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HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD QUARTERLY:

The Journal of Psychohistory

SUMMER 1973 • VOL. 1, NO. 1

A TRANSCENDENTALIST FATHER

PERSECUTORY CHILD-REARING

**FEARS OF SEXUAL LICENSE
IN THE REFORMATION**

**DID FREUD DISCOVER
CHILDHOOD SEXUALITY?**

AN AMBIVALENT REVOLUTIONARY

REVIEWS OF PSYCHOHISTORY

HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD QUARTERLY:

The Journal of Psychohistory

2315 Broadway, New York, New York (212) 873-3331

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES: U.S. and Canada, and equivalent in foreign currencies: Individuals—\$12.00 one year, \$22.00 two years, \$32.00 three years; Institutions—\$18.00 one year, \$34.00 two years, \$50.00 three years.

CONTRIBUTIONS: The Journal welcomes contributions of articles on childhood and the family, past and present, psychohistory in its broadest terms, individual or group, applied psychoanalysis except for purely literary studies, political psychology, and the psychology of historical movements. All manuscripts should follow the University of Chicago *Manual of Style* and be double-spaced, including footnotes. An author's fee of \$5.00 per printed page is paid, plus 50 free offprints.

PUBLICATION: *History of Childhood Quarterly: The Journal of Psychohistory* is published quarterly and copyright © 1973 by Atcom, Inc., 2315 Broadway, N.Y., N.Y. 10024. Statements of fact and opinion are made on the responsibility of the authors alone. An application to mail at second class rates is pending at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices.



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EDITOR'S
FOREWORD

**THE HISTORY OF
CHILDHOOD: THE
BASIS FOR
PSYCHOHISTORY**

LLOYD
DEMAUSE

Every scholarly journal has a history and a source of *élan*, and our new Journal is no exception.

Its history begins five years ago, with a group of twenty historians and psychoanalysts working with me on a research project under the sponsorship of the Association for Applied Psychoanalysis. Feeling that the failure of applied psychoanalysis to become a real science was due to its failure to become truly historical, we began a long-term project to examine primary source material back to antiquity in order to begin constructing an empirically accurate history of childhood. For these past five years we have been buried in unpublished family letters, pediatricians' observations, wet-nurses' advice, autobiographies, child care books, mothers' diaries and the like. What we found, soon to be published by Basic Books, Inc. as *The History of Childhood*, was so startling, so important to the understanding of historical change, and so generative of further research, that we began this Journal in order to have a place to publish our continuing findings.

We not only found that childhood in the past can indeed be reconstructed in rich detail, but also that the further back you go in history the more different the average childhood is from childhood today. As I state in my Introduction to the book:

The history of childhood is a nightmare from which mankind has only recently begun to awaken. The further back in history one digs, the more archaic the mode of parenting, and the more likely children are to be routinely abandoned, killed, beaten, emotionally and physically starved, and sexually molested.¹

The surprising richness of the historical record, when finally un-

earthed, answers the pessimism of recent historians who, like Lawrence Stone, wonder if the raw materials for an empirically-based psychohistory can ever be found:

Moreover, the Freudian psychologists, who soon afterwards began to come into their own, also laid great stress upon the role of nurture, with particular emphasis on childhood and early sexual experience. It must be admitted, however, that Freudian psychology has not been much use to the historian, who is usually unable to penetrate the bedroom, the bathroom, or the nursery. If Freud is right, and if these are the places where the action is, there is not much the historian can do about it.²

Indeed, both our book and this new Journal are a testimony to the accuracy of Frank Manuel's prediction that an entirely new field of history is about to be born:

At the present time writers who call themselves psychohistorians are forced to use, *faute de mieux*, crude and misleading affirmations about both the economy and the interpsychic relationships of the Western family. A measure of our poverty is the frequency with which Philippe Aries' history of childhood is cited as Holy Writ. Whenever I have tried to interpret the family relations of historical figures I have felt on shaky grounds in relying on old-hat, impressionistic utterances about this nuclear institution. But the possibilities for research are open and the materials cry for exploitation. There seems to be a consensus among social historians, prosopographers, and historians with an interest in psychological phenomena that the history of the family represents a gaping lacuna in our knowledge to which a new generation of historians should give significant priority.³

Now psychohistory itself, as George Kren and Leon Rappoport point out in the review article "Clio and Psyche" in this issue, has a long history of its own, one which has had far more promise than success to date. We feel that the reason for this failure of psychohistory to be more productive lies precisely in the paucity of careful empirical studies of childhood in the past. The history of childhood as the basis for psychohistory is one of the new approaches we feel our Journal represents.

At the same time, we want to sharply distinguish our field of childhood history from that of the currently burgeoning field called "family history." As best illustrated by Peter Laslett's fine new volume *Household and Family in Past Time*,⁴ family history derives its main concerns from sociology, centering on questions of household size, kinship structure, family mobility, historical demography, and the like. Childhood history, deriving more from developmental psychology and psychoanalysis, with its task of tracing childhood emotional experience in each stage of life through to adult personality and behavior, is a considerably different enterprise. While the childhood historian welcomes every bit of help the family historian can furnish, the two disciplines remain independent. And if we feel that of the two only childhood history pro-

vides the basis for psychohistory, it is because of our conviction that psychohistory is not just "using psychology in history"—it is first of all a *history of the psyche*, and this means that for the first time private events assume equal importance with public events in the stage of history.

It may be objected that the assumption that childhood history will cure the failures of both applied psychoanalysis and psychohistory is pure *hubris*. Well, it has now been 60 years since Freud expressed his hopes that applied psychoanalysis would be able to form the basis for a new kind of historical analysis, and 15 years since William Langer startled his fellow historians by suggesting that their next assignment should be to learn psychoanalysis. Perhaps our *hubris* is a product of deferred expectations. In any case, by our fruits shall ye know our theory; perhaps this first issue will give you a taste of the riches to come.

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A TRANSCENDENTALIST FATHER: THE CHILD- REARING PRACTICES OF BRONSON ALCOTT

CHARLES
STRICKLAND

One hundred forty years ago, two American parents set out on an experiment in child-raising that was designed to "liberate childhood from the barbarity and indifference" that characterized it to that time. Drawing upon the most complete records of child-rearing in America yet to be discovered, Charles Strickland draws a moving portrait of the conflicts and triumphs of two nineteenth-century parents as they try to overcome traditional child-rearing methods and invent new ones to replace them.

I. INTRODUCTION

On March 16, 1831, Anna Bronson Alcott was born in Germantown, Pennsylvania, and welcomed with warm enthusiasm by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Amos Bronson Alcott. One hour after the birth, her father recorded his feelings: "How delightful were the emotions produced by the first sounds of the infant's cry—making it seem that I was, indeed, a father! Joy, gratitude, hope and affection were all mingled in our feeling."¹ Mrs. Alcott was in no condition to write about her feelings just then. It had been a difficult pregnancy, casting her often into periods of gloom and anxiety, and she had endured thirty-six hours of labor in giving birth. Nevertheless, eleven days after Anna's arrival, she proved no less ecstatic than her husband. Writing her brother, Mrs. Alcott was eager to convey her joy, and to assure him it made not the least difference that her first child had not been a boy. Anna was in good health and perfectly quiet, while nursing and caring for her was delightful. "I would not," she said, "dele-

gate it to an angel. I am at times most impatient to dismiss my nurse, that not even she should participate with me in this pleasure."²

The joy that the Alcotts found in their first-born was, perhaps, common enough, but Anna's birth meant far more to her father than the usual delights of parenthood. He had in mind nothing less than an experiment in perfecting mankind. "We do not yet know," he wrote, "what favorable influences, from birth, will do for the infant. . . . It is reserved for some individual, who . . . shall take the infant, from the beginning, and paying due respect to his whole nature, shall cooperate with it, in due accordance and harmony with the laws of its constitution, and suggest to the world, both by success and failure, what the human being may become."³

An experiment should, of course, be recorded. Consequently, on March 25, just nine days after Anna's birth, Alcott began his "Observations on the Phenomena of Life, as Developed in the Progressive History of an Infant, during the First Year of its Existence." The record was fully worthy of the impressive title. It was, for one thing, one of the first infant diaries kept by an American, although Alcott had been inspired to undertake the work by the example of similar records left by Europeans.⁴ The other remarkable thing about Alcott's manuscript was its volume and scope. When Anna's first year was completed, he began another series of observations, and ultimately the record swelled to cover Anna's development until she was five, spilling over to include the early experience of Louisa, born in 1832, and Elizabeth, born in 1835. When Alcott laid down his pen in 1836, he had filled nearly 2500 manuscript pages with observations on the behavior of his young daughters and with reflections on the significance of the early years of human life.

Alcott's awesome industry was the product of professional ambition, as well as paternal love and scientific curiosity. Born in 1799, the son of an impecunious Connecticut farmer, Alcott spent much of his youth engaged in farming and peddling, acquiring more formal learning only through primitive rural schools and by dint of his efforts at self-education.⁵ At the age of 23 he became a district school teacher, which in itself was not so unusual. What else could a young man with bookish inclinations and no advantages aspire to? But Alcott, though poorly educated, possessed both intelligence and demonic energy, and he began to think of himself as a Messiah, come to save the world through reforming education. He also made two discoveries during his years as a Connecticut schoolmaster: first, that he had a way with children, especially with the little ones, and, secondly, that his talent was appreciated. His impressive work in the schools of Bristol and Cheshire, Connecticut, won him no friends in the local districts, to be sure, but he did manage to attract the attention of Boston's avant-garde, who proved willing to tolerate an educational Messiah. In 1828, Alcott accepted an invitation to conduct an "infant" school in America's intel-

lectual capital and within two years he had acquired a reputation as a reformer of schools for young children.

Convinced that a good family provided the model for a good school, he also began speaking out on the reform of family life. He hoped to write a book on nurture that would be welcomed by mothers anxious to do well by their children, as well as one that would place him in the front rank of American sages. In either case, Alcott reasoned, his conclusions should be based on a thorough understanding of child development, secured through the painstaking observation of an infant.⁶ His marriage to Abigail May, in 1830, held out, therefore, not only the usual marital joys but also an opportunity for scientific research.

Mrs. Alcott, far from resenting his curiosity about their offspring, did all within her power to encourage her husband's plans and ambitions.⁷ Contrary to legend, she was not a long-suffering wife who merely out of love for her husband tolerated his idealism. From the date of their first meeting she was fully taken with his ideas, and she had good reason to believe she understood what he was talking about. Coming from a respectable family, she was a highly perceptive and intelligent woman, who defied the conventions of her age and read widely in philosophy and history. Before making Alcott's acquaintance, she acquired decided opinions on a variety of subjects, including a leaning toward liberalism in theology and convictions about the necessity of providing freedom for the slaves, equal rights for women, and reform of the school and the home.⁸

Abigail was not, however, cut out for the career of a militant spinster. When she met Alcott she was already twenty-six, and she apparently decided immediately that they should join their lives together. For two years she pressed the shy, doubting, and hesitant Alcott toward a marital decision. Some of her relatives wondered if she should marry a man of Alcott's doubtful origins, and she was fully aware that he would never become a pecuniary success, but, swept by a tide of affection and idealism, she regarded such considerations as unimportant. Like so many who knew Alcott well, she was awed by his apparent serenity of spirit, which, she thought, would provide a beneficial check on her own volatile temperament.⁹ In any event, her faith overcame his doubts, and the way was prepared for an experiment in ideal domesticity. Seven months after their marriage, Alcott accepted an invitation from Reuben Haines, a wealthy Quaker farmer, to open a school in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Accompanied by his pregnant wife, Alcott sailed in December, 1830 for Philadelphia, where they spent the winter preparing for the new ventures in school and home, both of which Alcott trusted would launch a reputation among men of influence. Specifically, he hoped that the detailed observations of his infant would find a publisher.¹⁰

Unfortunately for Alcott's ambitions, his voluminous notes on the children held little interest either for scientists or for mothers. His journals were far too abstruse in content and turgid in style to be of

help to harassed housewives. As a practical book of advice, his luxuriant record¹¹ would require considerable pruning. Emerson, who shared Alcott's yearnings for the infinite, nevertheless found portions of the manuscript painful to read, and he had the courage to tell his friend not to think of publication. Emerson pointed out that the writing was diffuse and disjointed, while its chief fault was a "want of compression."¹² Alcott sadly acknowledged the justice of Emerson's remarks and put the observations away. For the next century his record of infancy and childhood remained only of sentimental value to the immediate family and of cursory interest to a few writers who investigated the Alcott clan, or aspects of transcendentalism.¹³

Nevertheless, Alcott's record possesses a value that neither he nor his contemporaries could have anticipated. His efforts clearly mark the beginnings of child psychology in America, a full half-century before G. Stanley Hall launched the "child-study" movement with his well-known investigation of Boston kindergarten children.¹⁴ Moreover, whatever his failings as a scientist, Alcott was actually a much more accurate and conscientious observer of children than Hall, and his work deserves a much larger place in the history of American psychology than it has been accorded. Then again, the fact that his daughters became the prototypes of the characters in *Little Women* lends a certain interest to his record. Those concerned, for example, with Louisa's career as a writer can discover in her father's infant journals early but clearly recognizable portraits of "Meg" and "Jo," which suggest the type of literary realism that Louisa's astoundingly popular novel attempted to convey.

In the end, however, the most valuable revelations in Alcott's manuscript do not concern his daughters, contrary to his intentions. He set out to note the details of child development, and the focus was to be on Anna, and then on Louisa and Elizabeth, but he actually disclosed much more about himself than about his children. Through a veil of vague mysticisms and philosophic abstractions emerges a rare historic glimpse of a father, and of the way he thought about his children, felt about them, and treated them.

Alcott's thinking and feeling about his children were largely a compound of the philosophic idealism, romantic imagery, and native religious sentiment that was to become known as American transcendentalism. In 1831, before transcendentalism had become a self-conscious intellectual movement, Alcott had already arrived, by dint of his strenuous self-education, at the faint outlines of the persuasions that Emerson would expound five years later in his seminal essay "Nature." Alcott was not, by any means, a systematic philosopher, but he read widely and thoughtfully, and one can detect in his early journals the beginnings of a rebellion against materialism—both as a philosophy and as a way of life. He was also speaking of a universal order, embracing both man and nature, but transcending both, to which men can refer their aspirations for the ideal. Above all, one can see Alcott grop-

ing for a belief in man's essential divinity, which consists in the power to transcend the limitations of human nature and human society.¹⁵

For Alcott, as later for Emerson, it was important to point to a concrete symbol to represent the possibilities of human nature, and, thanks to the tuition of romantic literature, the child sprang readily to mind. If one perceived aright, the child represented human nature uncorrupted by false philosophy and constricting institutions. The image of the child—simple, innocent, and idealistic—could serve as a kind of moral standard against which to measure and condemn the sophistication, hypocrisy, and materialism of adults. It was to be expected that this vision of childhood would readily join with Alcott's programmatic emphasis on educational reform, for if the child were uncorrupted, then it was incumbent upon adults to protect the child from the world in order to help him realize the future possibilities for human perfection.

As Alcott's transcendentalism matured, however, he began to think that he could learn as much from the child as he could teach him. Through association with the young, the adult could recapture from his own childhood a quality of innocence and idealism to sustain him amid the temptations of Jacksonian America. "Childhood hath *Saved* me!" Alcott exclaimed after a period of intensive association with his daughters, and it was, in fact, Alcott's musings about the spirit of childhood that led Emerson to remark:

Infancy is the perpetual Messiah, which comes into the arms of fallen men, and pleads with them to return to paradise.¹⁶

When Emerson published these lines, they may have had for him no more than a poetic significance, for he himself was not yet a father. His first child, Waldo, was born one month after "Nature" was published. But five years earlier, in Germantown, Alcott faced not only the image of an infant, but also a living, breathing fact. How did one go about the business of rearing a demigod? The romantic conception would seem to impose on parents a staggering obligation to protect the children from the world and at the same time to help the child realize his spiritual potential. As Alcott's diaries demonstrate, he and his wife took their obligations seriously, but even they encountered finite limits to their energy and dedication. Mrs. Alcott was often stricken with illness, and she missed some of the finer points of her husband's child-rearing theories. Alcott himself, after an initial enthusiasm for the domestic experiment, began to chafe under the restrictions of family life, longing for somewhat broader intellectual horizons. Always the threat of poverty hovered over the family. Evidently the world was jealous of a transcendentalist household, while, alas! parents were not themselves always what they should be.

Transcendentalist expectations were no less trying for the children. It was not that joy was absent from the Alcott household. For all his seriousness of purpose in child-rearing, Alcott believed in gentle means.

The "rod and its appendages" were banished, and there is in Alcott's extensive record no hint of deliberate cruelty or neglect. Moreover, the father's theories led him to grasp that play and imagination are the roads to a child's heart, and his record produced the kind of vignettes out of which are woven fond memories of childhood—Anna and her father romping about his study, imitating the letters of the alphabet; Anna engaged in sober conversation while sitting on her father's lap; Anna listening with wonder to her father's stories. There is a point, if a somewhat exaggerated one, to Lewis Mumford's comment that the major legacy of transcendentalism was the belief that childhood could be happy.¹⁷

But Alcott never confused happiness with hedonism. If he tried to see to it that his daughters were happy, he also expected a great deal from the children in the way of conscientious self-control at a very early age. The major point of transcendentalist child-rearing, as practiced by Alcott, was that gentle means must be used to promote ascetic ends, a view which made the burdens of childhood peculiarly intense. If a child is a demigod, then he should try to act like one. And, when he falls short, he should have the decency—perhaps one should say the divinity—to feel badly about it. Consequently, by the time she was four, Anna had often experienced a troubled spirit, while even Louisa had felt the lash of conscience. In this sense, at least, Alcott's child-rearing was a resounding success.

In 1831, however, the joy and sorrow of Alcott family life lay in the future. The father had an ample supply of theories about children, but he had not yet encountered the experience of dealing with his own, nor had he learned that the world, as one historian has put it, "has many ways of defeating those who try to stand too far from it."¹⁸

II. ANNA'S FIRST YEAR: THE "LITTLE PARADISE"

Anna's first residence in Germantown was a boarding house belonging to a Mrs. Stuckart.¹⁹ The Alcotts had lived in such establishments since their marriage, and they would do so again, but it was hardly the place Alcott would choose for his experiment in child-rearing. Required was something ideal, which meant in this instance something antiseptic. He could imagine the setting, far removed from the corrupt world. It would be a cottage set in a "romantic" valley, beside a bubbling brook, and surrounded by steep precipices and lofty mountains. Here, under the supervision of a mother who had renounced fashionable society and of a father who had repudiated worldly ambition, children would be reared as they ought.²⁰

Germantown fell short of the ideal, but it was still much better than either Philadelphia or Boston, and for that Alcott was grateful. Meanwhile, Reuben Haines, chief patron of Alcott's school, had promised to do his part by getting the family out of Mrs. Stuckart's boarding house, and he kept his promise. On May 13, nearly two months after Anna's

birth, the Alcotts moved into a cottage, recently painted, neatly furnished, and provided rent-free by Haines.²¹ Situated on a main road, with more than an acre of grounds and garden, the setting was very close to ideal, in Mrs. Alcott's opinion. She reported to her brother that the home was a "little paradise." The house would vie with her father's residence in Boston for neatness and order, while the garden was charming, lined with raspberry, currant, and gooseberry bushes. The grounds featured also a lovely walk shaded with pine, fir, cedar, apple, pear, peach, and plum trees. Completing the picture was an efficient housekeeper, and, of course, "the mild, constant and affectionate sympathy" of her husband. "With good health, clear head, grateful heart and ready hand, what can I not do when surrounded by influences like these?" she asked. "What can I leave undone with so many aids?"²²

It was Alcott's opinion that she should leave precious little undone, in so far as Anna was concerned. Success with Anna required that her care be completely under parental control, for the family was to be a fortress from which worldly incursions would be vigorously repelled. Relatives would present no threat; the move from New England to Pennsylvania ensured little interference from that quarter. Servants might, however, become a problem, for Alcott thought too many parents failed by consigning their infants to the care of a nurse, who was usually ignorant, selfish, and lazy.²³ It seems the Alcotts could not do without household assistance, and the record reveals that a servant usually worked in the home during these early years, but the danger was kept within bounds. The Alcotts insisted that the domestic take care of the house, while they kept Anna to themselves. With the exception of the first four weeks, therefore, Anna remained under the sole charge of her mother and father during her first year, as reported by Mrs. Alcott in August and as confirmed by her husband later in the year. Mrs. Alcott rarely left the house without Anna on her arm, and she even developed the habit of retiring with Anna in the evening, holding the infant until she fell asleep in her arms.²⁴

Alcott himself revolved in a slightly larger orbit of concern, busy with his school, attending professional meetings, and engaged in one or another writing project, but he also hovered about Anna a good deal.²⁵ As Mrs. Alcott noted in March, "my husband has not left my room many hours since my illness and though employed principally at his table with his manuscript, his presence has shed tranquility on the scene."²⁶ Alcott's school opened in May, but even then he was still much in evidence, since the pupils came to the Alcott home for instruction.²⁷ Always, of course, his "observations" kept him preoccupied with the infant, and during the first twelve months of her life, he managed to put down an average of one page of notes daily.

The unflagging attention bestowed by the Alcotts was meant to ensure that little Anna would dwell securely in an atmosphere permeated by warmth, affection, and extraordinary permissiveness. This, it might be thought, was only the usual reaction of parents, especially older par-

ents (he was thirty-one and his wife thirty), to the arrival of their first child. But Alcott himself was rarely casual about anything, and least of all about the crucial matter of a parent's relationship with his child. In the first place, physical affection was not a thing that Alcott displayed easily. He did not think of himself as possessing great warmth and affection, and he believed in fact that it was a man's task to provide some check on feminine emotion.²⁸ It was undoubtedly this view that led Mrs. Alcott to remark to a friend, shortly after her marriage, that with her and Mr. Alcott "love was a principle and not a passion."²⁹ As far as Anna was concerned, some "passion" was doubtless involved, and there is no reason to suspect that Alcott's outburst, on learning that he was a father, was anything but genuine. But in this instance, passion was reinforced by principle. He gave way to affection because he had first persuaded himself that infants are in fact lovable and that loving them would do no harm. His *Observations on the Principles and Methods of Infant Instruction*, published just the preceding year, had already laid down the general idea, drawn from sources in romantic literature and idealistic philosophy, that infants are worthy of affection and reverence.³⁰

The enemy, in Alcott's view, was the orthodox Calvinist position that the infant is depraved by the taint of original sin. He himself owed little to this view, since at the age of sixteen, he had become an Episcopalian, thus joining, as he later put it, the "signers-off from Calvin's colder creed."³¹ By 1831, his opposition to Calvinism was becoming violent:

Of all the impious doctrines which the dark imagination of man ever conceived, this is the worst. This is, indeed, the sin, which is unpardonable—the belief in the original and certain depravity of infant nature. If man had set himself down to contrive an agency which would . . . most effectually degrade human nature, he could not have accomplished his foul purpose so effectually as by this. Happy is it for the world that the progress of our race has out-distanced this debasing doctrine; that nobler views are gaining currency. Infancy is beginning to be respected.³²

His major objection to the orthodox position rested on psychological rather than on theological grounds. He accused the Calvinists of blasphemy for labelling God's creatures corrupt, but his greater concern was with the effect that such parental views would have on the children. Alcott feared that the belief in infant depravity would encourage parents either to neglect their children or to treat them with brutality. If parents believed children are tainted by original sin, they might argue that they are powerless to shape the character of their offspring. And, if parents believed infants are depraved, they might, as a consequence, treat children with cruelty. Addressing himself to the orthodox, he accused them of robbing "the author of the infant mind of all his glory, and this mind itself of all its loveliness, that ye may find an excuse for your indifference and impiety in guiding it as you ought.

