homosexual boy Scout mentors and teachers, homosexuality in sex education curricula and through internet filters, and, although this is debated, Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood (Sedgwick, 1993 versus Zucker

and Spitzer 2005; cf. Wilson, Griffin & Wren, 2002). This is not the continuation of a homophobic era. It is the reframeworiking of homosexuality in the age paradigm, where homosexuality matters only if it disturbs the new holy stratification mantra.

Drawing from Robert J. Corber and Stephen Valocchi's *Introduction* to their 2003 *Queer Studies* (in which age is still not represented other than in terms of adult "age play"), central to the deconstruction of this mantra would be that age-defined social loci are ideological fictions that work to naturalise and thus perpetuate power structures. Age based loci are provisional and contingent. The child is not a stable and autonomous category but a supplement that works to stabilise adulthood by functioning as its binary opposite. As such it enables adulthood to act out its normality, with "childhood", "adolescence" and any other inventions emerge as graded deviations, resolvable *in due time*. Adulthood came to depend on its childhoods for its coherence and stability. Per Judith Butler, age is performatively constituted, age identities are the effect of repeated performances of cultural signs and conventions. In other words: the salience of the temporary and that of timing is a political move. "Life phases" are constituted by regularised and constrained repetitions of social norms. Drawing from Foucault (historicising the unholy duo of the sexualised child and the psychiatricised pervert), the age-based subject may be said to be constituted in and through the meaning systems, normative structures and culturally prescribed taxonomies that circulate in communities. Both "child" and "paedo"phile internalise the norms generated by the discourses of age-delimited intimacies as they are circulated by social institutions and fora (schools, clinics, mass media, couch) and in so doing become self-regulating subjects, or subjects who police their own behaviour so they will appear "normal"—normally framed in time. As a sizeable bibliography¹⁰ shows, all male teachers work this normality as they attempt to negotiate a culture of "safety" (Jones, 2003, 2004).

Now, the exclusion of *development* within the canonical postmodern triad ('race'/ethnicity—class—gender) does seem obvious for a number of reasons. If anything, the concept of pedagogy appears to be rooted, embodied and institutionalised in a *cult of necessity* regarding generational power differentials, at least as far as intimacies are concerned. One can't step outside the three interventionalist paradigms of pedagogy: educationalism, correctionalism, protectionism. This means that intimacy educationalists have not been able to go

beyond what are called anti-authoritarian, critical, and postmodern formulations of “peer” led, “participatory”, “dialogical” and “exchange” based routes of education (which usually and safely means post-teen education). ‘Sex’ologically, then, we are not post-educational, post-developmental (cf. Janssen, 2004). This, I will be arguing, informs a culture critique of paedophilia where, in the public encounter, it is the tale of the developmentally unforthcoming depriving developing Others from their forthcoming piece of the adult cake, in a hip metaphor, a “cycle of abuse”. It is at this mythopoetic site that comments need to be made.¹¹

It is clear that in doing so we need to put on hold a normative sentimentalism in which the matter is usually immersed. As always, we have to look at the anxiety-driven plots and tropes indigenous to West-European sentimentality. The villain, usually over religious, ethnic or gender orientation lines, has commonly been understood as molesting children (Bronski, 1998, p. 112). In the 20th century this accusation consolidated from an attribute to a category. Ken Plummer (1995, p. 30) cites Gayle Rubin in the observation that in an imagined Western hierarchical system of sex value (an interesting neurosis), at rock bottom roam “those whose eroticism transgresses generational boundaries”. Paedophilia seems the residue after all humanity and worth has been flushed out. To this extent, who thus classifies himself or allows himself to be thus classified deprives himself from conventional, indeed residual, humanist coverage. Thus deprived, the reigning level of conventional social reference operates at the sentimentalist level. If ‘paedophiles’ aren’t emotionalists themselves, then, their social containment (e.g., Howitt, 2002) certainly is. Lynch (2002) observes how, instead of child-centeredness, there exists this “constellation of emotional expressions of disgust, fear of contagion, and pollution avoidance” at work in the would-be detached grids of legislative arenas that regulate the accessed child as such. Of course, child-centeredness is no unproblematic alternative (certainly no singular one, as Chung and Walsh [2000] observe) to however sincere an Emotionality.