Ye would stamp upon the infant the seal of sin that ye may find an excuse for your own sin." Thus, by Alcott's reasoning, the orthodox view was a self-fulfilling prophecy. By acting toward children with cruelty and neglect, orthodox parents succeeded in corrupting their offspring. He put it aptly: "Having made the child perverse by inheritance, ye contrive, upon principle, to make him so by education."³³

There is reason to doubt that Calvinist parents loved their children less than transcendentalists, or, if they did treat their children with cruelty and neglect, that they were prompted to do so by their theological views. Moreover, Alcott's romantic opposition to Calvinist views of man can be easily misinterpreted. His high estimate of childlike virtue was not intended to license indiscriminate toleration of childish foibles, which would have struck him as smacking of parental indifference. If not a Calvinist by persuasion, he was nonetheless a New Englander by birth, and he recalled that he had acquired early in life a notion of the importance of putting duty above pleasure. He was regarded by schoolmates as somewhat peculiar in this regard, and they made him the object of ridicule for his extremely serious demeanor.

He had, it was true, sometimes forgotten the call of duty during his youthful years of peddling in the South. Alcott managed to retain his chastity amid divers temptations, but he found poverty galling. Despite the fact that his father had gone deeply into debt to finance Bronson's peddling ventures, the son indulged in "fashion and improvidence," dressed himself in finery he could not afford, evaded a hotel bill by fleeing like a thief in the night, and returned home to face the disapproval of his parents. When he learned that his frugal father had to sell part of his small farm to pay the creditors, Bronson was truly penitent, and resolved he would turn to a life of "moral sentiment." His resolve was heightened when, during his final peddling trip to the South, he made the acquaintance of the Quakers, whose simplicity, gentle manners, and notions of the "inner light" may well have set Alcott's thinking in the direction of transcendentalism.³⁴

Calvinist theology, then, Alcott understood only at second-hand, but the threat of hedonism to his integrity had been a matter of painful personal experience. Men, if not fatally corrupt, were at least weak, and he regarded the age in which he lived as one well calculated to exploit that weakness in himself and in others. Only a heroic conquest of self and a repudiation of worldly temptation would enable a man to save his purity and integrity. By 1831 he was prepared to announce that virtue, by its very definition, is the "supremacy of the higher over the lower" in man's nature, while the chief purpose of education is to instill virtue.³⁵ Thus, when Alcott observed three-month-old Anna screaming and flailing her arms and legs from frustration, he did not perceive the beginnings of sin, but neither did he think he was witnessing the perfection of human nature. For all his reading of Wordsworth, Alcott frankly admitted that the infant was necessarily "selfish." He explained that

Infancy is the period of animal activity. The appetites and passions are then most supreme; the mind, in its weakness, has not assumed control over them; happiness is identified with the gratification of senses.³⁶

Moreover, despite his Wordsworthian sentiments, Alcott advised the parent, when confronted by the animal nature of the infant, to express toleration rather than unrestrained admiration. Parents should, in their treatment of the very young, exercise "charity for its failings, pity for its weaknesses, forbearance with its errors."³⁷

In the light of these views, one wonders what is to be made of Alcott's celebrated opposition to Calvinist theories of infant depravity? Were Alcott's opinions nothing but a ludicrous and bewildering collection of contradictions? There was, doubtless, considerable ambivalence in Alcott's attitude toward infancy, and, later, toward childhood, and he sometimes imposed more restrictions on his children than his theories would seem to justify. But in this instance, Alcott could reconcile his various attitudes toward infants, and at the same time set his position off as distinct from that held by Calvinists. The chief fault of their view, he thought, was not that they made so much of man's potential for sin, but that they made so little of man's power to transcend his weaknesses. The infant might be largely a bundle of appetites and passions, but at a very early age the infant also possesses higher faculties which hold great promise for spiritual perfection. From the day of Anna's birth, her father searched eagerly for the appearance of "mind," "soul," "spirit," or the "internal principle." For weeks his search was in vain, and he admitted that Anna's "internal principle" lay effectively hidden somewhere in the center of her being.³⁸ But, on May 13, when Anna was nearly two months old, Alcott was delighted to report that he detected the beginnings of a "conscious and intelligent soul." As proof he cited something like a smile crossing Anna's face as she gazed on a vase of wild violets resting on the mantel. This episode, minor though it might seem to the insensitive parent, provided Alcott with evidence that Anna was no mere animal being, but also a soul capable of recognizing and responding to beauty!³⁹

Parents must, through an exercise of faith in the infant's spiritual potential, bring to the surface its capacity for affection, reason, and conscience. Success in drawing out the operation of the higher faculties would, Alcott admitted, require a "generous indulgence" of the infant's desires, even to the point of tolerating behavior that a Calvinist might regard as willful.⁴⁰ At the heart of Alcott's child-rearing theories was the belief that the conquest of the lower nature by the higher must be in some sense voluntary. A virtue imposed from without was no virtue at all, and Alcott had little patience for popular biographies of saintly prodigies, not because the subjects were so young, but because their piety was too perfect and their character was so drained of willfulness. Virtue was not a gift of birth, but a quality acquired through heroic struggle, and for this an indomitable will was essential.⁴¹

The question is, of course, just how far Alcott was willing to take these theories. To use his own terms, just how was he to exercise a "generous" but not a "reckless" indulgence of his infant daughter?⁴² The record reveals that during Anna's first six months, the Alcotts were generous to the point of recklessness. The father's conviction and, doubtless, the mother's instincts produced something like a paradise for little Anna during her first year. The picture was often idyllic. Anna was permitted to spend many hours in her mother's lap after nursing at the breast, and she was the recipient of innumerable caresses.⁴³ The parents made every effort, moreover, to ensure that she was protected from "distorted faces" and "harsh sounds." Always she was addressed in "cheerful countenance, with soft tones and deep interest."⁴⁴ On the theory that too much movement disturbed Anna's tranquillity, the Alcotts even banned a rocking cradle,⁴⁵ and they would not permit their daughter to be treated as a plaything by well-intentioned but ignorant visitors. Specifically banned were sudden movements, loud voices, baby talk, and "incessant prattle." These "may excite surprise and thus gain the child's momentary attention," Alcott commented, "yet by their excess, they soon weary and irritate."⁴⁶

Anna must also be protected from fear, a stricture that Alcott himself once violated in his eager quest for information. When Anna was a little more than two months old, he made faces at her to see how she would react:

She seemed impressed by them all, and especially by that which embodied the emotion of fear, so much so that terror was manifested by loud cries, and the desire of seeking protection in the presence of her mother; and it was with difficulty that she could erase the idea of this . . . from her mind and restore herself to her accustomed tranquillity. The vision would reappear before her imagination, and produce the recurrence of the feeling for some time after its first entrance; and tears would flow.

Alarmed, Alcott resolved that he would never again frighten her. "The influence of fear, even in its milder forms, upon the mind of infancy must be unfavorable to its improvement and happiness."⁴⁷

Above all, Alcott and his wife made every conceivable effort to see to it that their daughter should neither be punished nor coerced. He was perfectly delighted when Anna loudly protested something that displeased her. Like any proud father, Alcott was prone to make invidious comparisons between his own offspring and other children, to the advantage of the former, and he noted with satisfaction that Anna was not so "passive" as other infants.⁴⁸ Consequently, when he observed Anna, at three months, crying from frustration, he refused to become alarmed:

To some these might seem like indications of passion, to which criminality is attached. They might regard them as the beginnings of anger, and think it their duty to check and overcome

them in their early weakness. The will, they might believe, should be only subjected to their own; and thus obedience, that virtue so often imposed on infancy, be made habitual from the beginning.

But this view of infant nature, seems to me essentially erroneous and the consequences which flow from it, in education, most injurious to the mind and character. Liberty is a primary right of all created natures, and the love of it inherent in all. . . .

Underscoring his words for emphasis, Alcott declared:

*The child must be treated as a free, self-guiding, self-controlling being. He must be allowed to feel that he is under his own guidance, and that all external guidance is an injustice which is done to his nature unless his own will is intelligently submissive to it. . . . He must be free that he may be truly virtuous, for without freedom there is no such thing as virtue.*⁴⁹

Whether Anna as yet possessed a free will may be subject to debate, but there is no doubt that she made demands, which the parents pledged themselves to obey. "Her nature has been watched and interrogated," Alcott wrote during the third month, "and its answers regarded, as far as they could be ascertained. She has not been permitted to cry, as is too often the case, for long periods, but her wants have been anticipated, and the occasions for tears have been few."⁵⁰ Writing to her brother during the fifth month, Mrs. Alcott assured him, "I have no rules. I am one great one to do what she [Anna] indicates to have done and she is so reasonable that I find no difficulty." The trick, she explained, was to satisfy the baby's "real wants" so quickly that she did not have time to generate artificial ones.⁵¹ With regard to dress, this liberal program meant that Anna would be dressed warmly but not so as to check the freedom of moving her hands and legs.⁵² As for feeding, it appears that Mrs. Alcott nursed the infant frequently and on demand. When Anna was six months old, Alcott reported that she was "partaking at regular intervals of an hour or an hour and half."⁵³ When Anna was nine months old, the loving father would even permit the baby to pull his hair.⁵⁴

On the whole, the Alcotts were pleased with the results of their program of warmth, affection, and indulgence. When Anna was five months old, Mrs. Alcott stated proudly that she was reaping the reward of constant attention to the infant. "She has no bad habits. I keep no light at night. She sleeps tranquilly till morning and retires regularly at about eight o'clock."⁵⁵ Two months later Alcott found his daughter happy and healthy and still sleeping the night through, and without a lamp burning.⁵⁶ By the end of Anna's first six months, the Alcotts could congratulate themselves on having created, by dint of constant effort, an Eden for their offspring.

During Anna's second six months the permissive regime continued with some modification, but with increasing signs that all was not serene in Anna's world. For one thing, the parents learned they could not protect their infant from all discomfort. Anna's paradise was

rudely shattered on September 26, during her seventh month, with the appearance of a first tooth. Heretofore a "stranger to pain," according to her father, Anna was a stranger no longer. The parents could only relieve the discomfort she suffered by making an incision in the gum to ease the passage of the tooth. The operation, Alcott said, gave immediate relief.⁵⁷

It was a pity, Alcott reflected, that physical pain could be relieved more readily than mental anguish, for it appeared to him that Anna was now becoming querulous and unhappy.⁵⁸ Anna's loud protests, which a few months previously had pleased him, now appeared to be getting out of hand, and he was becoming a bit uneasy. There seemed a danger that her will, in itself so admirable, might fall under the reign of her "passions." By Anna's seventh month, he thought the danger had become real. She was attempting to move a book too heavy for her, and the frustration produced an expression of "passion" that alarmed her father. He acknowledged he had witnessed "decided tones" before, but nothing to match this! "This expression was so strong as to induce movements of the hands forcing the book away from her with tears and all the manifestations of anger."⁵⁹ Was it possible that a generous indulgence had indeed become reckless?

Soon afterward, Alcott found it necessary to speak sharply with Anna, his first recorded use of a reprimand. It seems that Mrs. Alcott had been in the habit of allowing the infant to sleep in the parents' bedroom, and, in fact, the mother retired at night herself when she put the baby down to sleep. For several days, however, Mrs. Alcott could not go to bed at the usual hour, and rather than putting Anna to sleep, she allowed her to remain in the lighted parlor. When at last Anna was taken to bed, she cried because, in Alcott's opinion, she missed the light. The mother at last yielded, returned Anna to the parlor, where she enjoyed herself for a time, but on being returned to bed, she once again wailed. After this drama was repeated several more times, Alcott decided that indulgence had gone too far. Entering the room, he spoke to his daughter in a "kind though decided tone," attempting to make her understand "by the peculiarity of this tone that it was not his wish that her wants, in this case, should be gratified." Alcott thought she understood him. At any event she left off crying and not long after fell asleep.⁶⁰

Alcott's treatment of Anna in this instance came perilously close to intimidation, when viewed in the light of his own theories. And, in fact, he had in mind a much more subtle campaign to handle Anna's growing obstreperousness. It consisted of an attempt to weaken the "animal" side of her nature, which her father regarded as the source of her discontent, and to strengthen the "spiritual" forces of reason, affection, and conscience. As part of his campaign against the animal nature, Alcott sought to weaken the flesh by depriving it, quite literally, of its nourishment. One of Alcott's more exotic notions stemmed from his growing vegetarianism. He believed that eating meat strengthened

the animal faculties and led to the development of a brutish character. Although his vegetarian convictions reached their height in later years (he had not yet himself forsworn meat), he revealed when Anna was four months old that he had doubts about feeding meat to infants, or, for that matter, to adults.⁶¹ He dismissed the doubts for a time, and we discover Anna, in her tenth month, enjoying a diet including meat.⁶² But, when Anna was one year old, Alcott had reverted to his earlier doubts. Finding that his daughter was more difficult to please and easily irritated when fed animal food, Alcott dictated that she be limited to "vegetable and natural substances."⁶³ It was also Alcott's view that too much sleep strengthened the animal faculties unduly, and he noted with satisfaction that his daughter, at nine months, limited herself to a half-hour nap during the day. Better still, she sometimes dispensed with it altogether.⁶⁴

An even greater threat to Anna's development than either meat or midday naps was sheer boredom. The solution was simply to keep her busy. Here, Alcott's New England heritage seems again to reveal itself, and there was a sense in which he would subscribe to the dictum that idleness is the devil's workshop. But, as far as the infant Anna was concerned, Alcott meant only that she should be preoccupied with play and other diversions. Already, from the day of Anna's birth, her father had spent countless hours with his daughter—talking to her, offering his finger to be seized, allowing her to pull his hair, and surrounding her with all manner of colorful objects. A rocking cradle was banned, but Alcott thought some motion was not harmful, and he introduced a small swing, which would occupy the six-month-old infant for as much as a half-hour at a time.⁶⁵

Since the Alcotts kept Anna pretty much to themselves, the necessity of stimulating her through play must have placed a large burden on the parents. As always, too little is known of Mrs. Alcott's dealing with the infant, but the record makes clear that the father was giving her still more attention during the second six months. Moreover, the games he initiated with Anna had a point beyond simply preventing boredom. Alcott aimed at developing her infant reason through establishing what he called "associations" in her experience. The first lesson to be learned was the connection between cause and effect. He noted that nine-month-old Anna was greatly attracted by the lamp and even put her hand very near the flame. Her father was content for the present to forbid her to touch it.⁶⁶ Several weeks later, he judged that the time had arrived for the lesson:

Delighted with the brilliant light and anxious to seize it, she was permitted gently to place her hand within the flame, and experience the pain thus produced. At first she seemed greatly disappointed that an object so beautiful to her imagination should conduce to her pain, and obviously doubted the correctness of her sensations, for she put her hand again within the blaze in order to satisfy herself, but immediately withdrew it, her eyes suffused

with tears, and her whole countenance assuming the appearance of chagrin and disappointment.

Never again, Alcott claimed, could Anna be induced to put her hand in the flame.⁶⁷

He employed similar means to put an end to Anna's hair-pulling, which heretofore he had tolerated. Now, when she pulled his hair, he pulled hers, although very gently. Thereafter, when he presented his head for her amusement, she would only pat it and smile pleasantly. With the help of reason, her father explained, she was coming to exercise power over her own desires, which gave her as much pleasure as the power she had formerly exercised over her father. Thus, the incident supplied an example of transferring pleasure from an improper to a proper act.⁶⁸ The success of the lessons led Alcott to similar experiments. When Anna began playing with sharp objects, her father pricked her finger with a pin. Again Anna learned the lesson perfectly.⁶⁹

Anna's father was inordinately pleased with the success of these little experiments, for they beautifully illustrated one of his major contentions about child-rearing. As he interpreted the episodes, Anna had learned a connection between cause and effect, and, through an act of free will, had subjugated her desire to touch the flame, to pull her father's hair, or to play with pins. And it had all come about without the forcible imposition of parental authority! Through the use of her infant reason, Anna was making contact with universal, natural law and behaving herself accordingly.⁷⁰

But could Anna order her conduct in the light of her reason alone, insufficiently developed as her intellect was? After all, her father had been able to protect her from the flame only by his fatherly command until he judged she was prepared to obey a higher law. Moreover, Alcott acknowledged, there are some lessons that cannot be learned under the tutelage of reason alone. For these the faculty of conscience must be brought into play, which would reveal to Anna not alone the natural laws of physics, but also the natural laws of ethics. Alcott admitted that Anna did not as yet exhibit a conscience, but he understood that the conscience, though divine in origin, depended for its full development upon a child's relations with his parents. The chief prerequisite was that there be a strong bond of affection between parent and child.⁷¹

Alcott saw evidence that Anna was strongly attached to her mother. Such attachment is, of course, not surprising during an infant's first year, but, to judge by Alcott's comments, it seems that Anna could not bear to let her mother out of her sight. He noted that at six months Anna required constant attention and became very unhappy when left alone. With the appearance of teething and other minor ailments, Anna's clinging increased. At times her demands could be inconvenient. Her father noted she cried bitterly when Mrs. Alcott, deprived of domestic help for a few days, left her on the bed in order to take care

of household duties. Four months later Anna shed jealous tears when an infant, somewhat older than herself, came under the mother's care for a few days.⁷²

Despite his praise of self-reliance, Alcott was delighted. He took Anna's querulous demands for attention as simply a demonstration of affection. She was, he said, learning how to love. Even her illnesses were welcomed by the father, provided they were not too severe, for they opened the springs of gratitude and affection toward her parents.⁷³ It was evident that Alcott did not really admire the kind of self-reliance that arises from emotional detachment. At the end of Anna's first year, he found her still impatient of all restraint, but he also noted with pleasure that she was strong and ardent in her affections. By means of these affections Anna could be brought to the desired restraint.⁷⁴

III. ANNA'S SECOND AND THIRD YEARS: PARADISE LOST

During the spring and summer of 1832, Anna continued to enjoy considerable attention, relatively light discipline, and increasing liberty of movement. She was beginning to creep about and walk with the aid of furniture. A renewed bout with teething and an attack of measles reduced her mobility for a time, but restored health in the summer enabled her to toddle out into the yard, where she watched the passage of horses, wagons, and people. Her success at opening a gate meant that someone would have to accompany her on daily walks along the road, for it was her father's conviction that health and growth depended on her liberty to explore at will.⁷⁵

Anna may, however, have begun to detect that her mother seemed troubled. For one thing, Mrs. Alcott was pregnant, which seemed again to throw her into periods of depression.⁷⁶ Pregnancy was in those times also referred to as "confinement," and for good reason. Women were expected to confine themselves to their homes when it became all too apparent they were expecting a child. Mrs. Alcott, although obedient to the fashion, suffered under it. Her Boston family had been an extremely social one, and Mrs. Alcott liked to get about. She could invite persons to her home, but there was in the Germantown community a lack of "congenial society," as her husband admitted. She was getting a bit bored with her rural paradise.

More disturbing than either confinement or boredom was the fact that the Alcott family was hovering between genteel poverty and outright destitution. In October, 1831, just six months after Alcott opened his school, Reuben Haines died. Not only had the rich farmer provided a rent-free cottage and a direct subsidy to Alcott, it also turned out that he had given money to parents to pay their children's tuition. Now, with Haine's support withdrawn, parents began removing their children from Alcott's school. Alcott began to speak of leaving for Boston, but for some reason he could not bring himself to abandon the failing venture, perhaps as a matter of pride.⁷⁷

As a partial solution, Mrs. Alcott began to take in pupils as boarders. The first to invade the intimacy of the family was an eight-year-old girl, Elizabeth Lewis, who appeared during Anna's second summer. Soon, four other youngsters had arrived in the Alcott home. By winter, Alcott was hoping the children would soon be gone, but spring saw the youthful boarders still present in the family circle, exuding their "ungenial influences."⁷⁸ Mrs. Alcott, too, was complaining. In a letter to her brother she commented that "it is a thankless employment to take care of other people's children." She longed for the intimacy of "as small a circle as possible," and resolved someday to reside in a house with only three rooms, just enough for herself, her husband, and her children.⁷⁹

Although the parents were disturbed by boarders, the most unhappy event for Anna occurred on November 29, 1832, when Louisa May was born. Her father now transferred the bulk of his attention, along with his recorded "Observations," to the new baby.⁸⁰ Her mother was even more preoccupied with Louisa, who soon showed herself as demanding of her mother's attention as Anna had been. Soon Alcott was noting that Louisa seemed always in the arms of her mother, whether she was nursing or not.⁸¹ The Alcotts were determined that the infant Louisa should be as happy during her first year as Anna had been during hers.

Mrs. Alcott's preoccupation with Louisa May put Anna under the care of a succession of domestics for a period of a year. During this time, when, her father admitted, she should ideally have been around her parents a good deal, she spent most of her time with servants, taking meals with them and even sleeping with them.⁸² To make matters worse for Anna, many of the servants were unable to satisfy Alcott's rigid standards and thus did not remain long with the family. The first unsatisfactory nurse was a fourteen-year-old girl, who appeared shortly after Louisa's birth. She possessed "an agreeable countenance and an interesting manner of address," Alcott admitted, but she was otherwise unsatisfactory. In the place of Mrs. Alcott's "judicious and timely management," Anna was now subject to the girl's "jarring" and "hasty" ways, which had the effect of destroying Anna's peace of mind and her good behavior, or so her father thought.⁸³

Deprived of her mother's attention and subjected to incompetent nurses, Anna's reaction was, perhaps, predictable. At twenty-two months of age she was becoming unusually obstinate and aggressive. She manifested her feelings frequently by striking both her mother and her little sister.⁸⁴ Mrs. Alcott believed—or said she believed—that the blows were delivered out of "pure affection."⁸⁵ But her husband was not at all persuaded that affection had been the motive. A crisis had arrived in Anna's development.

Alcott assumed that his daughter, now nearly two years old, was capable of sympathy and remorse, and he intended to bring these sentiments to the surface by deliberately withholding physical punishment, and employing instead the withdrawal of parental approval and affec-

tion. A dramatic sample of this treatment occurred one day after Anna had once again assaulted her infant sister. Alcott delivered a lecture, warning Anna of possible physical punishment and speaking to her of the effect of her blows on Louisa's feelings. He then left the room whereupon Anna struck her sister again. Mrs. Alcott, loyal to her husband's theories, gave only a reprimand and pointedly sympathized with the baby, prompting Anna to run out of the room and down the stairs, saying, "Father, punish; Father, punish," while making gestures of striking someone. Rather than fulfilling her wish, Alcott explained to Anna once again the nature and consequences of her aggression. "She seemed sorry for it," he reported, "sympathized with her sister and returned to her play again."⁸⁶

There are at least two ways to interpret little Anna's feelings as she ran down the stairs, asking for punishment. One is that she felt no genuine remorse for her behavior, but, instead, was simply trying to find out if her father really meant what he said when he warned of a possible spanking, thus testing and discovering the limits of permitted behavior. The other view—and the one to which Alcott seemed to subscribe—was that Anna, in asking for punishment, was seeking relief for pangs of conscience. In sparing her bottom, Alcott deliberately sought to trouble her spirit. According to this view, the withdrawal of approval, so apparent in the above incident, would prove unbearably painful to a girl already suffering doubts about her parents' love.⁸⁷

It was with some puzzlement, therefore, that Alcott noted the recurrence of Anna's aggressions and jealousy. She continued to strike her sister when the opportunity presented itself. Consistent with his view of Anna's feelings, Alcott suspected that withdrawal of affection could be effective only if there were affection to be withdrawn. From Anna's point of view, it may have appeared that she had lost her mother's attention forever, and the only way to get it back was to strike someone, preferably, of course, the sister who was the cause of the deprivation. Her father reasoned that Anna was suffering from a lack of attention. The teen-age nurse was still not working out to his satisfaction, and the only solution seemed to be Anna's return to the care of her mother, or to secure an "attendant of cheerful habits, judicious management and long-tried experience"—in short, a substitute for the mother.⁸⁸ But Mrs. Alcott was still preoccupied with Louisa; and, where could such a superb domestic be found?

Alcott began to believe that a change of scene might do everyone some good. A move to the city of Philadelphia would relieve his wife's boredom, and it might be easier to secure an experienced attendant for Anna. As for himself, Alcott had in mind that Philadelphia boasted a good library, which he was now eager to exploit. Finally, there was the fact that he could not operate a school without pupils. In Germantown, only eight children remained in his school, and he calculated that he required at least twenty, at a tuition of eighty dollars each, in order to

provide a "barely adequate" livelihood for himself and his family. At the urging of friends, he decided that Philadelphia might provide a larger clientele for his teaching services, and by February, 1833, the decision had been made to move.⁸⁹

On April 10, the family left Germantown, with "few regrets," according to Alcott, and moved to the city, taking lodgings at a boarding house. Despite his earlier preference for isolated rural cottages, he now attempted to persuade himself that boarding would give Mrs. Alcott more time for the children, since she would not be required to prepare meals, and there was also the inescapable advantage that lodgings were cheaper than paying rent on a house. His school, which opened on April 22, fell short of the ideal enrollment, but still provided nearly twice as many pupils as at Germantown. Philadelphia also offered the inestimable advantages of the Loganian Library, while there was ample opportunity to meet more men of intellect and influence. Now also the Alcotts acquired a housekeeper who could meet even the father's exacting standards, a woman he described as possessing "good sense, aimable manners, and long-tried experience in the care of children." Finally, Alcott felt that Anna was happy with the change, being deeply interested in the greater variety of objects, and finding delight in walking the streets.⁹⁰ Cities, it seems, were not so bad after all.

Within a month, however, his doubts about urban life returned. Philadelphians, for all their urbanity, proved thick-headed when it came to grasping Alcott's idealistic views of education, and he once again thought how much more sympathetic patrons would be in Boston.⁹¹ The city was also bad for his daughters. It was impossible to allow Anna to roam as freely as she had done in Germantown:

She suffers . . . from confinement. Denied the free, unrestrained range afforded her while in the country, she sometimes finds it difficult to content herself with the few objects of the nursery and the attentions of her mother and nurse.⁹²

Their father was reminded of his earlier convictions that the city, artificial and conventional as it is, has little to offer the simple, docile mind of the child. It was so difficult to protect children under such conditions! One had to be with them every minute, unless one was content, like too many parents, to allow them to run in the streets and there encounter heaven knows what kinds of experience. Then, too, Anna's health was suffering. By June it was necessary to call in a physician, always a risky, distasteful, and expensive matter.⁹³

Proof that Anna was in a bad state lay in the fact that she continued to strike or scratch Louisa, but now with more frequency. Anna would approach her younger sister, giving every indication that she was delighted to see her, and then, suddenly, lash out at her. Alcott had not, however, surrendered his conviction that he should, on these occasions, appeal to Anna's conscience, in spite of the fact that Anna still *asked* to be punished physically:

Having been told that this hurts her sister, she seems sorry, sympathizes with her, and, sometimes, asks to be punished for the act. The sense of opinion seems awake—the consciousness of incurring the displeasure of her parents is obvious, and yet she seems to have too little power over her will to desist from the act when her sister's face is within her reach.⁹⁴

The problem, Alcott still felt, was that Anna needed more attention from her mother. Louisa had fallen into a period of ill health, meaning that Anna was handed over more exclusively to the care of the housekeeper. Writing in July Alcott commented:

She does not see her mother often enough; she is not under her influence enough to make her feel its continuous power, to form those habits of obedience . . . necessary to the happiness of the young. . . . She expects the constant attention of her mother and loses her temper if this be withheld and vents her displeasure upon her little sister, who is sharing her mother's attention.⁹⁵

Mrs. Alcott was distraught. She had never openly challenged her husband's child-rearing theories, and she did not do so now. But she found it difficult to translate his ideas into practice without more help. Writing to her brother she complained that her husband was so engrossed in his work and writing that he was unable to lend practical assistance. "Mr. A. aids me in general principles, but nobody can aid me in the detail," she mourned. Finding herself once again in bad health, she feared that the children might, despite the assistance of the housekeeper, prove too much for her. Moreover, her husband's views kept her constantly wondering if she were doing a good job. "Am I doing what is right? Am I doing enough? Am I doing too much?" She found herself so easily discouraged if everything did not go well, and, just now, Anna was ailing, irritable, and demanding.⁹⁶

Whether or not life in Philadelphia was responsible for this deplorable state of affairs, Alcott decided a vacation in New England would do the family some good, and besides, he wished to attend an educational convention in Boston, discuss with Boston publishers the prospects of issuing books written for children, and sound out prospects for opening a school.⁹⁷ Consequently, on July 29 Alcott and family left Philadelphia and arrived in Wolcott, Connecticut, where he deposited wife and children with his mother. As for himself, he journeyed on to Boston to take care of business, feeling some pangs at this, his first separation from the family. Three weeks later he returned to Wolcott, lacking prospects for a school but encouraged by the publishers and feeling that both he and his family had benefited by the vacation.⁹⁸

By September 1, the Alcotts were back in Philadelphia, "fitted," as Mr. Alcott put it, "for the duties of life in the city."⁹⁹ He believed that the country air had worked wonders for his daughters, although he had to admit that Anna was still inclined to strike her sister on occasion.

The habit of *striking* her sister still continues to operate on her

organism. This is obviously instinctive and habitual. It is periodical in all its appearances; seldom appearing when all exterior influences favour her tendencies. It will leave her in due time, as her system attains vigour, and her instincts are subjected to the power of her volitions. As yet she is not accountable for these aberrations. Time will correct the nervous and instinctive impulse.¹⁰⁰

Alcott always believed that his child-rearing theories were well ahead of current opinion, and his patience in the face of Anna's aggression would seem to provide evidence of it. Even as Alcott was indulging Anna, in the hopes of an appeal to her conscience, the pastor of the Central Calvinist Church of Worcester, Massachusetts, published a book that proved to be the first really popular treatise on child-rearing to appear in America.¹⁰¹ The Reverend John S. C. Abbott's *The Mother at Home* points up the differences between Alcott's practices and what was probably fairly widespread opinion in 1833. There were, to be sure, similarities between the clergyman and the transcendentalist heretic. Abbott was no less concerned than Alcott with parental neglect of children (else he would not have written the book), and he prescribed large doses of maternal sympathy and love. He even acknowledged that during the first year of an infant's life, a mother was perfectly justified in indulging the infant's desires.¹⁰² In this respect, at least, he was as liberal in theory as the Alcotts had been in practice. Evidently Calvinists were not quite as benighted as Alcott had assumed they were.

But the over-all tone of *The Mother at Home* was decidedly somber. Through a variety of examples Abbott made perfectly clear his conviction that the major causes of sin in Jacksonian America were mothers who indulged their offspring. He portrayed the typical American child of his era as a spoiled brat, and, like two centuries of Calvinist clergymen before him, he believed that nothing short of stern measures could put down the little tyrants. Whenever the child is old enough to understand an order, which Abbott thought was usually during the second year, he must obey. It was, he argued, a mistake to reason much with children—something Alcott never tired of doing with Anna. According to the Reverend Abbott, parents should give absolute commands, insist that they be obeyed without fail, and if the child refuses compliance, the parents should punish promptly and severely, including the infliction of "real pain."¹⁰³ The desire to be tender could be disastrous, Abbot warned, and he pointed with relish to Napoleon turning his artillery on the mobs of Paris. Parents must be domestic Napoleons, as ready as Bonaparte to invoke decisive measures in putting down childish rebellion. After the child's resistance is shattered, there is then occasion to speak to him of repentance. The success of these tactics, combined, to be sure, with kindness and love, would be recorded in the creation of a child who thereafter remains above temptation, a pale counterpart, indeed, to Alcott's vision of the child heroically transcending his passions through an act of will.¹⁰⁴

Alcott nowhere records that he read Abbott's popular treatise, although he would not have had much praise for it if he had, but Mrs. Alcott was evidently beginning to feel some sympathy for the point of view which the clergyman expressed. In the fall of 1833, Alcott noted euphemistically that a great deal of "power and pain" had suddenly appeared in Anna's experience. We may surmise that Mrs. Alcott, out of concern for Louisa's safety, had tired of waiting on the development of her elder daughter's volitions and administered instead some sound spanking. This treatment, in Alcott's opinion, only made Anna's behavior worse.¹⁰⁵

The question of Anna's discipline must have produced tense moments between the parents, but a favorable change of situation fortunately provided relief. Louisa, now a year old, was requiring less of her mother's attention, and Anna began to spend more time with her parents. For the first time in twelve months, she was permitted to sleep in the same room with them. Her father noted a striking change for the better in Anna's temper and behavior. She was now happier, more obedient, and more affectionate, both to her mother and sister. By December, her father's descriptions of her character and conduct were approaching something like rapture, although there is no way of knowing if the improvement resulted from his patience, Mrs. Alcott's spankings, or, what is more likely, Anna's restored intimacy with her mother.¹⁰⁶

And then, without warning, Alcott's record of his children came to an abrupt end. It is not known if the observations were lost, destroyed, or simply never made, but a sudden gap in Alcott family records usually suggests trouble so painful that someone could not bear the memory of it. Alcott's personal diary for the winter of 1833-1834 gave no hint of domestic difficulty, revealing only that he was busily engaged in preparing children's books for publication.¹⁰⁷ But in reflecting back on the period he admitted, indeed, that all had not been well in the Philadelphia boarding house. The principal problem, he thought, had been lack of space. Unable to rent a house of their own in the city, the family had been thrown too close together in their small apartment without even a study for the father, a convenience he had enjoyed in Germantown:

It is absolutely necessary to the natural unfolding of the infant mind, as well as the tranquility and progress of the parent, that *Space* should be enjoyed. . . . Before this, both myself and companion got time for reflection and study. This is of the first importance to us both. To me, it is a positive want of my being. I pine, and lose my Spirits, my hopes and aspirations without it. During the last few months, our arrangements were such that opportunity for free, uninterrupted thought, was almost impossible. My companion suffered from the same cause. We were thrown in *each other's way*. The children were thrown in *our way*. The effect on all was depressing. Life was rendered too monotonous. *Prox-*

imity was too large an element in our experience. The space and freedom . . . we ought to have had, was denied us. Intellectual progress was retarded, and health prostrated thereby.¹⁰⁸

Had Alcott lived in a later age, he might have been given the opportunity to train himself for a post as a professor of philosophy in some college, and thus supported his family comfortably, if not handsomely, while pursuing his spiritual and scholarly ambitions. As it was, however, his domestic ideals and his professional aspirations were painfully in conflict. In early April, therefore, he made what was for him an agonizing decision, removing his family from the city, and extracting himself from the family, except for periodic visits. He packed his wife and children off to a cottage in Germantown, where he intended they should remain through the spring and summer.¹⁰⁹ As for himself, he took a sparsely-furnished attic room across from the library, and began taking advantage of the leisure and quiet now available to him to read German literature and philosophy in translation, and to work on his writing style, which he admitted was abominable:

Here I am, removed from the third to the fourth story—blessed at last with my one little window fronting the City Library and the Athenaeum, with a bed, a trunk for my clothes, a wash-stand, two-chairs, and my books. On these I am to feed and content myself during the summer.

Well, it matters little, after all, what surrounds us, how few are the things in which we feel a property and to which we attach ourselves, if the mind have wherewith to feed and the heart to comfort itself. Man can live on his own faith, if his faith be fastened on Love and Wisdom. 'Tis not necessary that external goods should enter largely into the supply.¹¹⁰

These ascetic sentiments might do very well for Alcott, holed up in his scholarly cell, but what of his family in Germantown? Was there not some disparity between his ideals in 1831, and the actual state of affairs three years later? Would not model child-rearing require the presence of the father?

Despite the evident pleasure Alcott took in his monkish cell, he was troubled by the question of his family responsibilities and not a little of his personal diary, now swelling as a result of the new-found leisure to write, was devoted to mulling over the decision to send his family away. He did miss the "little prattlers." No question about that.¹¹¹ But he suspected that distance had lent some enchantment, which, indeed, was one of the advantages of the separation.

He persuaded himself, moreover, that the separation was a positive good for the family as well as for himself. Mrs. Alcott would now have more quiet also, and, reverting to a familiar theme, Alcott had great hopes for the country's beneficial effect on the health and morals of the children. Besides, he pointed out to himself, he intended to pass the weekends with them, and on occasion, he would even stay overnight in Germantown in the middle of the week.¹¹²

Blessed now by the absence of his children in their concrete form, Alcott was free to contemplate the significance of their "idealized presence" for his life and work. Just why, he asked himself, was he so interested in children? As a professional educator, he had, of course, asked the question before, and he thought he had arrived at a satisfactory answer. He conceived it his mission to teach children, to protect them from corruption and to help them achieve spiritual perfection. But now, as he thought about it, children seemed to have a deeper significance, related to his own past. Reflecting on his childhood, he recalled that he had been pure and idealistic as a child, although he had not been really happy. Too many in his acquaintance had failed to lead him by kindness and encouragement, not out of cruelty, but simply because they failed to grasp his sensitivity. It had been a lonely time on the Connecticut farm, for only his mother had given him genuine affection. Even she, a barely literate housewife, had failed to perceive his idealistic yearnings. Her affection—Alcott refused to call it "love"—had sprung more from an "affinity of disposition" and from her preference for the first-born than from a "sympathetic perception of the high purpose which then slept in my unfolded being." But, he admitted, there was something motherly about her feeling for him, and, imperfect as it was, her affection nourished his purity and idealism, inspiring his ambition to learn and to serve.¹¹³

Referring no doubt to his youthful escapades while peddling in the South, Alcott thought his childlike ideals had, for a time, been obscured during adolescence. Even now, he sometimes wondered if he had not forever lost the "vision," the "bright ideal" of his childhood. Catching himself taking a nap after lunch, Alcott thought remorsefully that his torpor symbolized the adult, who sleeps even when awake and who has lost the vigor and faith of childhood!¹¹⁴

Alcott's gloomy comparisons between his childhood and the present may have been prompted by the fact that the Philadelphia school was going from a failure to a disaster. Parents began withdrawing their children until he was once again facing only a handful of pupils, a situation trying both for the spirit and the pocketbook. Alcott thought the parents were unhappy because he emphasized moral above intellectual education, but had he not warned them, before they enrolled their children, that he intended to weed out their offspring's bad habits and to produce in his pupils a "moral regeneration"? Indeed he had, but it was becoming evident that Philadelphians liked their children much the way they were. The parents even ridiculed his "simplicity of character" and passed along rumors that he had lost his sanity. Alcott tried to console himself by considering the source, but still the accusations hurt, and he found himself increasingly cast into gloom and doubt about his ideals. When, if ever, would the rewards of his idealism appear?¹¹⁵

Also, was he not neglecting the childhood of his daughters? Mrs. Alcott thought so, notwithstanding the advantages Alcott professed

to see in the separation. While he hovered between faith and doubt in Philadelphia, she was enduring loneliness and anxiety in Germantown. Faithful to his promise, Alcott spent virtually every weekend for three months with his family, and frequently made visits in the middle of the week, but, unfortunately for his peace of mind, Mrs. Alcott usually took advantage of the visits to remind him that she was not at all happy about the arrangements. For one thing, she was having difficulty making ends meet, due to his apparent indifference to the question of making money. Alcott admitted that he might seem "unkind, indifferent, improvident" but he refused to be deflected from his study and writing. Mrs. Alcott might have endured the poverty, but the separation from her husband she found terribly trying. She simply missed having him around the house.¹¹⁶ Her desire that the family be reunited became insistent, however, after his absence nearly took her life. On May 20, he received an urgent message that his wife was ill. He hurried home to discover that she had experienced difficulty in summoning a physician. Whatever the cause of the malady, Alcott acknowledged that a delay of a half hour more in securing medical aid would have proved fatal.¹¹⁷ Six days later she had recovered, and Alcott returned to his duties at the school, but he now admitted that the separation from the family, whatever its advantages for his work, must come to an end.¹¹⁸ As for Philadelphia, he could no longer survive there with his ideals intact.

On July 3, having fulfilled his obligations to the remaining pupils, he closed the school and one week later gathered up his family for a visit to Boston to explore once again the possibility of launching a school there.¹¹⁹ Thanks largely to the efforts of his old friend, Elizabeth Peabody, he met this time with success. On September 22, he opened the Temple School, which proved for a time his most successful venture. As for his family, which he idealized but which he at times found so difficult to live with, Alcott resolved he must do better by his wife and daughters. In October, he resumed once more his "observations" and with them, his attempts to be a model father.

IV. THE RENEWED CAMPAIGN

On September 22, 1834, Alcott opened the Temple School in Boston, a project that conveyed fresh hope to him. Not for two years had he felt the excitement that always came when he believed he was making a contribution to the welfare of mankind; and not until two years later would he publish *Conversations with Children on the Gospels*, which would enrage influential Bostonians and result in the closing of the experimental school. For the time being, prospects looked favorable for his latest venture in educational reform. Important people had gathered more than thirty pupils from some of Boston's leading families. Elizabeth Peabody, herself a reformer of no mean repute, was present to assist in the school and to make a remarkable record of

the proceedings. Altogether, great things were expected of Alcott, and he expected much of himself. Although he noted in his journal that some of the school children seemed undisciplined and indulged, he had no doubt he could bring out the best in the youngsters. In fact, he felt himself to be on the verge of a great discovery about man, and that discovery had to do with the "redemption of infancy and childhood." Alcott himself would be the Redeemer.¹²⁰

Mrs. Alcott, practical woman that she was, was a bit cautious about the worldly success of the venture. Writing her brother early in September, she admitted that her husband's prospects were never brighter, "but I try to suppress all emotion but that of hope," she confided, "for I have always been woefully disappointed in my expectations and I mean this time to keep on the safe side."¹²¹ Despite the memory of trying days in Philadelphia, however, she entertained no doubts about the worth of Alcott's mission. "I believe there will be a great educational regeneration and I believe that my husband is to be the Messiah to announce to the world a new revelation."¹²²

As Alcott poised on the brink of this new educational venture, he realized he had not been doing well by his family. It would never do for childhood's Messiah not to have his domestic affairs in order. He admitted neglect of the family's financial needs and hoped that the income from the Temple School would be more than enough to free him from debt and to support the family comfortably. His anticipated salary constituted, in fact, a veritable "pot of gold," as Alcott put it, and he felt positively embarrassed by these unaccustomed riches.¹²³

But there was also the matter of personal neglect. His desperate attempts at self-education had kept him too much from the domestic circle. At ten o'clock in the evening of October 19, as a church bell tolled and he looked out on the darkened city, Alcott reflected with no little guilt on his role as a father:

Am I a *husband* and *father* in very deed? For I have a kind, loving wife, and two sweet little ones, whose outward image reminds me of their terrestrial parent and guide. I am a husband, but mingle too little of exposed sentiment in my daily manners and demeanor perhaps. I am a *father*, but pass too little time with the children, whose characters are being shaped under my eye. I am absorbed in the things belonging to my profession . . . while those at home are deprived of their just claims.