“The Paedophile”: A Movement? An Identity?

Once, “Pedophiles were another ‘minority within the minority’ and the question of boy love was recurrent in virtually every issue [of *Gai Pied*, a forefront

French gay lib mag]" (Chassaigne, 2005). Not surprisingly, with the gradual marginalisation of age politics from West-European gay radical circles (arguably the most thinkable place for such a politics), and with the overtly political non-coverage of age (other than the not-too-young) in queer theory (cf. Janssen, 2005^d), whatever remained in terms of a movement, apart from a brief international forum related to the *Paidika* journal (Amsterdam, 1987-1995), a radical (or even stable) platform never materialised. The overrepresentation of medicolegal truths, then, continues to inform an uncontested *iatric* hegemony. This bulwark is largely left intact by feminist appraisals. Some attention has been given within media studies¹² and some heretic efforts do exist¹³; however, a movement is not there.

If we are to conclude with Jeffrey Weeks (and Judith Butler) that paedophilias (*sic*) could aspire to productive and transformational 'oppositional identities', as 'necessary fictions', or 'sites of necessary trouble', then a major role would be carved out in establishing a critique of what I call *the sexual Curriculum*, or the total cultural apparatus that fixes subjects to their appropriate locus on The Social Timeline (Janssen, *forthcoming 2*).

I do not think age-pivoted identities have to be oppositional (to myths, e.g., to hegemonic age-identified sexualities), collective, alternative, or necessary (as Weeks appears to allow in his metaphor). I also depart from Weeks' imperatives of comfort, support, belonging, hope and survival, which I gather are rooted in unproductive American obsessions with redemption, therapy, a-traumatic self-deployment, unproblematic (e.g. "human" or "child") rights, self-evident truths, and anthropological parochialism. Clearly, these are luxuries self-identifying paedophiles cannot currently afford, and perhaps it is not just possible but even more productive to make other kinds of investments.

In social science, "the paedophile" is an exemplary case history of discourse formation and subjectivity (Michel Foucault), an "abject" or "queer" desire rooted in a praxis of shame, a "betwixt-and-between" itch to categorical "age society" (typically a man-boy or some self-conscious form of Peter Pan). In discursive psychology, the paedophile proves not so much a compromised male, as an "adult manqué", a failure to live up to the standard of being able to accommodate a sexualisation process *as a pivotal coming-of-age ordeal* or developmental challenge. Thus, the paedophile "*is*"

and “*causes*” a disruption of hegemonic organizations of age stratification, both in the social construct of the persona as in the politics of the interpersonal.

Ten years ago, Dynes (1995) argued that “[...] it might seem that ‘queeritude’ encourages any and all transgressions into forbidden zones, including sadism, masochism, and trans-sexualism. As if by common consent, however, pedophilia remains taboo. There are still, it seems, some limits”. Gayle Rubin (1992) however seemed to care enough to pay lip service to “the community of men who love underaged youth”. What community?

The category of a “paedo”phile was a product of second half 20th century and the social actors who “reversed” its deployment by mobilising politically around it. This reversal contributed to the consolidation of the binary organizations by reifying and further entrenching the categories involved. This analysis however may seem to neglect institutional underpinnings of discursive formation, particularly the role of medical and justice apparatus. It may be worthwhile to examine institutional sources of discursive power, and how institutions are in part discursively constructed.

Paedophilia could not be contained within a gender politics that included the deconstructed *other* sexes, *other* genders, *other* gender orientations; paedophilia never *postmodernised* (Simon, 1989, 1996). There’s no argument however to exclude deconstructed, *other* pedagogical principles from queer phenomenology.

Contra much elaboration of the reverse case, dominant clinical perceptions of paedophilia have contained age as erotic index, rather than identity fixture. In part this may be exponential to the “orientation identity” terrorism as seen in much of American sexology. The issue of identitarianism in paedophilia is obviously complicated since at no level (law, employment, consumption to name a few) can such an identity be productively claimed: paedophiles always lose. This may have had the historical effect that, contrasting the self-fashioning agency and mobility gained by the queer industry, paedophiles never developed the imperative or the tools to perform close self-analysis or clever counter-culturalism. Paedophiles are often culturally impotent if not invisible: instead of contributing to the deconstruction project, they make an ass of themselves in transgressive venues. This is unfortunate from every imaginable angle: stigma theory, truth culture, coherent and hospitable poststructuralism, critical pedagogy, honest parenthood, justice, psychiatry—these are all delivered to the blunt superficialities of the therapy doctrine. It may be regarded a sad thing, for instance, that paedophiles find no venue (no serious venue,

in any case) to contest their sexualisation, their praxis being reduced to crime potential, their gaze to that of the pornographer, their sentiments to those of orientation.