The proof of his neglect, he thought, lay not so much in outward complaints but in the undisciplined character of his children. Louisa May, now two years old, presented the most dramatic and pressing problem. By her father's account, she was obstinate, ungovernable, rude, aggressive and—at times—even violent. Anna, now three and one-half years old, suffered from more subtle difficulties. She had, it was true, become obedient and docile, but she was also timid and fearful.¹²⁴

Consequently, after Alcott had safely launched the Temple School, he turned attention to his daughters. On Sunday, October 26, he wrote:

Some habits, I regret to say, have been permitted to attain a strength and fixity that will require no small degree of skill, delicacy, and yet force of discipline to remove—more than the mother will be able to put forth, in the fondness and timidity of her heart. . . . I have left the mother to shape her methods to herself; but I find that without something more than this theoretical influence my duties as a father will be imperfectly discharged, and my relations as a husband to be feebly met. It is my duty to act in the way of example. My speculations, however true, must be actualized to the observation in practical methods under the eye of the mother, or a part of their value will be lost, or misunderstood by her—to say nothing of the consequences that must result to the children.¹²⁵

Alcott resolved that he could no longer delay so important a work: he would enter upon the task the very next morning. And so, on Monday, October 27, he rose earlier than usual in order to undertake both the disciplining and the observations of his children from the moment when they opened their eyes.¹²⁶ The observations were not new, but it was the first time that Alcott would be personally responsible for the discipline of the children for much of the day. Previously, he had been content to supervise Mrs. Alcott's handling of their daughters, but now he would be frequently rising before daybreak with the children and spending all but the school hours in domestic concerns. By the end of the following February he would have filled more than five hundred manuscript pages with observations and would have helped, he believed, Anna and Louisa weather a crisis in their coming-of-age.¹²⁷

The circumstances and setting for the domestic campaign were less than ideal. No more than Philadelphia was Boston a good place to rear children, in Alcott's opinion, but at the same time, he obviously had no intention of surrendering the advantages of living in the city. The only solution seemed to be close supervision of Anna's movements. She could not be allowed to roam freely, nor was she permitted to play with youngsters other than those in Alcott's school. She required outings, to be sure, but this meant that adults would have to take her and her sister for walks in the streets or on the Boston Common.¹²⁸

The home itself presented still another difficulty. After spending the summer in a boarding house on Morton Place, the family moved into a similar establishment on Bedford Street.¹²⁹ Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Alcott was entirely satisfied with the arrangement. As she told her mother-in-law in November, she was "tired of living about in other people's houses."¹³⁰ Her husband also noted once again the problem of space. Lacking freedom to play outside of the house, his daughters would also lack room inside.

Mrs. Alcott was again pregnant and suffering the attendant ailments, and, though the Alcotts could once again afford servants, they were to prove no more satisfactory in Boston than in Pennsylvania.

"Mary," the first in a line of Boston women to serve the family, proved to be "stupid" and was dismissed late in 1834. There followed another woman who, according to Alcott, lacked imagination and failed to evoke the affections of the children. After only four weeks of service, she too left the household.

We require an Ideal person. . . . She must have retained the purity, the innocence, the spirituality, the humble wisdom and seraphic love of infancy, and, at the same time, have suffered the trials of terrestrial existence, to bring forth and render hardy and vigorous the virtues of fortitude, self-dependence, self-control. An angel is, indeed, wanted.

Unfortunately, angels were in short supply in Boston, and Alcott entertained the thought of giving up on servants altogether.¹³¹

Even Mrs. Alcott lacked the angelic qualifications. As Alcott viewed more closely the way his wife handled Louisa and Anna, the greater his dissatisfaction grew. She was far too indulgent with Louisa, and she really did not understand Anna. Moreover, she felt harassed by the children, often lost her temper with them and at times sought only escape from the burdens of motherhood. To her physical ailments were added frequent periods of melancholy, brought on in part, one suspects, by the difficulties of being the helpmate to childhood's Messiah.¹³²

Nevertheless, Alcott expected nothing less than moral perfection from his daughters, and to this end the child-rearing must go forward under perfect parental control. Considering the circumstances and Alcott's high expectations, it was perhaps well that he intended to spend much of his day in the home.

He began by drawing up an orderly schedule, and adhered to it more or less faithfully. The schedule called for him to rise at six a.m. with the children. He washed and dressed them, frequently over their protest, although the nursery was kept warm during the night to make the task a bit more pleasant. The girls were then permitted to play in the nursery until seven o'clock, when the maid brought in breakfast. Afterward they spent some time with their father in the study, or resumed play in the nursery.¹³³

At eight-thirty the girls separated, Louisa to spend the morning with her mother, until lunch at eleven o'clock and a nap at twelve. Anna would pass the morning at the school with her father from nine o'clock until two, playing with the children, looking at pictures, listening to stories, and marking letters on her slate. By two-thirty, Anna and her father had returned to the boarding house, where Anna and Louisa would have dinner together, and afterward take a walk, either with their father or with the maid. The remainder of the afternoon they spent playing in the nursery, taking a light supper at six o'clock, followed by more play in the nursery, or, perhaps, by conversation with their father in the study. At seven-thirty they were put to bed.¹³⁴

One of the chief benefits of the schedule was that it kept the sisters apart for much of the day, an essential for Anna's safety and for their mother's peace of mind. Anna had developed a mortal fear of her younger sister and often ran to her mother for protection. Her fear did not, however, bar a good deal of quarreling between the girls, which often shattered the calm of the Alcott apartment. It was evident that Anna and Louisa betrayed as yet no signs of sisterly love. Seemingly the wisest course was to leave Louisa with her mother while Alcott took his elder daughter to school. Except for a period of several weeks, when a sprained ankle kept Anna at home, the separation was enforced, and with encouraging results. Louisa played happily when alone with her mother, while Anna seemed to enjoy the company of her friends at school.¹³⁵

Still, they could not be kept apart always, and Alcott believed he must play a larger role in Louisa's discipline. She possessed a "deep-seated obstinacy of temper" that could be eradicated only by a firm hand. She puzzled her father by an almost total lack of remorse. She was, Alcott said, a creature of "instinct." Once, after Anna had sprained her ankle, Alcott observed that Louisa seemed to take cruel delight in having her sister under her power:

She seems practicing on the law of *might*—the stronger and colder has the mastery over the weaker and more timid. She is still the undisciplined subject of her *instincts*, pursuing her purpose[s] by any means that will lead her to their attainment. Anna suffers a good deal from this temper of her sister's. She bears the mark of her sister's *hand*, at present, on her cheek. The sentiment of *love* is as yet too weak to regulate the appetites and desires.¹³⁶

Louisa was young, and her father made allowances for that fact—although not as many allowances as he had made for Anna when she was two years old—but Alcott was convinced that Louisa was not too young to behave in a more seemly manner. The source of her difficulty, he felt, lay in inherited temperament, heightened by her mother's indulgence. For one thing, Mrs. Alcott insisted on giving Louisa meat.

I am not sure but that her untameable spirit derives something of its ferocity from the nature of her diet. The Spirit is, perhaps, clogged in its functions, from having to dispose of so much animal matter, in the way of organic association, digestion, etc. . . . Think of a young being, compelled to lug about, in the very seat of its Spiritual life, a burden of flesh!¹³⁷

Beyond the matter of diet, Alcott noted that Louisa was, after all, very much like her mother. In both mother and daughter, "the will is the predominating power."¹³⁸ Little wonder, then, that Mrs. Alcott seemed to indulge her daughter in a way that Alcott could only regard as reckless.

His immediate prescription for Louisa was to put an end to indulgence. Ten days after Alcott instituted his regime, an incident oc-

curred that revealed both Louisa's temperament and her father's way of dealing with it. Mother, father, and daughter were seated at the dining table, waiting for their food to be served, when Louisa began teasing for a place on her mother's lap. Noting perhaps her husband's disapproval, Mrs. Alcott refused, prompting loud protests from Louisa. Her father then took a hand, "requesting" her to stop. He put Louisa's chair by her mother's place and invited her to be seated. She refused. There followed still another request and another refusal.

I told her that I should place her in the chair if she did not get in herself. She refused saying, "No! No!" with her usual force of expression, raising her tones and giving me to understand that the decision was made in her mind. I placed her in it, notwithstanding her struggles. The cry was heightened and prolonged; the persistence more decided and obstinate. I told her she must stop crying and sit in the chair, or I should punish her—hurt her—for she "must mind *father*." "No! No!" she exclaimed with more decided vehemence than before. I said, "Father must *spank* Louisa if she does not do as he says. Will she?" "No! No! Sit with mother," she reiterated. I *spanked* her. She cried the louder. I then told her that she must sit on her little chair by the side of her mother, and be still, or I should punish her more. She was unwilling to give up her purpose, and set up crying again. I repeated the punishment, and did not attain peace and quiet for her, till I had repeated it again. She then became quiet and continued talking with me and her mother till her supper was brought in, when, as I had promised her, she . . . sat at the table to eat it.¹³⁹

During this period, Alcott was not consistent in his treatment of Louisa. On occasions such as the above, he disciplined her with a severity and firmness that would have delighted the Reverend John Abbott, but at other times he permitted the most outrageous behavior, usually with the explanation that she was not yet responsible for her conduct. Once, the two-year-old actually had the temerity to pinch her father, but he restrained himself:

Sitting with me today, she held my hand in hers and while enjoying the sense of contact, she seemed to be instinctively tempted to *pinch* me. She actually seized the skin of my hand, pressed her finger nails into the flesh, and with not a little muscular irritation awaited the results. I paid no attention to it and she soon ceased the pressure. A little reaction, on my part, would doubtless have led to a scene of violence.¹⁴⁰

Clearly, Louisa baffled her father, and he could not quite fit her into his child-rearing scheme. He did not like to spank her, for it contradicted one of his most characteristic rules. He still felt it was a "brutal" and "barbarous" method, resting on "false and impious views of human natures—denying it faith, spirituality, power of self-guidance and self-reliance." The problem with spanking was that it appealed to the animal, rather than the spiritual side of a child's nature. Parents

who relied on it were employing an animalistic, pleasure-pain psychology.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, what was one to do with a creature who acted like a devil?

Alcott defended his frequent departures from theory, in Louisa's case, as a measure of last resort, made necessary by her mother's indulgence. Somewhat testily he remarked that "had the children been under my supervision continually, had the principles of prevention been carried out in the nursery, I do not believe that it would have been necessary to have resorted to such methods."¹⁴² However distasteful Alcott found his conflicting methods, they seemed to work, at least as far as bringing Louisa under some semblance of control, although Alcott was not satisfied that he was reaching the source of her difficulty.¹⁴³

In dealing with Anna, Alcott found himself on much firmer ground, and he could resort to more congenial tactics. He decided that Anna was much like himself—sentimental where Louisa was direct; idealistic and theoretical where Louisa was crude and practical; timid and inhibited where Louisa was aggressive and impulsive.

Not that Anna was perfect, for all her quiet ways. Her father noted with disapproval a certain "indolence of will," and "imbecility of purpose," and an "extreme susceptibility of sentiment" that made her less than ideal. Although she was not cursed with Louisa's animal ferocity, still Anna could benefit by some of her sister's force and energy.¹⁴⁴ Anna's timidity sometimes took forms that her father thought "peculiar." She was, unlike Louisa, very neat and orderly, and she often rebuked her younger sister for disorderly ways. Anna was "very careful of her playthings, books and clothes," Alcott commented proudly, and he never knew her to break a toy intentionally, to tear a book or to injure her dress. At the same time, he admitted her passion for order could go to extremes. He noticed that for Anna a door opened in a certain way must always be opened just that way or it was not opened correctly. On one occasion, while visiting friends, she would not leave until the chair in which she had been sitting was replaced and the toys she had been playing with had been put back in good order.¹⁴⁵

In search for explanations of Anna's peculiarities, Alcott fastened on her native temperament and once again, on her mother's incompetence. Alcott contended that Anna was a child who required an utterly different discipline than Louisa. A timid, fearful child responded to encouragement rather than reproof. She should at all times be treated with "great delicacy."¹⁴⁶ Unfortunately, Mrs. Alcott seemed to lack both delicacy and patience where Anna was concerned. At least the mother did not exhibit enough of these qualities to satisfy her husband.

As Alcott perceived, Anna's behavior was more than a matter of intellectual curiosity; she craved attention. Repelled by his wife's example and inspired by his theories, Alcott set out to lavish on Anna—

and on Louisa also if she could benefit by it—all the affection, gentleness, and attention he could command. Since Alcott had a decade of teaching experience behind him, much of the time spent with his daughters involved educational pursuits. He stressed that he was not attempting to rush Anna's development as a scholar—she need not learn to read until she was five—but a leisurely timetable did not exclude large attention to plays and games of an educational import.¹⁴⁷ When, for example, Anna became interested in the alphabet, her father devised a game of imitating the letters with the body. One is quite prepared to believe Alcott's report that Anna was "much amused" by these carryings on.¹⁴⁸

Louisa was not excluded from such pastimes altogether. She frequently joined her sister and father in the study after supper to enact little dramas, adapted from stories they knew, with a bit of music and dancing added for good measure. On another occasion Alcott proposed to his daughters that they build a tower out of books, which occupied them for an hour.¹⁴⁹

Louisa enjoyed one game especially. The Alcotts permitted the girls to run about the room naked for a time before they were dressed for bed. Anna, of course, was awkward and inhibited in her enjoyment, but Louisa let herself go, "running riot," as her father put it.¹⁵⁰ It was rare indulgence in New England, and somewhat curious in view of Alcott's pronounced antipathy to the things of the flesh. Under his prompting Anna had told him that naughtiness came "from the body," and he filled his record with remarks on the unremitting warfare between the "lusts" and the "spirit."¹⁵¹ Never in these militant tirades, however, did he refer explicitly to sexual lust, perhaps because he supposed children innocent of this particular impulse. How else can one explain his naive assurance when, in 1835, he instituted a series of discussions with his school pupils both male and female on the significance of birth? Proper Bostonians, more sensitive to the taboo than Alcott, were scandalized, but they did not realize the depths of innocence in a man who sincerely believed that sexual matters could be discussed with children in a purely symbolic way. It had not occurred to him that anyone would think children might approach the subject on any but the loftiest of planes.¹⁵²

Storytelling provided Alcott with the surest avenue to the conscience. He prepared the evening hour with great care and surrounded his little narratives with caresses and kisses, taking pains to associate the stories with frequent demonstrations of parental warmth and affection. Quickly, the tales became something of a bedtime ritual, enjoyed not only by Anna, but also by Louisa, who could summon a patience for stories that she could not command for her father's conversations. As with the games and discussions, the stories aimed at a serious purpose. Anna and Louisa would plead with their father to provide "something to make us laugh," but their father insisted that the stories be more than "merely humorous or ludicrous." They must

be "beautiful," "pure," and always present a moral. Alcott, for all of his stress on play, utterly lacked a sense of humor. Anna, at least, began to share her father's preferences. "Well, Anna," he once asked her, "shall I tell you stories to make you laugh or to make you cry?" Anna replied that she liked best the stories that made her cry. Among her favorites was the tale of a little boy whose mother died under unspecified but heartrending circumstances. It never failed to prompt Anna to tears. Still another story providing a good cry told of a little boy and girl who stole birds out of a nest and then plucked the feathers from their wings.¹⁵³

In keeping with his theories and out of respect for Anna's delicacy, Alcott did not usually respond to misbehavior with physical punishment. He claims to have spanked Anna only twice between October, 1834 and March 1835, on both occasions for unspecified demonstrations of "querulousness" and "excessive sensibility."¹⁵⁴ As punishment, he preferred rather to ration the warmth and affection he otherwise lavished on the girls. On occasion, he would shut off contact altogether. The usual punishment for misdeeds was to eliminate the bedtime story hour, and with it the kisses and other little demonstrations of affection. He would also shut the door to their bedroom, which ordinarily was left open to admit some light. "They are left in darkness," he explained, "without the conscious presence of their parents—a natural consequence of naughtiness and a means of quickening the sentiment of conscience." With Anna the punishment usually brought expressions of repentance and promises of better behavior.¹⁵⁵

Even Anna was crude enough, her father admitted, to prize rewards more tangible than parental affection and approval. Both she and Louisa were inordinately fond of apples, and it occurred to their father to appeal to Anna's appetite for apples in the hopes of associating it with more worthy motives. Anna, whose sprained ankle kept her at home, was sitting one day in a rocking chair. Louisa wanted the chair and used tears, pleas, and blows to make her point. Alcott intervened and suggested that Anna, because she was older, should give in to Louisa's demands, Anna promised to try, but an hour later fresh outcries brought Alcott back to the nursery where he discovered Anna sitting in the chair once again and Louisa standing beside her in tears.

"Anna, what is the matter with Louisa?"

"She wants to sit in the rocking chair, where mother told me I might sit because I am lame, while she puts the room in order."

"But will you not let her sit in it, if it will stop the tears from running so down her cheeks. Will you not get up to make your sister happy?"

"I want to sit here. Mother said I might."

"So does your sister. And don't you know that you said you would give up your wants to Louisa's. And now you can do so."

Mother is willing that Louisa should sit in the chair. Are *you*, Anna?"

"I want to sit in it."

"Well, Anna, I see you do not mean to be *very good*. Very good little girls give up their own wants to the wants of their little sisters whom they *love*. Love makes us give up our own wants. If you love your little sister, you will give up the chair to her."

"I love her but I want to sit in the chair."

Alcott then asked Anna to go down with him to the study. When she refused he turned to Louisa and asked her to go. Louisa agreed, and he picked her up in his arms, but as he was leaving the room, he said to Anna:

"Now, you are not a *very good* girl. If you were, you would give up the chair to Louisa. I shall not give you the apple that you were to have if you [had been] good, when I come up again.

"I will let her sit in the chair," Anna said, moving herself to the floor to make room for Louisa.

"Now, Anna, did you give up the chair because you *loved* your sister, or because you wanted the apple?"

"Because I *wanted* the *apple*." After a reflective pause, she added, "and I like sister too."

It was, Alcott admitted, not a "perfect" example of self-sacrifice but he hoped that Anna would soon perceive the superiority of acting out of love for Louisa than out of love for apples.¹⁵⁶

V. THE TRIALS OF CONSCIENCE

The discipline Alcott instituted in the Bedford Street boarding house during the fall and winter of 1834-1835 falls clearly within that mode of child-rearing that subsequent students would call "love-oriented," as opposed to "object-oriented." Object-oriented discipline is a dimension of treatment that includes the granting and withholding of tangible rewards and privileges and the administering of physical punishment. Alcott did, it was true, spank Louisa and, less frequently, Anna, and he even offered them apples, but his emphasis was rather on reasoning with his children, giving praise and affection as a reward, and practicing isolation and withdrawal of affection as forms of punishment. He already sensed what later investigations would make clear, that a love-oriented discipline is usually associated with the early appearance of conscientious behavior. Alcott's approach was, therefore, well calculated to produce his transcendentalist objectives.

Alcott's judgments about the effectiveness of his technique is, of course, suspect, since it was important for him to believe that he understood children, but, in any event, he was pleased when he observed

the changes overcoming Anna. Her father thought she was becoming very sensitive to the matter of parental approval and could not bear to be regarded as bad. Her father noted also that she often averted her face and blushed, sure signs of the struggle within. Noteworthy too was the fact that she was beginning to confess her little sins, having been assured by her father that he would love her even more for doing so. Shortly after her first such confession, she began telling her father, "You make me good, Father," and "Good Father, I love you," or asking repeatedly, "I am good, am I not, Father?"¹⁵⁷

Anna not only displayed the effects of a conscience, she even managed to locate it physiologically, or so her father maintained. During one of their metaphysical conversations, Anna informed him that God was in her, and He told her when she was naughty and when she was bad. Alcott then asked her just *where* it was that she was told. She laid her hand on her heart. "There, there!" she said. Surely, Alcott thought, she could not have learned this connection through mere experience. On the following evening, at bedtime, father and daughter were discussing voices when Anna announced that there was something that spoke to her sometimes, and asked her father if he knew what it was. Alcott told her he supposed she meant her conscience. "Yes," Anna replied, "something *here* that says 'naughty girl—good girl.' Father, can you hear it when it speaks to me?" Putting her head down on the pillow, she listened for a moment and said, "I think it will say 'good girl, good girl,' for I have been good today." Alcott admitted to himself that Anna might have picked up the ideas from him. Certainly it was clear that he had supplied the words "conscience," "good girl," "bad girl," but he was convinced that in this instance he had witnessed the "sentiment of self-approval" itself springing from an "inward, spontaneous conviction."¹⁵⁸

An illustration of the mixture of candor and conformity on Anna's part is provided by lengthy conversations that ensued between father and daughter on the question of her feelings about punishment. Alcott had begun to worry that Anna feared him and, it was true, he sometimes forgot his serenity and shouted at her. As Anna reminded him:

"Father, when I am good, how kindly you speak to me; but when I am naughty I do not like the way you speak; you speak loud to me and make me afraid."¹⁵⁹

It is noteworthy that Anna felt free to make this confession to him, but her candor did nothing to still his concern. Not only on theoretical but also on deeply personal grounds, it was important to him that he not lose the affection he had so carefully cultivated. His worry was increased by Mrs. Alcott's distressing habit of leaving punishment to him. He could, to be sure, console himself with the thought that Mrs. Alcott appealed only to the children's pleasure, whereas he addressed himself to their higher nature. Still, it was just possible that Anna

did not understand the matter this way. A bit of conversation was in order. Alcott asked Anna if he made her happy.

"Yes, Father, you do."

"Now, by making you give up your want to mine or Mother's, or by letting you do as you please?"

"By making me give up."¹⁶⁰

A few days later, Anna was not so sure. "Father," she said, "I don't love you as well as I do Mother."

"Aye, I should like to be loved as much as Mother. I suppose when I am as good as Mother, you will love me as much? Don't you think you shall?"

"Yes, Father, I think I shall."

"But Anna, *why* am I not as good as Mother? What have I done? I wish you would tell me so that I may try to make you love me as much as you do her. Do you think you can tell me?"

"You punish me, Father, and Mother does not."

"Aye, that is the reason then. Well, should not naughty girls—naughty children—be punished to make them better?"

"Yes, Father."

"And is not Anna naughty, sometimes, and does her father punish her then to make her better and make her *love* to be good?"

"Yes, Father."

"Well, then, cannot you love Father, though he does punish you sometimes? For he punishes you to make you love him and to *dislike* your naughtiness that makes you feel so bad."

"Well, Father, I like you both sometimes and sometimes I do not like you both. But you are both good."¹⁶¹

Anna seemed to agree, verbally at least, with Alcott's opinion that a worthy father could be a punishing father, but she had not yet grasped the point that she should control her loves and likes, directing them only to worthy objects. After a particularly severe punishment for some undesigned misbehavior, Anna confessed she understood a bit better. Her father asked her if she knew why she had been punished.

"Yes, for being cross."

"How do you feel now?"

"Pleasant."

"What made you feel cross?"

"I was naughty."

"What did you do?"

"Troubled sister."

"Did that make you cross?"

"I believe so."

"Could you have helped being cross?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"By trying to be."
"Did you try?"
"Not much."
"Why?"
"I believe I did not want to."
"What! Not want to be good?"
"I believe not."
"Do you want to be good now?"
"Yes, I do."
"What made you?"
"Being punished, I believe."
"Do you think the punishment made you feel as you now feel?"
"Yes; you made me want to be good."
"Was I good for wanting to make you good? You think I punished you to make you better, don't you?"
"Yes, you punished me to make me better."
"Can you love me after I have punished you?"
"Yes."
"Do you love me now?"
"Oh, yes; I love you."
"Should you love me as much as you do now if I did not try to make you good by punishing you when you are naughty?"
"I love you, though you do punish me."
"Does my punishment make you love me?"
"I believe it does."
"You mind me better after I have punished you, don't you?"
"Yes."
"Do you mind me because you love me?"
"I think I do."
"Are [you] afraid of me?"
"A little."
"Don't you sometimes mind me because you are *afraid* of me—afraid I shall punish you if you do not?"