In the remainder of this article I will offer some points of departure for engaging in age trouble. I would like to stress the obvious here, that I do this not for the sake of the paedophilic encounter, but to recognise its current ethnographic salience in the deconstruction of age stratification as a “total” system. If anything should be clear, it is the centrality of this system that is at stake.

“The Child”: Sexual Curricula, Proto-Erotics

Western humanist writing over the course of the late 20th century produced academic discourses that demonstrate clear paradigmatic *idées fixes* and pivots: among these, “erotics”, “sexual performance” and “gender”. A discussion of curriculum here is usually organised around issues of becoming, that is to say, one is entitled, included and reckoned when one *has become*, only marginally so when one *is becoming*. For instance, the inclusion of ‘Q’ for ‘questioning’ to the addressee mantras of G/L/B/T/S/A communities suggests a cognitive trajectory ending in choice...there’s no ‘N’ (Not affiliated) either. As Plummer notes for the post-1970 Anglo-Saxon case, this gender bulwark’s dealing with trajectories has typically teased out modernist therapeutic tales of “suffering, surviving, surpassing”, with unambiguous entries, courses and exits (discussed in Janssen, 2005^c). The net result of this process has been that pre-adult intimacies have been reduced to exactly these, performances of preceding, aspiring, attempting, experimenting, play (Janssen, 2005^b), developing, approaching, awakening, budding, blossoming, arriving at some imagined ‘minimal’ status or, horribly, some stable or ‘end’-stage (‘being gay’). Although a number of efforts document tales of inconsequential, unproductive and otherwise atypical trajectories, naive realist formulations of trajectories show up in the writings of even forefront genderists (Janssen, 2004). “Development” seems a mantra too appealing and too instrumental to abandon it to the deconstructionist, while institutions by necessity entirely refute subjective approaches to matters of ontology, and perform utterly obscene forms of reductionism (consent ages).

Jacqui Gabb's (2004^{a,b}) research assessed "the effects of cultural debates, social policy and government legislation on "families' 'intimate practice' and how these cultural changes and social discourses structure the emotional currency of families".

This proposed nexus between the discursive and emotional realm seems to be of interest to paedophilia as a tale of "sexuality". American 1970s discourse of sexual performance allows that what are considered intimate matters of identity prove decidedly suitable for technologising, therapeuticising, and marketing. This of course was the Foucaultian insight: a culture of silence turned out to be a culture of constant, compulsive, and propulsive communication (indeed: "intimation"). This meant reification, mass confession, and mass representation of erotic performativity. This culture of orchestration suggested, and was to suggest, that the erotic could be and should be thought of in terms of managerialism (cf. Tyler, 2004), superimposed on the popular notion of the erotic as a biological (and hence biologically scheduled) modality. That is to say, eroticism was being reduced to, and contained in, market-driven performance-centred mass-circulated imperatives of self-realisation and self-enhancement.

This regimentation tended to exclude young consumers but aggressively include the pedagogue. Crucially this pedagogisation of entitled subjects came to border the adult scene characterised by imperatives of anticipation and modelling. This marks a culture of flux, in which essences should "become", and alter to become better. The counter-argument of course reads that essences are mythic constraints on diversity, and that the maxim of betterment is a capitalist trick. The capitalism of the erotic also erases the proto-eroticism of childhood which is imagined only in terms of the adult and the pubertal (Janssen, 2005^d), in terms of an ideal yet unholy absence.

Preadolescence—it is the adrenergic world of undefined unarticulated tension, excitement, immersion and absorption in the new and untrodden. It is the stage where identitarianism is not yet pronounced, any partiality excusable, yet, according its 21st century poetics, every act of participation is a magnet for parasitic, abject "usage". This stage excludes "the sexual" as we know it (as we like it), but then, the child is not immune to it *as such*. Far from it: here, it is more potently identitarian than ever, it is out of control, our control.

The discursive localisation of paedophilia in the realm and the sphere of "the sexual" is opportune in the sense that it locates the child in the realm of the adult.

Paedophilia, then, is *ectopy*, a child out of place. Hence the child is object, victim, ignorant and innocent of what the acquaintance is construed to be about, namely sexual=adult desire. Hence, the peculiar nosological entity of the “sexualised child”, a 1990s American clinical invention which seems to juxtapose (that is: propagandise the existence of) natural and “hurried” chronologies of sexual inauguration. As the well-marketed and well-received argument goes, the adultified child is rendered ectopic to its peer culture.

The naïve objection that “children are not innocent” is an endorsement of the privileged claim of “the sexual” as a universal human experience (which the child “learns” or “grows into”), or at least an incorrect observation given the low status of sexological sophistication in Euro-American children (and adults, for that matter). Obviously they *are* innocent, and this is why they cannot resist a victim narrative.

Here we touch the core issue: sexual abuse occurs where the sexual is defined present, where it is demarcated. The elaborate bureaucratisation of this definition ensures that this is always the case where bureaucratic (medicolegal) procedures are present. This state of centralisation also dictates that alternative definitions, definitions that *might* be considered indigenous to the subjects most directly involved are either not considered or, more likely, considered only in terms of the bureaucratic protocol. This leads, for instance, to the suspect juridical-clinical notion of “cognitive distortions” meant to neutralise dissenting truth-versions by people subject to a diagnostic or reintegration trajectory. Most of these notions are as much “distorted” as paedophilia is a “disorder”, namely in terms of an apparent failure of social processes to produce a normal plot, an approved text, a normative subject.

Question is whether classificatory adults might partake in the pre-managerial, pre-propaedeutic, proto-erotic realm. Obviously this question is neither posed nor answered, since the problem, as observed, is taken to be strictly genital. This is, as many things in social politics, a rather unfortunate project of disambiguation, a bizarre desexualisation/sexualisation proposal that one might expect from a person who has known no intimate life whatsoever, has no frame of reference, and no eye for the subtleties of life’s often paradoxical sentimentalities. It is the worst kind of eclectic Freudianism. Sadly, it is also a deep public consensus to drive this project to its ugly extremes.

To Conclude

The paedophile is the regressive option, it transgresses where it regresses. But how is regression pathological?¹⁴ Where does it cross what line? Does it, other than parenthood, produce an unproductive nostalgia, an unworkable stagnation? Yes. Does it produce a need for rejuvenation surgery or decelerating hormone therapy? No. Does it compromise a stabilising mythology of human procreation? I would say that it might. Does it, in its negation, sustain and feed an ongoing fictional fabric of intellectual progress, of trajectorial selfhood and of cultural ascendancy? Quite so. Does it, by its very definition, solve perennial problems of ambiguity, uncertainty and prospectively titrated purpose? Yes.

So is paedophilia (the idea of a felt desire for approximation and unification with the immature) damaging? No— if it feeds and delivers a desirable plot of transgression, protection, and survival, which it does. No— if it is referenced as a protocol of social organization, since its localisation stages an enforcement that seems to need continuous staging. No— if it satisfactorily allocates a pervasive danger, and renders a troubling situation (cultural indoctrination and blindness) solvable, which it does. No— if it provides a “preferential” (orientational) Self as an “identitarian” Self, which it strikingly (if unfortunately) does.

References

- Alcoff, L. M. (1996) Dangerous pleasures: Foucault and the politics of pedophilia, in Hekman, S. (Ed.) *Feminist interpretations of Michel Foucault*, pp. 99-135. University Park: Penn State Press
- Angelides, S. (2004^a) Historicizing Affect, Psychoanalyzing History: Pedophilia and the Discourse of Child Sexuality, *Journal of Homosexuality* 46,1/2:79–109
- Angelides, S. (2004^b) Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse, and the Erasure of Child Sexuality, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies* 10,2:141-177
- Angelides, S. (2004^c) Paedophilia and the Misrecognition of Desire, *Transformations* 8 [http://transformations.cqu.edu.au/journal/issue_08/article_01_print.shtml]
- Angelides, S. (2004^d) Sex and the child: are modern approaches to the treatment of child sexual abuse, in ignoring or misapprehending Freud, at risk of compounding the trauma that can result from that abuse? *Meanjin* 12/1/2004
- Angelides, S. (2005) The Emergence of the Paedophile in the Late Twentieth Century, *Australian Historical Studies* 37,126:272-295