Anna smiled her agreement.

"Then you do sometimes mind me because you are afraid of me. Do you mind me more because you love me, or more because you are afraid of me?"

"Because I love you."

"I want to have you love me enough to mind me always, and then you would never be afraid of me—of punishment. Do you think you can love me so well?"

"I should like to."

"Well, you can. Give up your want to Father's, and then you will begin to love me *more*. And the more you do so, the more you will go on to love me, till, by and by, you will love me well enough to *give up* your want always."¹⁶²

Though Alcott succeeded in securing Anna's agreement to his beliefs, still he understood that she would fall short of true virtue if she did not behave well, and moreover, behave in obedience to conscience. By

January, 1835, Alcott judged that the time had arrived to subject Anna's conscience to a trial.

The first opportunity presented itself while father and daughter were visiting the office of a physician, where Anna was to have her ankle treated. Anna spotted a neatly rolled bandage lying on the floor and asked for it. Alcott explained that it was not hers, but the explanation did not prevent her from asking for it again. Alcott gave the bandage to her. Holding it in her hand, Anna said, "Father, I am going to have this." Alcott replied, "Anna, it is not yours. Ask the doctor for it, and if he says you may have it, I am willing." Anna said she did not want to ask him. She then put the bandage under her cloak, saying, "Father, I am going to put it here a little while." Fascinated by the little drama in temptation which he was sure would unfold, Alcott agreed and waited. Anna then put the bandage in her apron pocket and sat, evidently deliberating her next move. Looking at her father, her face "suffused with the doubtfulness of the act," she said, "Father, I am going to do a little thing."

Alcott replied, "Yes, Anna, I know you are. You have put the bandage into your pocket. You did not like to ask the man for it, and so you put it first under your apron, where you thought he would not see it, and when you had done this, you slipped it into your pocket, where you thought Father would not see it. And when you had done this, you went on thinking of what you had done, and something within you seemed to tell you that you had done wrong to put the thing away so, and to make yourself feel better, you said to me, 'I am going to do something,' hoping that I should ask you what you meant to do and let you do it. . . ." Anna's father reported she looked "much abashed," and said, "Yes, Father, so I did." Alcott made clear that he loved Anna for admitting her guilt, but he explained again the rights of property. What she was in fact doing was stealing. "Is it?" she asked. "I will not steal. . . . I will take the things out of my pocket." And so she did.¹⁶³

The exercise of conscience in the physician's office was fortuitous, but the next trial came about as the result of deliberate planning. Moreover, Anna would be on her own this time, without her father's presence to strengthen her resolves. As Alcott was leaving school with his daughter, he made a point of calling her attention to an apple he had not eaten at lunchtime. Instead, he was taking it home with him. After arriving home, he left Anna and Louisa in the nursery, first taking care to put his apple in full view on a wardrobe. Without referring to the apple directly, he asked, "Anna, should little girls take things that do not belong to them without asking their fathers or mothers?"

"No, they should not."

"Do you think you shall ever do so—take an apple, or such thing if you should see one, without asking for it?"

"No."

"And shall you, Louisa?"

"No, Father."

When Alcott returned from dinner, Louisa had the apple core before her on the table, and Anna was standing near. Their father asked Louisa what was lying before her plate.

"Apple."

"Where did you get it?"

"By the fire."

"Yes," said Anna, "I put it there. Louisa and I took it from the wardrobe. We both got up to get it at the same time. Louisa took it before I could get it. I told her she must not, but she did, and then we eat [*sic*] some of it, and then I threw the rest into the grate, but Louisa took it from the grate and bit some more from it. I was naughty. I *stole*, didn't I? I did not ask you, as I ought to. Shall you punish me, Father, for it?"

Her father explained he would not punish her, but he added, "I put the apple there on purpose to *try* you, and I rather thought that you *would* take it, but I hoped you would *think* of what I had said, and that you *would not* take it. Did you think you were doing right when you took it?"

"No. My *conscience* told me I was not."

"And shall you mind it next time?"

"Yes, I think I shall."

"Well, Anna, always *mind* that, and then you will do right, whether Father or Mother be by or not."¹⁶⁴

Even Louisa benefited somewhat by the trial, or, at least, she provided a good imitation of her sister's behavior. Taking Louisa on his knee, Alcott asked, "Louisa, you eat [*sic*] some of the apple, did you?"

"Yes I did."

"Why did you take it before Father said you might have it?"

"I wanted it," she said with a grin, but catching the expression in her father's face, she added, "but I was naughty."

On the following day still another apple was left on the wardrobe in Louisa's sight. Mrs. Alcott reported that Louisa went to it several times during the morning, took it in her hands, looked at it wistfully, and seemed on the point of biting it, but each time she said, "No. No. Father's. Me not take Father's apple. Naughty! Naughty!" The temptation proved too much, however, and when her mother left the room, she devoured the apple. When her mother returned, she exclaimed, "Me could not help it. Me *must* have it."¹⁶⁵

On the whole, their father was pleased. Both Anna and Louisa had done extremely well, for though they had succumbed to temptation, they had resisted for a time. They had fallen short of perfection, but at least they were beginning to grasp, however faintly, the idea of perfection, to measure themselves against it, and to struggle for its attain-

ment.¹⁶⁶ Anna must, however, have felt discouraged at times especially when her father commented that he "rather thought" she would take the apple, although he "hoped" she would not.

Mrs. Alcott hinted that her husband's expectations might be much too high. She loved him deeply and still stood in awe of his convictions, but she managed on occasion to register mild dissent to some of his ways. She remarked with amusement to her brother that Alcott did not always enjoy as much success in disciplining Anna and Louisa as he did in dealing with other children.¹⁶⁷ Alcott's own record betrays a more pointed conflict between the parents. If his barbed remarks about his spouse can be trusted, it seems she frequently undermined the carefully prepared domestic campaign, giving way to sheer impulse in dealing with the children. She often indulged her daughters when she felt like indulging them, and spanked them when they annoyed her. Alcott believed the sabotage sprang from his mate's indifference and incompetence.¹⁶⁸ Perhaps it did. But Mrs. Alcott was no fool and she loved her daughters. It was just possible that she felt uneasy as she sensed the pace and intensity of her husband's child-rearing program. On one occasion, at least, she openly disagreed. During a conversation between Anna and her father, Mrs. Alcott interrupted with the remark that the discussion was far too difficult for the child, being "too metaphysical." Alcott recorded the comment only to refute it. "Nothing," he rejoined, "is too metaphysical for the mind of a child."¹⁶⁹

VI. CONCLUSION

Those who are wise in the ways of the world—or those who are merely cynical—may suspect that Alcott was embarked on a dangerous course with his daughters. Even as he liberated childhood from barbarity and indifference, he sought to impose a burden that could prove more crushing to the human spirit. He asked of the girls nothing less than moral perfection. The expectations were doubly severe in that the model of perfection was essentially an ascetic one. Human maturity was seen by Alcott as a gradual escape from entanglement in the world, not as a growing wisdom in dealing with it. Consequently he held up models of other-worldly perfection and then asked Anna to engage in a voluntary act of self-renunciation—"by and by you will love me well enough to give up your wants always." There could be no escape from this expectation. It was the price of parental approval. And, if Alcott succeeded in his training of the conscience, it would also prove to be the price of self-approval. Confronted by his stern expectations, Anna might be tempted to simulate attitudes she did not feel—"I love you, though you punish me." Ultimately she might become the self-sacrificing saint her father desired, but she could also become a precious prig.

It is well, to remember, however, the kind of man Alcott was. He is an easy target for criticism, for in family life, as in all his projects to save the world, he exposed himself recklessly. Even many of his con-

temporaries thought him ridiculous. Nevertheless, deep conviction can give a certain dignity and meaning to the most bizarre of practices. Alcott may have asked much of Anna, but he also asked much of himself. Ascetic renunciation of the world was for him a way of life, not a merely sentimental gesture. Boston merchants might despise his innocence of worldly values, but Thoreau thought him one of the sanest men in Jacksonian America. Anna paid her tribute by observing—without prompting—that she thought her father nearly as good as Jesus.¹⁷⁰ He did shout at her occasionally, and he often provoked her to anger and resentment, but by practicing what he preached he may have invested his stern demands with sufficient meaning to save Anna from hypocrisy. Only the future would tell.

In later years, Alcott thought Anna and Louisa had turned out well, and it was true that they both displayed a keen sense of putting duty above pleasure, which was consistent with their father's early stress on the importance of self-sacrifice. It is well known that Louisa nourished a fierce loyalty to the welfare of the family, especially to her mother and sisters, and, during her early career, wrote juvenile potboilers to keep the family afloat. Less well known is Anna's devotion. She left home at sixteen to work, and until her marriage thirteen years later she sent most of a small salary home for the support of her family.¹⁷¹

It can be argued, of course, that Alcott's dealings with Anna and Louisa during their early years had little to do with their displays of self-sacrifice. Their father's later refusal, in principle, to engage in lucrative employment gave them little choice, after all, while it is quite possible that Mrs. Alcott exerted far more influence on the daughters through her own sacrificial example. Moreover, if Anna and Louisa did their duty, they were frequently unable to find in it the contentment that their father had always promised as the reward of sacrifice. Neither took his more exotic principles seriously after they reached adolescence. They began to treat him as if he were a lovable though difficult child—responding, it seems, to that quality of childlike innocence which he struggled all his life to retain, through many utopian adventures and in the face of monumental financial difficulties. At the age of twenty-one, when the family was destitute, Anna wrote a letter to her father (in which she enclosed some money) gently teasing him about building "such beautiful castles" for making the world better.¹⁷² Louisa, at twenty-four, displayed a similar tone:

I know you were a serene and placid baby when you began your wise meditations in the quiet little Spindle Hill farm house (I believe that is where you descended from on high) looking philosophically out of your cradle at the big world about you. . . . Surely, dear father, some good angel, an elf, dropped a talisman in your cradle that gave you power to walk through life in quiet sunshine while others groped in the dark.¹⁷³

Whatever the subsequent effect of the child-rearing experiment on

his daughters, Alcott was certain that the consequences for himself had been wholly beneficial. As if in anticipation of the end of the recorded experiment, he reflected on the significance of the venture which had begun in Germantown four years previously. He found himself, in January, 1835, more interested in his family than ever before:

Life is fuller of serene joy and steady purpose. I am happier—have more of the faith that reposes on Providence and the love that binds me to human nature, more of the assurance of progression than I have been wont to enjoy.

As he looked back it seemed to him that he had once wandered from this child's "kingdom of heaven," a reference perhaps to the period of discouragement and familial separation in Pennsylvania. He had come very near to losing his "innocence," he said, but thanks to the association with his children, he had regained it. He did not dare think what his life might have been had he not been a father:

Verily, had I not been called to associate with children, had I not devoted myself to the study of human nature, in its period of infancy and childhood, I should never have found the tranquil repose, the steady faith, the vivid hope, that now shed a glory and a dignity around the humble path of my life. Childhood hath *Saved* me!¹⁷⁴

Alcott's exclamation marked a depth of feeling that he was unable to sustain over long periods. Seven months later he found himself overwhelmed by the responsibility of caring for Anna and Louisa (Mrs. Alcott being preoccupied with the infant Elizabeth born in June), and he was even plagued by heretical doubts concerning the divinity of his daughters. He also found them suffering from a want of sympathy, and he was disturbed that he could not give them the love they seemed to need.¹⁷⁵

But Alcott's worship of the idea of the family, erratic though it might prove in practice, reflected an emotion that was gaining force, even outside Transcendentalist circles. The family was no longer to be seen as a mere legal convenience for passing along life, names, and property. Neither was the family alone a device to protect children from the corruptions of society, although that essential function had been in Alcott's mind when he undertook his experiment in domesticity. What he had discovered, both in his successes and his failures as a father, was that the family should also serve the parent—as a refuge from the world, as a compensation for worldly frustrations, and as a means of renouncing worldliness within one's self. By the agency of Louisa's books, this was the message Alcott left to later generations of American women.

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A longer version of this article appeared originally in *Perspectives in American History*, Vol. III, 1969. The author wishes to thank the U.S. Office of Education and the Emory University Research Committee for grants enabling him to undertake the work on which the present paper is based. Gratitude should also be expressed to Mrs. F. Wolsey Pratt and the Harvard College Library for permission to quote at length from the Alcott Family Manuscripts deposited by Mrs. Pratt in Harvard's Houghton Library. During early stages of the writing, valuable suggestions were supplied by Erik Erikson, William Harrison, Boyd McCandless, G. Alexander Moore, James Jordan, Robert Wheeler, R. Jackson Wilson, Richard Ward, and, especially, Kai Erikson. My wife, Eycke M. Strickland, not only transformed Alcott's child diaries into a legible typescript, she also shared her hard-won insights into the nature of family life.

1. Bronson Alcott Journals, March 16, 1831, Alcott Family Manuscripts (Houghton Library, Harvard University). All citations of manuscripts refer, without further designation, to this collection.
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3. Bronson Alcott, *Observations on the Life of My First Child* (Anna Bronson Alcott) during Her First Year, p. 27.
4. The articles that prompted Alcott's interest were two brief letters by a certain "R.B." appearing in *Nicholson's Journal of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and the Arts*, 15 (September-December, 1806), 42-50, 181-187. See Alcott, Journals, March 25 and July 16, 1831.
5. The essential facts of Alcott's career are drawn from Odell Shepard's excellent biography, *Pedlar's Progress: The Life of Bronson Alcott* (Boston, 1937), and from Bronson Alcott's *New Connecticut: An Autobiographical Poem*, ed. F. B. Sanborn (Boston, 1887). Dorothy McCuskey has dealt explicitly with Alcott's school career in *Bronson Alcott, Teacher* (New York, 1940).
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13. Only within the past decade have scholars begun to appreciate the historic value of Alcott's observations. To date, Barbara Garlitz has made the best use of the material as a basis for a chapter in her unpublished dissertation, "The Cult of Childhood in Nineteenth-Century

- England and America" (Radcliffe, 1959), portions of which have appeared in her article, "The Immortality Ode: Its Cultural Progeny," *Studies in English Literature*, 6 (1966), 639-649. Brief portions of Alcott's child-rearing journals are included in Honoré Willsie Morrow's *The Father of Little Women* (Boston, 1927), pp. 111-117, 148-160; in Kenneth W. Cameron's *Emerson the Essayist* (Raleigh, N.C., 1945), II, 101-125; and in Sherman Paul's "Alcott's Search for the Child," *Boston Public Library Quarterly*, 4 (April 1952), 88-96.
14. See "G. Stanley Hall: Prophet of Naturalism," *Health, Growth and Heredity: G. Stanley Hall on Natural Education*, eds. Charles E. Strickland and Charles Burgess (New York, 1965), pp. 1-26.
 15. Shepard, *Pedlar's Progress*, pp. 145-160. Shepard has accurately dated the period of Alcott's most rapid intellectual development toward transcendentalism from August, 1832, when he read Coleridge; but Alcott's Journal for 1831 records several assaults on materialism. On September 24, 1831, Alcott wrote: "Thus man's duty is within him. It is his apprehension of his own nature which gives him the idea of a divinity. It is his nobler part which he adores. The deity within him is more excellent than any which is revealed to him from without, for his senses, holding communion only with the external world, can never bring to him those views of divine truth and beauty which it is the peculiar province of the reflective powers to appreciate. Without is but the resemblance of God. Within, He dwells and reveals Himself." This is not, however, the place to enter into the vexing question of whether the transcendentalism of Alcott and Emerson was the only version available in the early eighteen-thirties. See Joel Porte, *Emerson and Thoreau: Transcendentalists in Conflict* (Middletown, Conn., 1965), esp. pp. 8-10.
 16. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," in *Emerson on Education*, ed. Howard Mumford Jones (New York, 1966), p. 72; Paul, "Alcott's Search for the Child," pp. 88-96. Paul's observation that Alcott was seeking in the image of the child an image of his own "untarnished self" anticipated the view elaborated upon in the present article.
 17. Lewis Mumford, *The Golden Day; A Study in American Experience and Culture* (New York, 1926), p. 163.
 18. Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: the History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1963), p. 112.
 19. Bronson Alcott, Journals, February 18, 1831.
 20. *Ibid.*, July 8, 1831.
 21. *Ibid.*, May 10 and May 13, 1831.
 22. Abigail Alcott to Samuel May, May 22, 1831, Family Letters, 1828-1861.
 23. Bronson Alcott, *First Child, First Year*, pp. 75, 78.
 24. *Ibid.*, pp. 167, 194, 232, 308; Abigail Alcott to Samuel May, August 11, 1831, Family Letters, 1828-1861.
 25. Bronson Alcott, Journals, March 21, April 10, April 15, July 25, September 15 and November 19, 1831.
 26. Abigail Alcott to Samuel May, March 27, 1831, Family Letters, 1828-1861.
 27. Bronson Alcott, Journals, June 24, 1831.
 28. *Ibid.*, December 19, 1829; *First Child, First Year*, p. 11.
 29. Abigail Alcott to Lucretia May, June 15, 1830, Family Letters, 1828-1861.
 30. Bronson Alcott, *Observations on the Principles and Methods of Infant Instruction* (Boston, 1830), p. 9.
 31. Bronson Alcott, *New Connecticut: An Autobiographical Poem*, ed. F. B. Sanborn (Boston, 1887), p. 53.

32. Bronson Alcott, *First Child, First Year*, p. 24.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
34. Bronson Alcott, *New Connecticut*, pp. 77-101, 241-242.
35. Bronson Alcott, *Journals*, July 7, September 24, 1831.
36. Bronson Alcott, *First Child, First Year*, pp. 37-38, 95.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 197; *Principles and Methods*, p. 15.
42. Bronson Alcott, *First Child, First Year*, p. 96.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 10, 17, 25, 40, 57, 113, 170-171.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
51. Abigail Alcott to Samuel and Lucretia May, August 11, 1831, *Family Letters*, 1828-1861.
52. Bronson Alcott, *First Child, First Year*, p. 170.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
55. Abigail Alcott to Samuel and Lucretia May, August 11, 1831, *Family Letters*, 1828-1861.
56. Bronson Alcott, *First Child, First Year*, p. 171.
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 186, 190.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 174.
60. *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 258.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 337.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
65. *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 33, 34, 62, 64, 89, 183, 185.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
68. *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 288.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 325.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 292-293.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 146, 167, 182, 272, 308, 316.
73. *Ibid.*, pp. 146, 182.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 289.
75. Bronson Alcott, *Observations on the Life of My First Child* [Anna Bronson Alcott] during Her Second Year, pp. 1, 5, 8, 11, 16-18. This item in the Alcott Family Manuscripts is bound with another concerning Anna's third year, but the two manuscripts will here be cited as separate volumes.
76. Bronson Alcott, *Observations on the Life of My Second Child* [Louisa May Alcott] during the First Year, pp. 1-4.
77. Bronson Alcott, *Journals*, November 7 and December 24, 1831, June, September, 1832.
78. Bronson Alcott, *First Child, Second Year*, p. 47.
79. Abigail Alcott to Samuel and Lucretia May, February 20, 1833, *Family Letters*, 1828-1861.

80. Alcott's observations on Anna, which occupied more than 300 manuscript pages during her first year, dwindled to only 120 pages for both her second and third years. His "observations" of Louisa's first year, largely of a speculative sort, filled nearly 300 pages.
81. Bronson Alcott, *Second Child, First Year*, pp. 45-46, 58.
82. Bronson Alcott, *Experience of a Child*, p. 62.
83. Bronson Alcott, *First Child, Second Year*, pp. 27-29.
84. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
85. Abigail Alcott to Samuel and Lucretia May, February 20, 1833, *Family Letters*, 1828-1861.
86. Bronson Alcott, *First Child, Second Year*, pp. 33-34.
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-38, 42-43.
88. Bronson Alcott, *Experience of a Child*, pp. 2-4.
89. Bronson Alcott, *Journals*, January, February, 1833.
90. Bronson Alcott, *Journals*, March, April, 1833; *Experience of a Child*, pp. 3, 9; *Second Child, First Year*, p. 215.
91. Bronson Alcott, *Journals*, April, 1833.
92. Bronson Alcott, *Experience of a Child*, p. 28.
93. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32, 33.
94. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
96. Abigail Alcott to Samuel and Lucretia May, June 22, 1833, *Family Letters*, 1828-1861.
97. Bronson Alcott, *Journals*, July-August, 1833.
98. *Ibid.*
99. *Ibid.*
100. Bronson Alcott, *Experience of a Child*, p. 50.
101. John S. C. Abbott, *The Mother at Home: or, The Principles of Maternal Duty Familiarly Illustrated* (Boston, 1833). Frank Luther Mott estimates that Abbott's book sold more than 125,000 copies, in several editions, making it a "best-seller" for the times: *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York, 1947), p. 303.
102. Abbott, *Mother at Home*, pp. 50, 60-62.
103. *Ibid.*, chap. ii.
104. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-77. Abbott's boundless admiration of Napoleon led him, in 1850, to publish *A History of Napoleon Bonaparte*.
105. Bronson Alcott, *Experience of a Child*, pp. 56-57.
106. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63, 66-70.
107. Bronson Alcott, *Journals*, January, February, March, 1834. At the end of his record for Anna's third year there stands a laconic note: "January and February, to complete the round of this year, are wanting . . .," *Experience of a Child*, p. 70.
108. Bronson Alcott, *Journals*, April 23, 1834.
109. *Ibid.*, April 13, 1834.
110. *Ibid.*, April 28, 1834.
111. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1834.
112. *Ibid.*, April 13, 1834.
113. *Ibid.*, April 28, 1834.
114. *Ibid.*, June 17, 1834.
115. *Ibid.*, April 29, May 5, May 10, May 13, May 14, May 15, May 16, June 6, June 9, June 14, 1834.
116. *Ibid.*, April 25, 1834.
117. *Ibid.*, May 20, 1834.
118. *Ibid.*, May 22, May 29, June 6, June 7, June 14, 1834.
119. *Ibid.*, June 29, July 3, 1834.
120. Bronson Alcott, *Journals*, October 11, October 12, October 27, 1834.

For a portrait of the Temple School see Elizabeth Peabody's *Record of a School: Exemplifying the General Principles of Spiritual Culture*, 2nd ed. (Boston, 1836).

121. Abigail Alcott to Samuel May, September 1, 1834, Family Letters, 1828-1861.
122. *Ibid.*, September 7, 1834.
123. Bronson Alcott, Journals, September 22, 1834.
124. *Ibid.*, October 19, 1834.
125. *Ibid.*, October 26, 1834.
126. *Ibid.*, October 27, 1834.
127. The record of this four-month period is contained in two manuscripts by Alcott entitled, *Observations on the Spiritual Nurture of My Children*, and *Researches on Childhood*. Although bound together, the manuscripts will be cited separately, the first as: *Spiritual Nurture*, and the second as: *Researches*.
128. Bronson Alcott, *Spiritual Nurture*, p. 14; *Researches*, pp. 87, 191.
129. Bronson Alcott, Journals, October 13, 1834; Memoir, 1878, entry on fly-leaf.
130. Abigail Alcott to Mrs. Anna Alcott, November, [1834], Memoir, 1878. This letter appears to be incorrectly dated "1835,"; for it refers to Anna's sprained ankle, which she suffered in 1834, and it speaks of the family's recent arrival in Boston.
131. Bronson Alcott, *Spiritual Nurture*, pp. 28, 61, 81, 137, 239; *Researches*, pp. 5, 21-24.
132. Bronson Alcott, *Spiritual Nurture*, pp. 67-68; *Researches*, pp. 37-38, 103-105.
133. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.
134. *Ibid.*
135. *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 39, 133, 161.
136. *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 161.
137. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
138. Bronson Alcott, *Researches*, p. 105.
139. Bronson Alcott, *Spiritual Nurture*, pp. 109-110.
140. *Ibid.*, p. 232. See also pp. 21, 37, 133, 136, 152.
141. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.
142. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
143. *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 153.
144. Bronson Alcott, *Researches*, pp. 80-81.
145. Bronson Alcott, *Spiritual Nurture*, pp. 94-95, 258.
146. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60, 210.
147. Bronson Alcott, *Spiritual Nurture*, p. 80; *Researches*, p. 191.
148. Bronson Alcott, *Spiritual Nurture*, p. 91.
149. *Ibid.*, p. 170; *Researches*, p. 247.
150. Bronson Alcott, *Researches*, p. 258.
151. Bronson Alcott, *Spiritual Nurture*, p. 162; *Researches*, p. 121.
152. Shepard, *Pedlar's Progress*, pp. 180-197.
153. *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 124-125; *Researches*, pp. 53-54.
154. Bronson Alcott, *Researches*, pp. 250, 273.
155. Bronson Alcott, *Spiritual Nurture*, pp. 10, 20, 83, 97.
156. *Ibid.*, pp. 200-202.
157. Bronson Alcott, *Observations on the Spiritual Nurture of My Children*, pp. 56-57, 77-79.
158. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93, 99-100.
159. Bronson Alcott, *Spiritual Nurture*, p. 160.
160. Bronson Alcott, *Researches on Childhood*, p. 90.
161. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-119.
162. *Ibid.*, pp. 273-276.
163. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-10.

164. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-159.
165. *Ibid.*, pp. 159, 164.
166. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
167. Abigail Alcott to Lucretia May, April 12, 1835, Family Letters, 1828-1861.
168. Bronson Alcott, *Researches*, p. 280.
169. Bronson Alcott, *Spiritual Nurture*, p. 214.
170. Bronson Alcott, *Researches*, p. 52.
171. Abigail Alcott, *Fragments of Diaries*, March 16, 1856.
172. Anna Alcott to Bronson Alcott, July 1, 1852, Family Letters, 1850-1855.
173. Louisa May Alcott to Bronson Alcott, November 28, 1855, *Correspondence by Various Hands*.
174. Bronson Alcott, *Journals*, January 21, 1835.
175. Bronson Alcott, *Psyche, or, The Breath of Childhood*, pp. 63, 157-160; *Journal*, August 17, 1835. The volume entitled: *Psyche, or, The Breath of Childhood*, contains observations from June, 1835, to June, 1836, and reveals that Alcott's child-rearing tactics remained essentially unchanged. It reveals also that his attention was gradually drifting away from the concrete life of the family into the realm of the empyrean. A subsequent volume, entitled *Psyche, an Evangel*, was exclusively speculative.

COMMENT BY HENRY EBEL

"Have you sons in the army?" I asked; for the note he brought was not to me.

"Yes, ma'am. I had four, but two were killed, one is a prisoner, and I'm going to the other who is very sick in a Washington hospital," he answered quietly.

"You have done a great deal for your country, sir," I said, feeling respect now, instead of pity.

"Not a mite more than I ought, ma'am. I'd go myself, if I was any use; as I ain't, I give my boys, and give 'em free."

He spoke so cheerfully, looked so sincere, and seemed so glad to give his all, that I was ashamed of myself. I'd given one man, and thought it too much, while he gave four, without grudging them. I had all my girls to comfort me at home; and his last son was waiting, miles away, to say "good-by" to him, perhaps! I felt so rich, so happy, thinking of my blessings, that I made him a nice bundle, gave him some money, and thanked him heartily for the lesson he had taught me.

—*Little Women*

"Well, Anna, I see you do not mean to be *very good*. Very good little girls give up their own wants to the wants of their little sisters whom they *love*. Love makes us give up our own wants. If you love your little sister, you will give up the chair to her."

—Bronson Alcott

There could be *no escape* from this expectation. It was *the price* of parental approval.

—Charles Strickland
(emphasis added)

This attic was Maggie's favorite retreat on a wet day, when the weather was not too cold; here she fretted out all her ill-humours, and talked aloud to the worm-eaten floors and the worm-eaten shelves, and the dark rafters festooned with cobwebs; and here she kept a Fetish which she punished for all her misfortunes. This was the trunk of a large wooden doll, which once stared with the roundest of eyes above the reddest of cheeks; but was now entirely defaced by a long career of vicarious suffering. Three nails driven into the head commemorated as many crises in Maggie's nine years of earthly struggle; that luxury of vengeance having been suggested to her by the picture of Jael destroying Sisera in the old Bible. The last nail had been driven in with a fiercer stroke than usual, for the Fetish on that occasion represented Aunt Glegg.

—George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*

The nineteenth was also the anti-Christian century, not solely because the German Higher Criticism then destroyed once and for all the fundamentalist idea of Biblical composition, but because it was the first century to propose theories of nature and society diametrically opposite to the traditional Christian assumption of hierarchical order.

"One law for the lion and the ox is oppression." "The cut worm forgives the plow." Blake's aphorisms are the drum rolls for a century that gloried in the idea of struggle and strength as the true determinants of survival, and whose fascination with what was popularly conceived of as the violent life of "primitive" man had as the reverse side of the coin the assumption that modern man too was in the grips of a comparable violent struggle—between nations and individuals, between rival companies, between father and son.

As ordinarily happens in the history of ideas, what began as a repudiation of Christian ethics, above all of the injunctions to be meek and mild and to turn the other cheek, ended by confirming some of the crucial renunciatory aspects of Christianity. Cassirer notes in *The Myth of the State* that much of Carlyle's thinking is "a disguised and transformed Calvinism." Nineteenth-century visions of strife and competition as the true laws of life, whether Carlylean or Darwinian or Marxist, can be seen as strategies to place the Christian emphasis on self-subordination and dysgratification on a new moral platform, to see them as utilitarian virtues precisely in a period that was substituting for a divinely ordained order a new one based on continual dynamic collision between its constituent forces.

The impact of the new order on child-rearing and on the conception of the child was fundamental and long-lasting. The magazine that Dr. Barnardo published for young children was adorned with chromolithographs of such natural ferocities as a stag preparing to battle to the death in order to protect his family from wolves. The movement vaguely referred to as "social Darwinism" was actually part of a pervasive reordering of thought that, among other things, *systematized* the types of brutality to which children were subjected in order to prepare them for the realities of life and that, above all, tended to substitute moral for physical coercion. Dr. Barnardo's chromolithographs, like the colossal struggle depicted in *War and Peace*, like the German response to the rediscovered *Nibelungenlied*, should not obscure the perfectly lucid understanding in the nineteenth century that in the modern world "single combat" and individual muscle had given way to larger and more intangible forces. The new ferocity was not that of a Siegfried, though Siegfried might serve as a symbol of it; it was that of a venturesome capitalist or an imperialist statesman. There was now, in other words, a dialectical relationship between personal self-effacement, the practice of "puritan" virtues, and the extension of one's power.

What was needed, therefore, was not the physically hardened specimen, quick to anger and punctilious in defense of his honor, of the traditional European aristocracy. The new virtues were patience and

postponement. It is impetuosity, the inability to wait, that brings Maggie's father down in *The Mill on the Floss*, all the capitalist attributes embodied in "lawyer Wakem." Thus the reformations of education in the nineteenth century, of Arnold at Rugby and of Alcott in America, strove to supplant external coercion with internal censorship, to implant into the child an instinctive (or suprainstinctive) "no" to virtually every prompting of desire or need.

Charles Strickland's article raises in an acute way the question of how a society responds, in its child-rearing and educational practices, to its own new and barely articulated needs. Thomas Arnold would no doubt have been horrified to learn that he was preparing a new moral type for an age of production and imperialism, and Bronson Alcott would have reacted similarly to the suggestion that the internally-censored society would have a marked advantage in fighting the Civil War. (Louisa May, as the quotation at the head of this article shows, grasped clearly the connection between self-suppression and triumphant nationalism.) What then is the mechanism by which educational "reformers" arise to provide, in their apparently unconscious way, precisely what society requires?

In the case of Bronson Alcott, my own answer must be partial and speculative. First of all, the "reformer," seminal though his thinking might be, inevitably responds to the promptings of his culture as represented, in Alcott's case, by Germano-Coleridgean idealism and by Wordsworth. Very striking is Alcott's description of "an interesting interview with Anna at twilight, the hour when my own mind is most self-reposing and when, amid the blendings of light and shadow, by the glowing grate of coals, ere the lamp is lighted, the imagination shapes outward things into correspondences adapted to its own ideal"; or his quickness to perceive that Mr. and Mrs. Alcott were "Symbols" to their daughters. Intertwined with the elements of direct responsiveness in European romanticism, the ecstatic rediscovery of the tangible, the physical, and the sensual, there is a contrary and very Platonic strand which tends to discredit the surfaces of life and nature in favor of some deeper and more inward significance.

It was this puritanical and profoundly asensual strand that seems to have found its way most readily into the American *geist*. It infused the ur-metaphor of American society, that of the competitive marketplace, with precisely the emotional dynamism needed to transform it into an ideology.

And here we have a good point at which to return to the Alcott family. Even in a nineteenth-century context, Bronson Alcott seems like an unusually monstrous human being, reminding me irresistibly of a character out of Dostoevsky. Maggie Tulliver could escape to the family attic, there to discharge those truly "primitive" impulses that link her, as a pre-socialized modern, to the "savages" of Borneo and the Amazon. But from Bronson Alcott there was, as Strickland notes, no escape: he was a wraparound father, the image of the Grand Inquisitor, a true

contemporary of the Jeremy Bentham whose ideal prison was one in which the inmates were eternally under observation. The relative absence of physical coercion should not mislead us here, as it sometimes seems to mislead Charles Strickland. One should rather look carefully at Alcott's own assertion that "the parent, like the Divinity, should exert a special oversight over all the relations of the sphere in which he moves; he should be the Providence that fills, sustains and protects every member of his domestic creation." One should note Alcott's extraordinary replay, complete with apples and arbitrary prohibition, of the Eden drama. And one should feel in one's pulses the full implications of Strickland's sentence regarding Alcott and Anna: "In sparing her bottom, Alcott deliberately sought to trouble her spirit."

Indeed, Bronson Alcott introduces us to the American version of a new universe. The Baroque monarchies of Europe were the first that sought to impose on all their citizens an external discipline, a new regimentation expressive of national power. Without quite surrendering this earlier discipline, the societies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have sought to achieve a subtler domination of the inner life. Without quite abandoning shackles and prisons, they have nevertheless devised a more effective mode of control: the withholding of affection and its symbols, the conditional acceptance and traumatic withdrawal, that Alcott practiced so effectively. Hence the oft-noted fact that among the deprived in a Western or industrialized society one finds little or nothing in the way of philosophical resignation. Our poor have no consolation, philosophical or otherwise. They feel—and they are—unloved and rejected, punished by the averted face of their symbolic father, be he Joseph Stalin or Richard Nixon. God is not dead. He is deliberately, sadistically, absent.

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COMMENT BY J. LOUISE DESPERT, M.D.

Although the influence of Alcott on child psychology and education has been limited, his work was undeniably a first in the attempt to understand and mold the child as an *individual*. A number of works relating to the welfare and "salvation" of children had appeared prior to Alcott's observations. To cite only two: Michael Wigglesworth (1631-1705) and his "*Day of Doom*," and Cotton Mather (1663-1728) and his "*Magnala Christi Americana*." Through these works, it is evident that the approach to the raising of children is through *fear* to be instilled in them, this a continuum from the Middle Ages. Concepts were expressed not at the level of individual growth, but as a general philosophy. Fear, as a deterrent, survives in Alcott's otherwise new approach to educational philosophy.

The personality of Alcott, as a husband, and, more importantly, a father, is difficult of analysis. Strickland has carefully analyzed and reported the facts, as can be shown, of the family life, of the relation between the various members of the family, the financial insecurity prevailing, close at intervals to destitution, the ever changing home conditions (residence, mode of living, etc.) in boarding houses, and consequent lack of continuity, the determination of the father to pursue his spiritual ambition, and the moral support to be found at first in his wife who, as time went on, did not approve altogether of his ideas.

One facet must be noted: throughout the ages, ending at the beginning of the twentieth century when the child labor law was enacted, the child was considered a *miniature adult* whose physical power and endurance were overestimated and exploited as a matter of convenience. Bronson Alcott also deals with the *miniature adult*, but in another sphere, the intellectual. As rightly described by Strickland, the father would "treat the children as if they were his intellectual and moral equals." The long conversation between father and Anna about Anna's relative love for father and mother, with its moral overtones is a classic of how to obtain agreement, and perhaps conviction, without appearing to have dictated one's will or to have put pressure to enforce a moral issue. The price is *good behavior*. "Mother will never leave you if you are good." (i.e., if you are good, Mother will not die).

Of the same order is the rocking chair episode: Anna has suffered a sprained ankle and is confined to the home. She aims to occupy the chair, but father sees an opportunity for the child to be "good" and to let her younger sister sit in that special chair as Louisa wants. Anna has been trained to "giving up" consistently because of her seniority. She must yield, crippled or no, for the sake of that good deed. Louisa, as usual, is the winner.

The mother, in this sibling relationship, has played an important part, somewhat detached from the "Messianic" image of the father.

Incidentally, it must be said that, as time goes on, she brings him closer to just human size. At about the same time, he criticizes her "incompetence" and tends to feel that, left to himself, he would do better. But one is impressed by the mother's capacity to radiate love for her children. She is involved, not in the abstract, but with them as real human beings. As to Alcott, even if he frequently mentions "affection" as a tool used by him to motivate behavior, one is not convinced that, in the majority of situations described, his use of the word is not just plain rhetoric. The feeling is not always manifest.

It is of great interest as a clue to his character that one result of his involvement with his children's early years brings him to "*find*" his own childhood. That his experiences of his own childhood be repressed would be no unusual finding for the period. "The original sin" concept has been long lasting and pervasive. Intruding into several religions, it is still today a moral lever, and often the *anlage* to guilt feelings. But his explosion, "Childhood hath SAVED me!" is very revealing. Even though the statement is somewhat ambiguous, it reveals a degree of internal pressure prior to the explosion which tells of his compulsiveness, his drives toward a kind of achievement in child-rearing which excludes feeling and makes appeals to reason in young children, incapable though they be of reasoning in a mature sense. It is no accident that Louisa's celebrated writings are entitled "*Little Women*" and "*Little Men*."

Perhaps the final question is: Why was the child through the centuries so completely and deliberately ignored? With the current extravagance of published works, why is there no room for this fabulous story? Some pattern of complex guilt feelings is bound to be brought out as trends, influences, counter-influences can be traced in centuries of the past, and revealed today.

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COMMENT BY JOHN WALZER

The journals of Bronson Alcott, transcendentalist father, are enough to make a colonial historian's mouth water. A similar gold mine of information on eighteenth century American child-rearing practices may yet turn up, but it is more likely that the extant sources will continue to reflect the striking contrast in attitudes toward children.

The nineteenth century appears to have witnessed a "cult of childhood." The eighteenth century, my specialty, might be called the age of cruelty and neglect, to choose a phrase from this article.

To be sure, Alcott's own attitudes and practices certainly exaggerate this contrast. He and his wife might be ecstatic at the arrival of their first born. Colonial parents, judging from their correspondence and diaries, were considerably less enthusiastic, or at least less effusive. Births were barely noted; occasionally they caused "much pleasure," but on other occasions they were forgotten. Elizabeth Drinker, whose domestic jottings are extensive, failed to record the birth of one child who did not live long. Restraint of emotional outpouring characterized infant departures as well as entries into the uncertain temporal scene. Straightforward announcement of infant deaths, often without mention of the little one's Christian name, was common in journals and letters. When New York merchant Gabriel Ludlow could not contain his uncharacteristic urge to enlarge on the details, he at least managed to keep things impersonal:

Tuesday at 5 of the Clock in the afternoon being the first of Febr 1697/8 was borne & Christened Hanmore Ludlow who died Wed the 2nd of March following about 10 of the Clock in the morning and was interred in the burying ground in the city of New York the next day, being Thursday about 4 of the clock in the afternoon.

A determination not to "repine long at the dispensation of Providence" may have represented a necessary distancing between parents and children at a time of high infant mortality. (There are some who would argue the reverse: that mortality was high because of negative parental attitudes.) Whatever the reason, it did exist, and reflected a more deep-seated determination not to indulge one's children, let them become too important to oneself, or get out of control. You must break their wills before they break your hearts, was the advice of the Dr. Spocks of the age. Esther Burr, wife of the President of Princeton College, manufactured an excuse to spank her ten-month-old daughter in 1756, telling herself it was none too early to accustom the child to obedience.

One derives the impression from Professor Strickland's article that the very idea of abandonment would have made the Alcotts shudder. But abandonment, in more or less disguised form, was by no means uncommon, even in the late eighteenth century. Colonial children were put out of the home for short and long terms, both early and late in childhood. They were sent out to nurse, to school, to a relative, or to a master. Sometimes, though rarely, they were left by the highway. Other times they were thrown into a river or over a bush and into a hole. Besides high infant mortality, there was high parental mortality, and fathers often sought homes away from home for their children when they lost their wives. Littleton Waller Tazewell, of Virginia, was handed from relative to relative even when his father could easily have

kept him. When he did finally return to his father's house, he found a boy just his own age residing there. Strickland is ready to concede that Calvinist parents did not love their children any less than transcendentalist parents, just as Edmund S. Morgan feels that colonial parents probably loved their children about as much as modern parents do. But I wonder. At least it seems that the manifestations of this love (and hate!) changed a great deal from century to century. Certainly Bronson Alcott's relationship with his daughters was much more particular and intense than St. George Tucker's relationship with his Randolph stepsons, or Theodore Sedgewick's, Henry Drinker's, or Robert Carter's relationships with their children.

For all the striking contrasts to be found between one period and the next, history is essentially a study in continuity. It is the similarities between eighteenth and nineteenth century American child-rearing practices, suggested by Charles Strickland's article, rather than the differences, that are the more meaningful. The cult of childhood, especially when the phrase is used to characterise parental attitudes, has its roots very much embedded in early American history, and no doubt arose in connection with the transition from medieval to modern values. In the first place, one can see a definite softening up in the eighteenth century. Spare the rod and spoil the child, say the colonial Dr. Spocks, surely, but they hasten to add the qualification that for some children a harsh word cuts as deeply as the lash. A Connecticut schoolteacher who injured one of his pupils in 1781 was reassured that the law was very favorable to him, but a threatened lawsuit and extensive rationalization recorded in the man's diary indicate a definite uneasiness. Phillip Vickers Fithian, a Virginia tutor, was by no means confident about the rule of the rod, either. The necessity of whipping one of the Carter boys made him cringe every bit as much as it did young Ben. William Byrd did not hesitate to use extreme measures on his niece or "Eugene" (probably an indentured servant, who was made to drink a "pint of piss" for wetting the bed), but he turned right around and scolded his wife for using corporal punishment too readily.

On a more important level, eighteenth century parents showed an increasingly possessive attitude toward their own flesh and blood. Thomas and Margaret Penn Frame, for example, put off sending their little Tommy to England to go to school with his cousins, all the while assuring Margaret's brother, John Penn, that he was wrong when he asserted they were overly fond of the child, and would ruin him thereby. Elizabeth Drinker put her baby out to nurse, but only after she convinced herself it was essential for physical reasons, and then she went to see him every day, rain or shine, for a month, until her husband finally took her on a sightseeing tour calculated to make her forget the child (which she did).

In a large way, it would seem, colonial harshness toward children was a calculated affair, a purposeful effort by parents to prevent themselves from falling into the excesses of a Bronson Alcott, which was

seen as a very real threat. In the seventeenth century, such a fear was the ostensible reason for putting one's children out to another master. In the eighteenth century, the oft-repeated advice to break their wills lest they get out of control and bring shame and heartbreak upon their parents was accompanied by numerous complaints that many children were already out of control. I suspect that from the beginning, the lot of the child in the colonies were significantly better than that of his European contemporary, and that permissiveness in child-rearing is nothing new in America.

There is, finally, a strange kind of similarity in the hoverings of an Alcott parent and the brutal rejection of children practiced at an earlier time. Seventeenth century French nurses took their charges to bed with them, much as Mrs. Alcott took Anna, but in order to smother them. Smothering would not be a bad choice of words to describe what our transcendentalist father was up to. Bronson Alcott's experiment in child-rearing may have been very child-centered in one sense, but it was also very Bronson Alcott-centered, too. I wonder whether it would be unfair to say that Alcott was first and foremost, and at the expense of his children, as well as to their advantage, engaged in an experiment that would compensate, justify, and reassure Bronson Alcott? Certainly the business of proving one's worthiness in this world in some secular way, as opposed to seeking assurance that one was saved and bound ultimately for a better one, was what Alcott's fellow Americans strived for. By 1831, this was one of the major changes that had taken place since medieval times in the very important human pursuit of what is currently called identity. Could it be that this transformation, well under way in seventeenth and eighteenth century America, gave to children a new and important role, but one that nevertheless smothered them to serve the interests and purposes of their parents? The Puritan emphasis on the children of the saints as the "seed" whereby the true religion of the parents would be perpetuated fits into this interpretation. Likewise, the degree to which American parents would feel exonerated by the upward mobility of their children during the next century and a half illustrates the same principle. "After all," explained one Puritan clergyman in 1730, "are not your children a part of yourselves?"