- Brongersma, E. (1990) *Loving Boys*. 2 Vols. Elmhurst: Global Academic Publishers
- Bronski, M. (1998) *The Pleasure Principle: Sex, Backlash, and the Struggle for Gay Freedom*. New York: St. Martin's Press
- Bullough, V. L. (2005) Age of Consent: A Historical Overview, in Helmut Graupner & Vern Bullough (Eds.) *Adolescence, Sexuality & the Criminal Law*. New York: Haworth Press
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge
- Chassaigne, Ph. (2005) *Gai Pied and the rhetorics of identity in the French gay community, 1979-83*. Proposal for the "Rhetorical Construction of Identities: Place, Race, Sex and the Person" Conference, University of Redlands, 20-23 January, 2005
- Chudacoff, H. P. (1989). *How old are you? Age consciousness in American culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Chung, Sh. & Walsh, D. J. (2000) Unpacking child-centredness: a history of meanings, *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 32,2:215-234
- Corber, R. J. & Valocchi, S. (2003) Introduction, in Corber, R. J. & Valocchi, S. (Eds.) *Queer Studies, An Interdisciplinary Reader*, pp. 1-16. Malden, MA [etc.]: Blackwell Publishing
- DeMause, L. (1991) The Universality of Incest, *Journal of Psychohistory* 19,2:123-164
- Dynes, W. R. (1995) Queer Studies in Search of a Discipline. *Academic Questiones* 8:34-52
- Gabb J. (2004^b) "I could eat my baby to bits". Passion and desire in lesbian mother-children love', *Gender, Place & Culture* 11,3:399-415
- Gabb, J. (2004^a) *Behind closed doors: Intimacy and sexuality in 'non-abusive' families*. 2004 British Sociological Association Annual Conference, "Sociological Challenges: Conflict, Anxiety and Discontent", York University, UK
- Gayle, R. (1984) Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality, in Abelove, H., Barale, M. A. & Halperin, D. M. (Eds.) *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, pp. 3-44. Originally published in Vance, Carole S. (Ed.) *Pleasure and Danger*. London: Pandora
- Gubrium, J. & Buckholdt, D. R. (1977) *Toward Maturity*. London: Jossey-Bass
- Haug, F. (2001) Sexual deregulation or, the child abuser as hero in neoliberalism, *Feminist Theory* 2,1:55-78
- Howitt, D. (2002) Social exclusion--Pedophile style, in Goodwin, R. et al. (Eds.) *Inappropriate Relationships: The Unconventional, the Disapproved, and the Forbidden*, pp. 221-243. LEA's Series on Personal Relationships. Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers
- Janssen, D. F. (2001) *Paradoxia Sexualis. Bio-Othering and Psychopathia Sexualis of the Child (1877-1931)*. Unpublished, Nijmegen University, Dept. of Medical History, Philosophy and Ethics
- Janssen, D. F. (2002-5) Growing Up Sexually. Volume II. [*The Sexual Curriculum*](#). Amsterdam / Nijmegen / Berlin: Magnus Hirschfeld Archive for Sexology
- Janssen, D. F. (2004) [*Postdevelopmental Sexualities: Don't Bring the Kids*](#). Paper delivered at the XVIth Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sozialwissenschaftliche Sexualforschung (DGSS) Conference on Social Scientific Sexuality Research "Sexualities and Social Change", Lüneburg University, Lüneburg, Germany, June 25-27, 2004
- Janssen, D. F. (2005^a) [*Current Western Problems of "Taught" and Propaedeutic Sexualities*](#). Paper read at the "Cultural Aspects of Sex/Sexuality Education" One-day Conference at the Institute of Education, University of London, UK, May 25, 2005
- Janssen, D. F. (2005^b) [*On Sex Play \(1,2\)*](#). Paper delivered at the 2nd European Summer School, "Playtime: The Cultures of Play, Gaming and Sport", Institute for Contemporary Arts, London, UK, July 26-30, 2005
- Janssen, D. F. (2005^c) [*Sex and Curriculum in Life Narratives: A Poststructuralist Meditation*](#). Mini-Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Cultural Anthropology, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands, June 2005

- Janssen, D. F. (2005^d) [Queering “the” Child Where it Hurts the Most. Or: What’s Fundamentally Wrong about Eating Cookies?](#) Paper delivered at 3rd Queer Zagreb’s International Conference “Heteronormativity of Childhoods”, Zagreb, Croatia, September 9–11 2005
- Janssen, D. F. (forthcoming 1) [“Become Big and I’ll Give You Something to Eat”: Thoughts and Notes on Boyhood Sexual Health](#). Forthcoming in *International Journal of Men’s Health*
- Janssen, D. F. (forthcoming 2) *Sex as Development: Curriculum, Pedagogy and Critical Inquiry*. Forthcoming in *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*
- Jenkins, Ph. (2001) *Beyond Tolerance: Child Pornography on the Internet*. New York & London: New York University Press
- Jones, A. (2003) Touching children: policy, social anxiety and the ‘safe’ teacher, *Journal of Curriculum Theorising* 19,2:103-116
- Jones, A. (2004) Social anxiety, sex, surveillance, and the ‘safe’ teacher, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25,1:53-66
- Katz, J. N. (1995) *The Invention of Heterosexuality*. New York: Dutton
- Kincaid, J. R. (1998) *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting*. London: Duke University Press
- Leahy, T. (1991) *Negotiating Stigma: Approaches to Intergenerational Sex*. PhD Dissertation, University of New South Wales, Australia
- Lord, C. (2003) Minor Eruptions; Lesbian Accused of Promoting Pedophilia, *Radical Teacher* 66:22-27
- Lynch, M. (2002) Pedophiles and Cyber-predators as Contaminating Forces: The Language of Disgust, Pollution, and Boundary Invasions in Federal Debates on Sex Offender Legislation, *Law & Social Inquiry* 27,3:529-566
- Marshall, D. (2004) *Ephebophilic Desire: A Queer History of Male Homosexuality*. PhD Dissertation, Department of English with Cultural Studies, University of Melbourne, Australia
- Mc Cartan, K. (in preparation) *“Reroute to Remain”: The Use of the Moral Panic of Paedophilia as a Coping Mechanism in a Cultural Risk Society (A Case Study)*. PhD dissertation in preparation
- Morss, J. R. (1990) *The Biologising of Childhood: Developmental Psychology and the Darwinian Myth*. Hillsdale, NJ, England: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- O’Neil, M. L. (2000) *‘Act your Age!’: Law, Culture and the Boundary between Child and Adult*. PhD Dissertation, University of Kansas
- Plummer, K. (1995) *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change and Social Worlds*. London: Routledge
- Satter, B. (2003) The Sexual Abuse Paradigm in Historical Perspective: Passivity and Emotion in Mid-Twentieth-Century America, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12,3:424-464
- Sedgwick, E. K. (1993) How to bring your kids up gay: the war on effeminate boys. In *Tendencies*, (pp. 154-164). Durham, NC: Duke University Press
- Simon, W. (1989) The Postmodernization of Sex, *Psychology and Sexual Behavior* 2,1:9-37
- Simon, W. (1996) *Postmodern Sexualities*. London: Routledge
- Stockton, K. B. (2004) Growing Sideways, or Versions of the Queer Child: The Ghost, the Homosexual, the Freudian, the Innocent, and the Interval of Animal. In Bruhm, S. & Hurley, N. (Eds.) *Curiouser*, pp. 277-315. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press
- Turmel, A. (2004) Towards a historical sociology of developmental thinking: the case of generation, *Paedagogica Historica* 40,4:419–434
- Tyler, M. (2004) Managing Between the Sheets: Lifestyle Magazines and the Management of Sexuality in Everyday Life, *Sexualities* 7,1:81-106