To say that parents love their children about as much as they always have is to say that parents love themselves about as much as they always have, and while there is much truth in this, it argues in favor of a static psychic situation. Does it not seem equally possible that man has been making slow psychic progress over the ages, or at least has undergone psychological change? The idea is new, but exciting. "Psychogeneology," one man has called it. I prefer the term "psychological evolution." There was no superego in pre-Hellenic times, Melanie Klein has asserted. That was hardly the case by the time of Calvin. If psychological evolution exists, then one good place to learn something about it is in the study of childhood, for not only is the child the

father to the man, but parents willy-nilly reveal a great deal about their most basic wishes in the ways in which they treat their children.

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MORTON
SCHATZMAN,
M.D.

PARANOIA OR PERSECUTION: THE CASE OF SCHREBER

Many psychoanalysts base their understanding of paranoia upon Freud's analysis of Schreber. Freud thought Schreber became paranoid as a "defense" against homosexual love. Freud, and most of those who analysed Schreber after him, neglected an important source of data—the writings of Schreber's father about child rearing. The father had been an eminent German pedagogue.

Schatzman discusses some striking similarities between the father's methods of rearing children and some of the son's strange experiences for which he was considered paranoid. He infers from reading the father's writings that he persecuted Schreber.

Schatzman proposes a transactional theory of paranoia to explain Schreber's experiences. He links his experiences with his father's behavior, thus parting company with all previous analyses of Schreber's paranoia. If his theory also explains other cases of paranoia, its effects could, and should be widespread.

Psychoanalysts have built their theories about persons called paranoid upon data gathered mostly from the persons themselves. What they know of the childhood and family life of their patients is mainly derived from what their patients tell them. Since patients, like everyone else, never report entirely or precisely what they experience, this information is always incomplete and can be misleading.

Freud's¹ analysis of Daniel Paul Schreber is unique among his case studies since a source of "raw" data about Schreber's childhood, which Freud did not use, still exists. Schreber's father, a physician, orthopedist, and pedagogue, wrote eighteen books and booklets; many are

about his methods of educating children; he applied them to his own children. Although Freud knew of Schreber's father, he ignored his writings as data—as did those who wrote about Schreber for nearly the next fifty years—even though the father's books had been widely read and are still available. Freud's analysis of Schreber is a pivotal statement of the psychoanalytic theory of psychosis and has had much influence. It is the origin of the view, held by most psychoanalysts, that paranoia arises as a "defense" against homosexual love, i.e., that the paranoid person is persecuted by his (or her) unconscious love, specifically for his (or her) parent of the same sex, which he (or she) experiences consciously as persecution from outside.

Schreber is considered a classic case of paranoia and schizophrenia. Eugen Bleuler,² who invented the term schizophrenia and developed the concept, thought Schreber was paranoid, schizophrenic, hallucinated, deluded, dissociated, autistic, and ambivalent. He never mentions Schreber's father.

In 1959 William Niederland,³ an American psychoanalyst, pointed out some striking likenesses between some of Schreber's odd thoughts and his father's techniques of bringing up children. I have found Niederland's pioneering work invaluable; I use several of his examples in what follows.

I have read some of the father's writings and have found that several of Schreber's peculiar experiences for which he was labeled paranoid, schizophrenic, insane, etc., can be linked to specific procedures of his father, that the father's child-rearing practices could confuse any child, and that he would have forbidden a child to see how confusing his methods are.

I wish to relate the son's strange experiences to the child-rearing practices of his father. In terms of set theory, consider Dr. Schreber's methods of rearing children as elements of a set F and his son's peculiar experiences as elements of a set S . If an experience of the son is an *image* of a procedure of his father, we can call that experience a *transformation* of his father's procedure. I wish to define the operations by which elements of F are *transformed* into elements of S .

Although I confine myself to the study of Schreber's mind and his father's behavior, my findings, and how I construe them, may help to understand others seen as paranoid or schizophrenic.

What I have found brings other issues into view. Irony is everywhere. An eminent pedagogue has a psychotic son; it does not hurt his reputation. Freud, an avid reader, neglects books on child-rearing—as do his followers—by a man whose son's childhood experiences he tries to derive. German parents rear their children by the ideas of a man whom many people now would see as sadistic or mentally ill.

SON

Schreber, the son, (1842–1911) was a German judge. He began a career as a mental patient at forty-two, spent thirteen of his next

twenty-seven years in mental asylums, and died there. At sixty-one he published *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*,⁴ a book he compiled from notes about his experiences and thoughts while "suffering from a nervous illness." Although he started the work in a mental asylum with no idea of publishing, he changed his mind as he progressed with it. He came to think that "observations of my personal fate during my lifetime would be of value both for science and the knowledge of religious truth." The *Memoirs* is the source of Freud's data about Schreber; Freud and Schreber never met.

Schreber endured for many years, during his "nervous illness," painful and humiliating bodily experiences. He thought they were "miracles" (*Wunder*) which God performed, through "rays," upon his body. These experiences, and especially his view of their origin, led others to consider him crazy. Here he discusses them:

"From the first beginnings of my contact with God up to the present day my body has continuously been the object of divine miracles. If I wanted to describe all these miracles in detail I could fill a whole book with them alone. I may say that hardly a single limb or organ in my body escaped being temporarily damaged by miracles, nor a single muscle being pulled by miracles, either moving or paralyzing it according to the respective purpose."

"Even now the miracles which I experience hourly are still of a nature to frighten every other human being to death; only by getting used to them through the years have I been able to disregard most of what happens as trivialities. But in the first year of my stay at Sonnenstein (the mental asylum) the miracles were of such a threatening nature that I thought I had to fear almost incessantly for my life, my health or my reason."⁵

"This, as indeed the whole report about the miracles enacted on my body, will naturally sound extremely strange to all other human beings, and one may be inclined to see in it only the product of a pathologically vivid imagination. In reply I can only give the assurance that hardly any memory from my life is more certain than the miracles recounted in this chapter. What can be more definite for a human being than what he has lived through and felt on his own body."⁶

These experiences caused him great suffering and interfered with everything he did. Here are five "miracles" he describes; I follow each of them with passages from his father's books:

SON AND FATHER

Son:

"Miracles of heat and cold were and still are daily enacted against me . . . always with the purpose of preventing the natural feelings of bodily well-being. . . . During the *cold-miracle* the blood is forced out of the extremities, so causing a subjective feeling of cold . . .

during the *heat-miracle* the blood is forced towards my face and head in which of course coolness is the condition corresponding to a general sense of well-being. *From youth accustomed to enduring both heat and cold*, these miracles troubled me little . . . I myself have often been forced to seek heat and cold."⁷ (Italics here and in all the passages I quote are my own except where specified otherwise.)

Father:

" . . . starting about three months after birth *cleansing of the infant's skin should be by cold ablutions only*, . . . in order to physically toughen up the child."⁸

He advises *warm baths for infants up to six months*. Then "one may pass to *cool and cold general ablutions* which should be performed at least once daily and for which the body should be prepared by prior *local applications of cold water*."⁹ He says *cold baths* are the accepted rule after four or five years old.

Son:

"My eyes and the muscles of the lids which serve to open and close them were an almost uninterrupted target for miracles. The eyes were always of particular importance. . . . The miracles on my eyes were performed by 'little men.' . . . These 'little men' were one of the most remarkable and even to me most mysterious phenomena. . . . Those occupied with the opening and closing of the eyes stood above the eyes in the eyebrows and these pulled the eyelids up or down as they pleased with fine filaments like cobwebs. . . . Whenever I showed signs of being unwilling to allow my eyelids to be pulled up and down and actually opposed it, the 'little men' became annoyed and expressed this by calling me 'wretch,' if I wiped them off my eyes with a sponge, it was considered by the rays as a sort of crime against God's gift of miracles. By the way wiping them away had only a very temporary effect, because the 'little men' were each time set down afresh."¹⁰

"As often as an insect . . . appears, a miracle simultaneously affects the *direction of my gaze*. I have not mentioned the miracle before, but it has been regularly practised for years. Rays after all continually *want to see what pleases them*. . . . My eye-muscles are therefore *influenced to move in a certain direction*. . . ."¹¹

Father:

He insists on eye exercises for children in his booklet, *The Systematically Planned Sharpening of the Sense Organs*: to distract quickly a child's visual attention, to force him to estimate dimensions of similar objects at different distances, to judge various distances, etc.¹² In another book, in a section called "The Care, Education and Sharpening of Sense Organs," he recommends "the proper alternation between looking near and far . . . one should get the children into the habit of recognizing the first traces of tiredness of the eyes or of that well-known slightly burning or irritating feeling of overstimulation: in this case especially, besides rest, spraying the eyes with cool water is recommended; *repeated visual exercises* looking over mildly lit green areas with

sharp or precise fixing on distant, barely recognizable, objects, . . . just as important are exercises in close-up vision, like precise observation and comparison of small objects. . . ."¹³

He recommends that children's eyelids, eyebrows, and temporal areas be treated daily with cold water," which he thinks will sharpen their vision.¹⁴ (Quoted from D. G. M. Schreber.)¹⁵

Son:

He describes a painful experience he calls "the so-called coccyx miracle." "This was an extremely painful caries-like state of the lowest vertebrae. Its purpose was to make sitting and even lying down impossible. Altogether I was not allowed to remain for long in one and the same position or at the same occupation: when I was walking one attempted to force me to lie down, and when I was lying down one wanted to chase me off my bed. Rays did not seem to appreciate at all that a human being who actually exists must be somewhere. . . . I had become an embarrassing being for the rays (for God), in whatever position or circumstance I might be or whatever occupation I undertook."¹⁶

Father

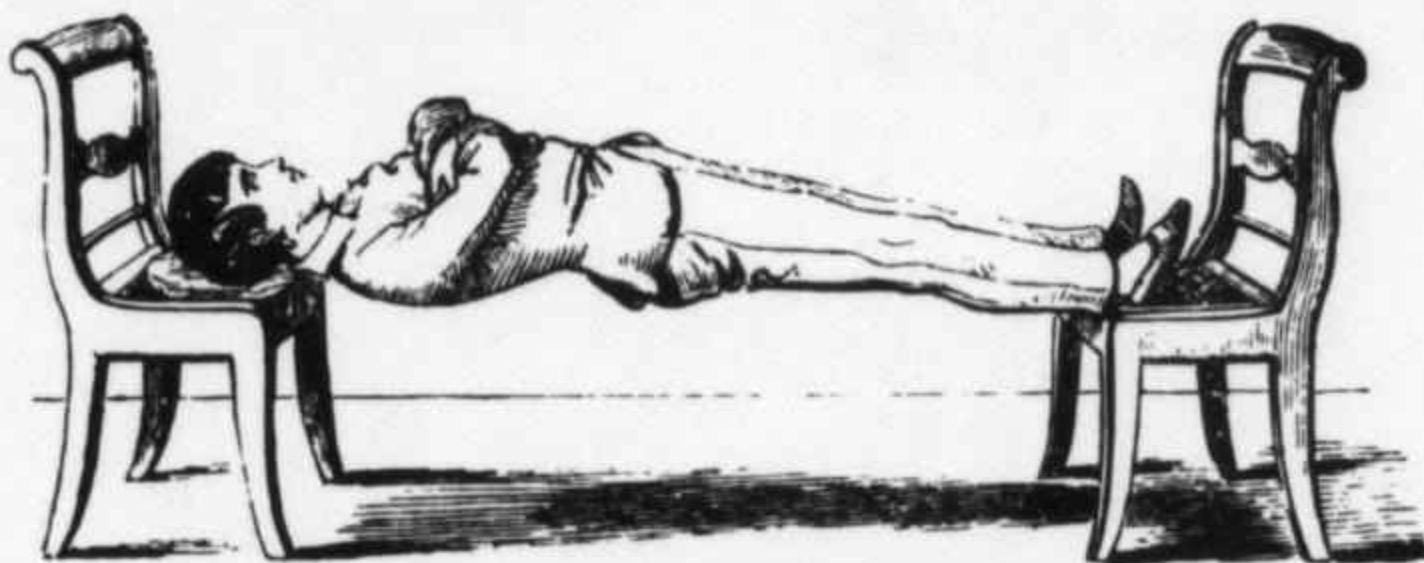
He warns parents and educators to fight the child's tendency to sit unevenly because he says it harms the spinal column. ". . . One must see to it that children always sit straight and even-sided on both buttocks at once . . . leaning neither to the right or left side. . . . As soon as they start to lean back . . . or bend their backs, the time has come to exchange at least for a few minutes the seated position for the absolutely still, supine one. If this is not done . . . the backbones will be deformed. . . ."¹⁷

". . . Half resting in lying or wallowing positions should not be allowed: if children are awake they should be alert and hold themselves in straight, active positions and be busy; in general each thing which could lead towards laziness and softness (for example the sofa in the children's room) should be kept away from their circle of activity."¹⁸

These procedures and the following ones were part of the father's program to keep the bodies of children, of all ages, straight at all times: when they stood, sat, walked, played, lay down, or slept (see Figures 1 and 2). He thought children must sleep in a straight position only, flat on their backs; babies under four months must lie only on their backs when resting. It is important, he taught, to start with infants, since he thought it harder to train older children. In his book *The Harmful Body Positions and Habits of Children, Including a Statement of Counteracting Measures*, he presented as medical fact his false idea that if a child lies too long on one side his body on that side may be damaged, "the nutrition is impaired," the "flow of juices is impeded," the "blood stops and piles up in the vessels," and the vessels "lose a large part of their life tension."¹⁹ This may lead later to paralysis of the arm and foot on that side, he said.²⁰

Son:

"One of the most horrifying miracles was the so-called *compres-*



FIGS. 1-8 are photostatic reproductions from Dr. Schreber's *Kalipädie* (23).

FIG. 1. The "bridge." Dr. Schreber thought a forward slump of a child's head and shoulders when walking was "an expression of weakness, dumbness and cowardice." He devised the "bridge" as an exercise "to strengthen the back and neck muscles" of children who slumped.

*sion-of-the-chest-miracle . . . ; it consisted in the whole chest wall being compressed, so that the state of oppression caused by the lack of breath was transmitted to my whole body."*²¹

Father:

He invented a device called *Schreibersche Geradhalter* (Schreber's straightholder) to force children to sit straight (see Figures 3 and 4). This was an iron cross-bar fastened to the table at which

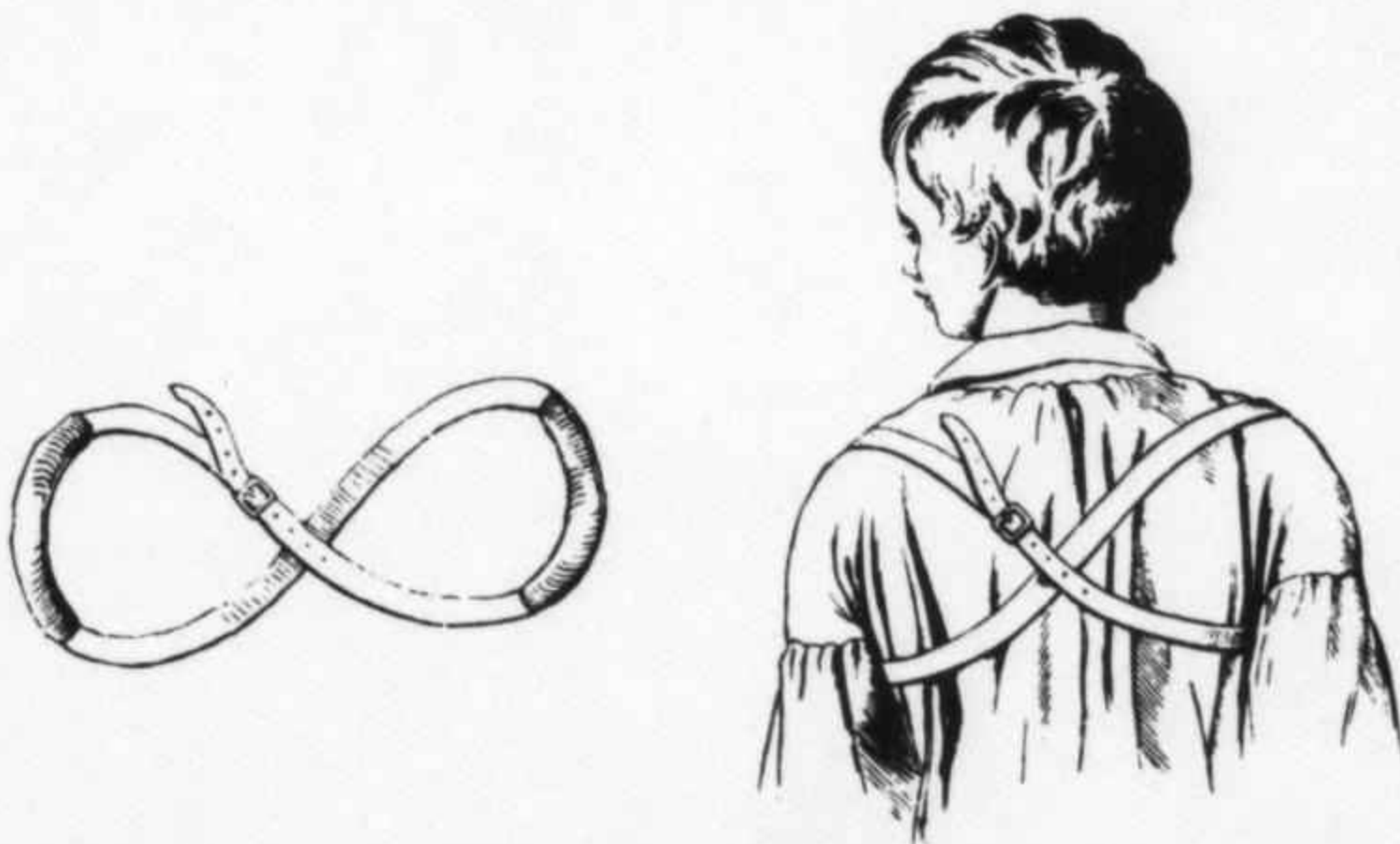


FIG. 2. A shoulder band to prevent "falling forward of the shoulders." Dr. Schreber thought it should be worn every day, all day, until "the bad habit is regulated." The shaded parts of the band on the left are metal springs to rest on the front of the shoulders.

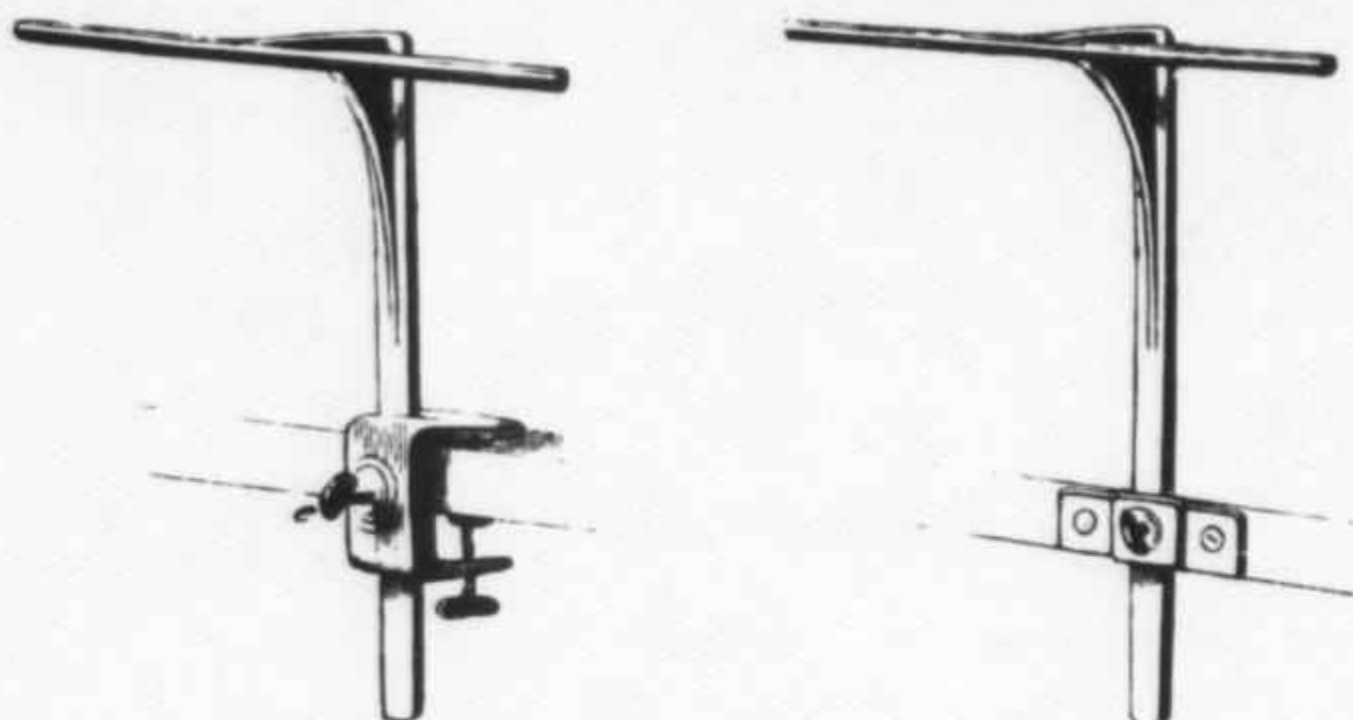


FIG. 3. The Geradhalter. On the left is a portable one for home use. The one on the right was fixed to desks at school.

the child sat to read or write. The bar pressed against the collar bones and the front of the shoulders to prevent forward movements or crooked posture. He says the child could not lean for long against the bar "because of the *pressure* of the hard object against the bones, and the consequent *discomfort*; the child will return on his own to the straight position."²² "I had a Geradhalter manufactured which proved itself to be suitable after multiple tests on my own children. . . ."²³ Besides the physical effects, he



FIG. 4. The Geradhalter in use.