- Wilson, I., Griffin, C. & Wren, B. (2002) The validity and diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder (Child and Adolescent Criteria), *Clinical Child Psychology & Psychiatry* 7,3:335-351
- Yuill, R. (2004) *Male Adult-Youth Relationships in the United Kingdom*. PhD dissertation, Glasgow University, UK
- Zucker, K. J. & Spitzer, R. L. (2005) Was the gender identity disorder of childhood diagnosis introduced into DSM-III as a backdoor maneuver to replace homosexuality? A historical note. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* 31,1:31-42

Notes

¹ Later it was announced that “It is the intention of the Press to publish a future volume [...] which will examine the controversial issues surrounding research on adult-adolescent sexuality in a fully-framed context from as many perspectives as possible, including Dr. Rind’s and those of his critics.”

² New book promotes sex with children. Ph.D. 'expert' claims pederasty good for 'nurturing,' 'mentoring' young boys, *World Net Daily* | September 19, 2005 http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=46394; Child-sex book cancelled after WND report, *World Net Daily* | September 22, 2005 http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=46447

³ Quoted from Rind’s abstract previewed at Haworth’s website.

⁴ A clear example of this would be the 2004 movie of Scott Heim’s 1995 novel, *Mysterious Skin*.

⁶ Obviously ICD nor DSM Pedophilia has ever entailed a claim on traumatogenicity, and proposals to for a post-abuse syndrome were never included.

⁷ *Childhood Sexual Abuse Causes Serious Harm to its Victims*. Statement by American Psychological Association, March 23, 1999; House of Congress Resolution 107, unanimously passed in Senate, July 30, 1999.

⁸ Consider Alcoff (1998).

⁹ Age, “that modernist obsession” (Stockton, 2004), may have appeared of an Other “factoriality” than gender, in name of its (superior?) “rationality” – a “naturally hierarchising” ratio measure rather than nominal and dual one. But that is a mistake, social/erotic ages have no legitimate ‘natural zero’, while genders are dual *nor* nominal. Social ages are no interval measures either, because they do not answer to an unambiguously ordered, constant scale; neither are they unproblematically ordinal. “Age” *sec* is not a measure at all, it is part of sociologists’ instrumentarium to invent medicolegal fixtures such as “abuse”.

¹⁰ *Growing Up Sexually*, Vol. III, *Bibliographies*, [bibliography 13](#)

¹¹ I have offered reviews of ethnographic literature elsewhere, notably in [chapter 14](#) of *Growing Up Sexually*, Vol. II. See also Janssen ([forthcoming 2](#)).

¹² Consider Maassen (1989), Babington (1993), Kitzinger (1997), Kincaid (1998), Ganesini (2000), Critcher (2002, 2003), Landini (2003); McCartan (2004). Cf. Jenkins (2000) and Drury (2002).

¹³ Terry Leahy (1991 [2002]), Daniel Marshall (2004), Richard Yuill (2004), Kieran Mc Cartan (*in preparation*). Others have voiced antihegemonic perspectives (e.g., Tom Reeves, David Thorstad, Tom O’Carroll, Harris Mirkin, Paul Richard Wilson, René Schérer, Guy Hocquenghem, Paul Okami, Judith Levine, Richard Mohr, Edward Brongersma, Theo Sandfort, Frits Bernard, Michael Ingram, Ralph Underwager & Hollida Wakefield, Gerald Hannon, Michel Foucault, James R. Kincaid, Pat Califia, Kate Millet, Camille Paglia, Keven Bishop, David Riegel, Daniel Tsang, Rind, Bauserman and

Tromovitch) and edge aesthetics (Germaine Greer). Other have been attacked for their alleged 'advocacy' however absurd (Vern Bullough, John Money, Alfred Kinsey).

¹⁴ "It is the secret of the charm of writers like Goethe, Tolstoi, Dickens, Hugo, and Strindberg [...] it enables us, when the problems of life become too hard, to retreat or regress to a more juvenile point of view and flee for a time from reality without the danger of becoming permanently arrested like dementia praecox cases, but rather to be refreshed and reinvigorated as by an Antaeus touch of mother earth and to gain strength for a fresh advance, which thus gathers to itself a new supply of momentum from the whole upward push of the *élan vital*, which is behind us all". G. Stanley Hall, *Life and Confessions of a Psychologist* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1923), p. 462.