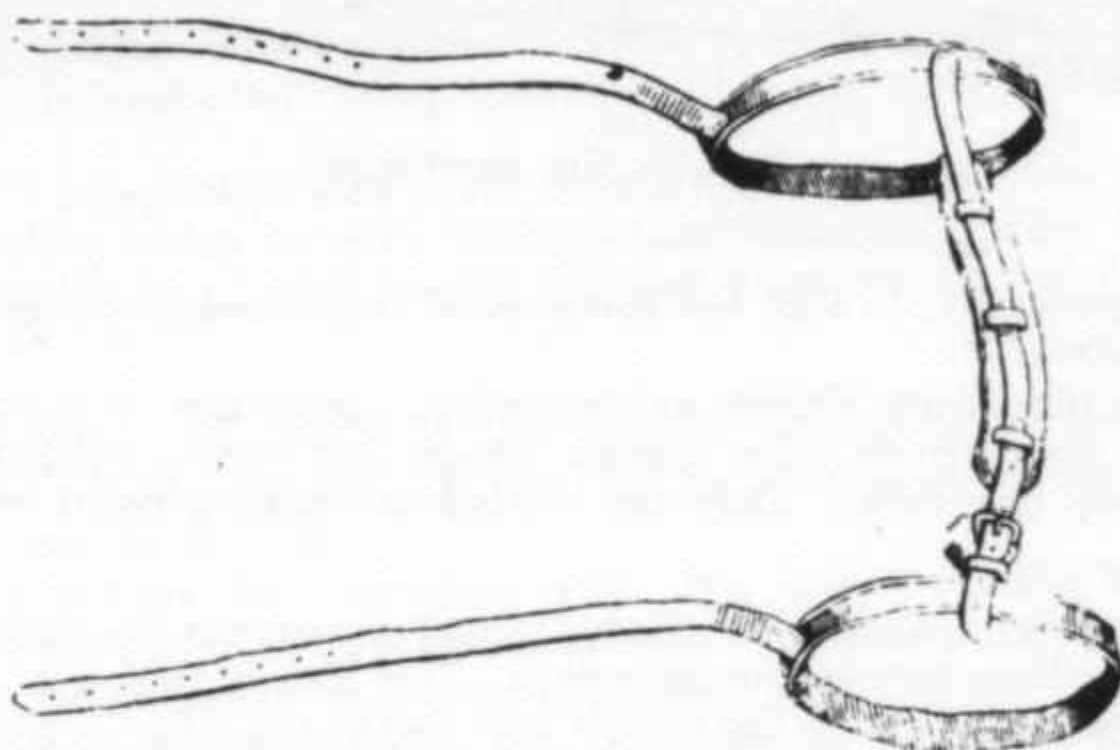


FIG. 5. A belt for the sleeping child.

says it is also "an effective moral means."²⁴ (He says that the vertical bar which supported it was "useful" too since it prevented young children from crossing their legs.)

He also tied a *belt* to the child's bed which ran across *the child's chest* to ensure that the child's body remained supine and straight when sleeping (see Figures 5 and 6).

Son:

"This was perhaps the most abominable of all miracles—next to the compression-of-the-chest-miracle; the expression used for it if I remember correctly was 'the head-compressing-machine.' (Kopfzusammenschnürungsmachine: literally, the head-together-tying machine). . . . The 'little devils' . . . *compressed my head as though in a vice* by turning a kind of screw, causing my head temporarily to assume an elongated almost pear-shaped form. It had an extremely threatening effect, particularly as it was accompanied by severe pain. The screws were loosened temporarily but only

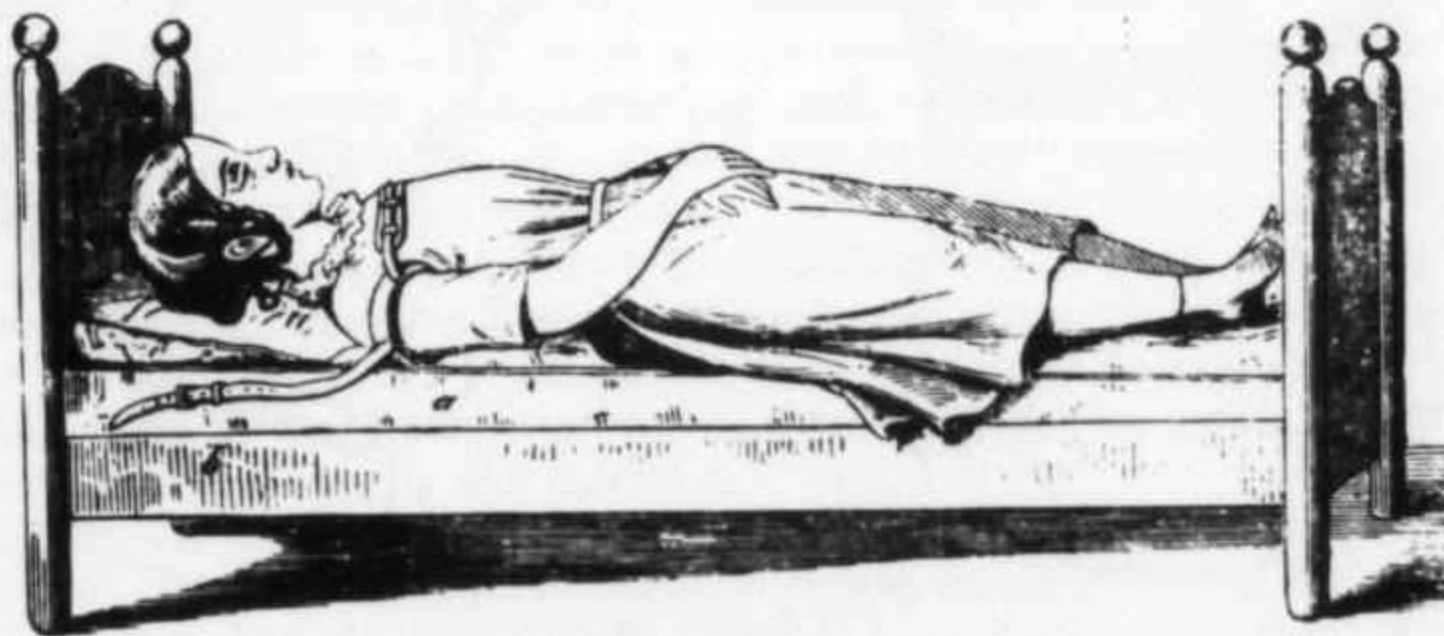


FIG. 6. The belt in use.



FIG. 7. The Kopfhalter.

very gradually, so that the *compressed state usually continued for some time.*"²⁵

"I suffer from almost uninterrupted headaches of a kind certainly unknown to other human beings and hardly comparable to ordinary headaches. They are *tearing and pulling pains.*"²⁶

Father:

He invented a *Kopfhalter* (head-holder) to prevent the child's head from falling forward or sideways. The Kopfhalter was a strap clamped at one end to the child's hair and at the other to his underwear so that it *pulled* his hair if he did not hold his head straight (see Figure 7). It served as a "reminder" to keep the head straight: "The consciousness that the head cannot be lowered past a certain point soon becomes a habit." He admits it was apt to produce "*a certain stiffening effect on the head*" and should therefore be used only one or two hours a day.²⁷

He also had a chinband built which was held to the head by a helmet-like device (see Figure 8). This was to ensure proper growth of the jaw and teeth.²⁸

These comparisons show uncanny similarities. It is as if the father taught his son a language of sensory stimuli by which to experience parts of his own body.²⁹



FIG. 8. The chin-band.

Niederland wonders if Schreber's experiences of having been tied and strapped by the father into orthopedic apparatus are the origin of the "divine miracles" of "being tied-to-earth" and "fastened-to-rays."³⁰

"God is inseparably tied to my person through my nerves' power of attraction which for some time past has been inescapable. There is no possibility of God freeing Himself from my nerves for the rest of my life."³¹

The son thinks the "miracles" are enacted upon objective anatomical organs of his body. He does not see that he is *re-enacting* his father's behavior towards his body.

Schreber suffers from reminiscences. His body embodies his past. He retains memories of what his father did to him as a child; although part of his mind knows they are memories, "he" does not. He is considered insane not only because of the quality of his experiences, but because he misconstrues their *mode*: he *remembers*, in some cases perfectly accurately, how his father treated him, but thinks he *perceives* events occurring in the present for which he imagines God, rays, little men, etc., are the agents. He knows what he most needs to know, but does not know he knows it. When he calls his experiences "miracles," he denies what he knows, denies he is denying anything, and denies there is anything to deny, *and* he denies those denials too.

Schreber's "forgetting" is not the usual amnesia for events of early childhood; his father used belts across the chests of sleeping children starting at seven or eight years old, and the *Geradhalter* and *Kopfhalter* with eight to sixteen-year-olds.

It is as if Schreber is forbidden by a rule to see the role his father has played in his suffering, and is forbidden by another rule to see there is anything he does not see, and as if a rule forbids him to see that rule, or *that* a rule might exist. For instance, he never says he cannot find what his experiences mean, and that he cannot because a rule stops him, or that he cannot, and does not know why he cannot. He is certain he knows what they mean; although he discusses their meaning in detail, he never connects them with his father.

The use of one's mind to try to understand the meaning of experiences that occur in one's mind can be uniquely problematic. Ashby, in *An Introduction to Cybernetics*, said that when a man cannot see some of the variables of a system, the "system" represented by the remainder may develop remarkable, even *miraculous*, properties.³² A mind that observes itself is both the observer and the system observed; the variables it cannot see may be those it does not *wish* to see, whether or not it knows of its wish. Experiences that arise from a region of one's mind of which one is not ordinarily conscious may appear to have extraordinary sources and qualities.

Why did Schreber turn memories into "miracles"? My hypothesis is that his father had forbidden him to see the truth about his past. His father had demanded that children love, honor, and obey their

parents. As I illustrate later, he taught parents a method explicitly designed to force children not to feel bitterness or anger towards their parents, even when the feelings might be justified. He wished to rid children of such "dangerous" feelings. Schreber, in order to link his suffering with his father, would have had to consider his father's behavior towards him as "bad." This, I infer, his father had forbidden him to do. He is unable, or unwilling, to violate his father's view of what his view of his father should be. Prohibited from seeing the true origin of his torments, he calls them miracles. As a result, he is considered crazy.

He was not alone in failing to see the link. No one else did either, including the psychiatrists who treated him and those who wrote about him.

He could almost see it; he accuses his doctor, Flechsig:

"You, like so many doctors, could not completely resist the temptation of using a patient as an object for experimentation."³³

It would be important to know how and why Schreber *stopped* repressing and started re-experiencing sometime after forty the suffering of his childhood, albeit he did not know he was remembering it.

FATHER

The father was Dr. Daniel Gottlieb Moritz Schreber; he wrote books about human anatomy and physiology, hygiene and physical culture; he was interested in body-building by gymnastics. He began the *Schreber Vereine*, associations for calisthenics, gardening and fresh air activities. He added moral principles to his precepts for physical health, joining them into a comprehensive educational system for parents and teachers. If his readers applied his ideas to their daily lives and their children's, he said, a stronger race of men would result. He dedicated his *Kallipädie*, from which I quote, "to the welfare of future generations." The full title of the book is *Education Towards Beauty by Natural and Balanced Elevation of Normal Body Formation, of Life-Supporting Health, and of Mental Ennoblement, Especially for the Use, if Possible, of Special Educational Means: for Parents, Educators and Teachers*. He died at fifty-three when the author of the *Memoirs* was nineteen.

Freud said about him:

"(He) was no insignificant person . . . (his) memory is kept green to this day by the numerous Schreber Associations which flourish especially in Saxony. . . . His activities in favour of promoting the harmonious upbringing of the young, of securing co-ordination between educators in the home and in the school, of introducing physical culture and manual work with a view to raising the standards of health—all this exerted a lasting influence upon his contemporaries.

His great reputation as the founder of therapeutic gymnastics in Germany is still shown by the wide circulation of his *Arztliche Zimmergymnastik* (Medical Indoor Gymnastics) in medical circles and the numerous editions through which it has passed."³⁴

Possibly, he had one face for the world and another for those with whom he lived. Baumeyer,³⁵ while in charge of a hospital near Dresden from 1946 to 1949, found this note among case records of Schreber's hospitalizations: "His father (founder of the Schreber Gardens in Leipzig) suffered from obsessional ideas with murderous impulses" (my translation). Baumeyer thinks its source was a member of the Schreber family or a person close to the family;³⁶ the father had died thirty years before the note was written.

Dr. Schreber had two sons. Daniel Gustav, his elder, three years older than the author of the *Memoirs*, shot and killed himself at thirty-eight.³⁷ Daniel Gustav's sister thought he had had a "progressive psychosis" before his suicide.³⁸

Little is known about Dr. Schreber's wife, their other children (three daughters), or their family life. We know some of Dr. Schreber's ideas about family life.

"When the man can support his opinions by reasons of demonstrable truth, no wife with common sense and goodwill will want to oppose his decisive voice."³⁹

"If one wants a planned upbringing based on principles to flourish, the father above anyone else must hold the reins of upbringing in his hands. . . . The main responsibility for the whole result of upbringing always belongs to the father. . . ."⁴⁰

FATHER'S MORALS

"Few people have been brought up according to such strict moral principles as I . . ."—Schreber in his *Memoirs*.

Dr. Schreber thought that parents must curtail their children's freedom by harsh disciplines. It was for the sake of health: moral, mental, and physical. He seemed to believe that children are criminal or ill from the start, or surely would become so, unless rescued in time.

His model of the human mind is simple. Thoughts, feelings, and acts are either good, noble, high, right, and fine or bad, ignoble, low, wrong, and crude. Those that are neither are "indifferent."

He presumes to know what is good, noble, high, right, and fine and what is not; he does not say how he knows. He considers sensual desires "bad." Bad elements of the mind are "weeds" to be "uprooted" and "exterminated."

"Moral will power is the sword of victory in the struggle for life itself . . . without fight there is no victory. . . . We should give our children the weapon to enter this fight."⁴¹

He thinks it critical to start training early. With babies of five to

six months parents must follow the "law of habituation," "the most general law for mental education of this age group":

"Suppress *everything* in the child, keep everything away from him which he should not make his own but guide him perseveringly towards everything to which he should habituate himself."

"If we habituate the child to the Good and Right we prepare him to do the Good and the Right later with consciousness and out of free will. . . . The habit is only a necessary precondition to make possible and facilitate the proper aim of self-determination of free will. . . . If one lets the wrongly directed habits take root the child is easily put in danger; even if he later recognizes the Better he will not have the power anymore to suppress the wrongly directed habit. . . ."42

A stitch in time saves nine. If one does one's work early and well, one needs to do none, or nearly none, later. One will be able to leave the children to follow "freely" what they have been taught.

Compare what his son said years later:

"The fundamental view I gained about God's relation to His creation is this: God executed His power of miracles on our earth . . . only until the ultimate aim of His creation was attained with the creation of the human being. From then on He left the created organic world as it were to itself, and interfered directly by miracles only very rarely, if at all, in very exceptional cases."43

The father aims to implant "self-determination," "self-reliance," and "free will." His psycho-logic is peculiar; parents must suppress the child in order to teach him self-determination. He has no faith that a child could learn when and how to regulate his own behavior without being forced to.

The *exact* opposite of what he intended occurred with his son. The psychiatrist who was superintendent of the asylum in which Schreber was confined years later wrote in a report that Schreber had no "*unimpaired self-determination* or sensible reasoning, rather the patient was completely under the power of overwhelming pathological influences."44

Dr. Schreber gives details of his methods:

". . . One must look at the moods of the little ones which are announced by screaming without reason and crying. . . . If one has convinced oneself that no real need, no disturbing or painful condition, no sickness is present, one can be assured that the screaming is only and simply the expression of a mood, a whim, the first appearance of self-will. . . . One has to step forward in a positive manner: by quick distraction of the attention, stern words, threatening gestures, rapping against the bed . . . or when all this is of no avail—by moderate, intermittent, bodily admonishments consistently repeated until the child calms down or falls asleep."

"Such a procedure is necessary only once or at most twice and—one is *master* of the child *forever*. From now on a glance, a word,

a single threatening gesture, is sufficient to rule the child. One should keep in mind that one shows the child the greatest kindness in this in that one saves him from many hours of tension which hinder him from thriving and also frees him from all those inner spirits of torment which very easily grow up vigorously into more serious and insurmountable enemies of life."⁴⁵

The parent-child relationship he strives for is like the relationship between a hypnotist and the person he has put in a trance. Laing and Esterson ask:

"Is the pre-psychotic child in some sense hypnotized by the parents, or is hypnosis an experimentally induced model psychosis, or, perhaps more precisely, an experimentally induced model pre-psychotic relationship? Experimental hypnosis certainly stimulates some aspects of the pre-psychotic child-parent relationship"⁴⁶

Dr. Schreber presupposes that a parent's goal is to master his child. The child must be mastered in order to be saved from *his* view of a child's self. *He* sees "tensions" and "inner spirits of torment" in a child who cries, which *he* thinks are precursors of "insurmountable enemies of life." This is how he justifies "saving" the child. He sees the child's crying as "crying without reason" because he sees no reason for it. The child could be crying because he is bored and wants someone to play with him. *He* thinks a "whim" in a five or six-month old is a bad sign. He does not see that an infant's wish to win a response to his whims could be a real need.

A psychoanalytic interpretation would be that Dr. Schreber projects "inner spirits of torment" from inside himself into a child, i.e., he thinks he wants to master a child but really wants to master "bad" parts of himself. Many psychoanalysts have dwelled upon the motives of the person who projects: few have pondered the experience of the person *upon whom* someone else projects parts of himself, which he tries to master "in" the other person, for what he imagines is the other's sake.⁴⁷ Here is Schreber's experience of it: "*God Himself was on my side in His fight against me.*"⁴⁸

Everywhere Dr. Schreber talks of parents changing children: nowhere of parents learning from children. The channel of effects is one-way. Schreber says:

"A long time ago I formulated the idea that God cannot learn by experience . . . as follows: Every attempt at an educative influence directed outwards must be given up as hopeless."⁴⁹

To educate his father, he would have had to see that his father was beset by "tensions," "inner spirits of torments," and "insurmountable enemies," why he was so beset, and how to help his father to see it—not an easy job for a child.

Although children have no effect upon parents in Dr. Schreber's system, parents are not independent of their children. Parents are

not free not to fight their children's badness. Indeed, since what they are fighting is in themselves (if they resemble Dr. Schreber), how could they be free?

The father says:

"If the child is lifted from the bed and carried around each time he makes noises—without checking if there is really something wrong—and is calmed by gentleness of one kind or another, this may often lead to the appearance of the emotion of spite later in the life of the child. I wish mothers and nursemaids would recognize the importance of this point!"⁵⁰

He deploys the term "spite" against a child who refuses a position his parent assigns him. In his view, the child who shows spite is bad: the child a parent can rule by "a glance," "a word," "a single threatening gesture" is good. Since he gives no evidence that lifting an infant and carrying him around whenever he makes noises may "often lead" to "spite" later—nor does any exist as far as I know—I assume what he fears is his delusion.

". . . Another important rule: even allowed desires of the child should be fulfilled only if they are expressed in a friendly, harmless, or at least quiet, manner, never if by screaming or unruly movements . . . even if the child's need for his regular feeding is the cause. . . . One has to keep from the child even the faintest glimmer that he could, by screaming or unruly behaviour, force anything from his environment . . . the child learns very soon that only by . . . self-control he gains his purpose."⁵¹

Is a five- or six-month old free to choose to express his wants "quietly," as Dr. Schreber seems to think? An infant at this age is physiologically unable to specify some needs, especially hunger, sometimes, without screaming or waving his arms and legs; a demand for "self-control" would frustrate and confuse him. If his appeals were not endorsed, he might stop trying. Dr. Schreber says that "service personnel seldom have enough comprehension" to share these ideas of his and practice them. Maybe they comprehended more than he did.

"By the last mentioned habit the child has already a noticeable headstart in the art of waiting and is ready for . . . an even more important one, the art of self-denial. . . . Each forbidden desire—whether or not it is to the child's disadvantage—must be consistently and unfailingly opposed by an unconditional refusal. The refusal of a desire alone is not enough though; one has to see to it that the child receives this refusal calmly, and if necessary, one has to make this calm acceptance a firm habit by using a stern word or threat, etc. Never make an exception from this! . . . This is the only way to make it easy for the child to attain the salutary and indispensable habit of subordination and control of his will"⁵²

Why is it "salutary" and "indispensable" that a child, before he is

one, learn how to subordinate his will and receive calmly the denial of his desires? Dr. Schreber does not say. Perhaps this is how *his* father taught him "self-denial" when *he* was an infant. Or was it his mother, or nurse?

He could be sadistic in pursuing his high-minded goals. Consider this regimen to train a child, before he is one, in "self-denial." No one must give the child a morsel of food besides the regular three meals a day. His nurse must seat him on her lap while she eats or drinks whatever she wishes. However much the child should wish food or drink, she must give him none.

"Here is only a small experience from my own family circle. The nurse of one of my children, generally a very sweet person, once gave a child something between his meals even though having been told explicitly not to.

. . . It was a piece of pear which she herself was eating. . . . She was without any other reason dismissed from the service at once because I had lost the necessary trust in her unconditional correctness."⁵³

News about the episode spread among the children's nurses in Leipzig and from then on, he says, he had "no further trouble with any other such erring maids or nurses."

Dr. Schreber's method of teaching a baby self-denial is to set up a hierarchy by which he applies his power upon the nurse to apply hers upon the baby. Only the baby is denied anything. It is relevant that Schreber in his "nervous illness," many years later, experienced God as a hierarchy of powers.

Here is another example Dr. Schreber gives from his family. Since he is talking about a male infant, he could be referring to the author of the *Memoirs*:

"One of my children had fallen ill at the age of one-and-a-half and the only treatment, though a dangerous one, giving any hope for saving his life was possible only through the completely quiet submissiveness of the young patient. It succeeded, because the child had been accustomed from the beginning to the most absolute obedience toward me, whereas otherwise the child's life would in all probability have been beyond any chance of rescue."⁵⁴

It would be interesting to know how the child's absolute obedience towards his father made possible the only treatment that could save his life, and what that treatment was. It is unlikely we can ever find out.

A parent's demand does not always need a rationale, he thinks, as in the next example. Might makes right.

"If one asks a child to hand something to oneself with one specific hand but the child will use only the other hand, the intelligent upbringer will not rest until the act is done as demanded and the impure motive is removed."⁵⁵

The irrelevance of the parent's demand is irrelevant to Dr. Schreber.

He never considers it possible that a child who opts to disobey a parent's arbitrary wish may know, better than his parent, what is best for him.

In his view, a parent must do more than control a child's acts. He must control his "*sentiments*," his "*motives*." The "outer" is less important than the "inner."

"Let us always treat the child exactly as his sentiments, which are mirrored so clearly in the whole of his being, deserve. . . . If parents stay true to themselves with this principle, they will soon be rewarded by the appearance of a wonderful relationship where the child is nearly always ruled merely by parental eye movements."⁵⁶

Dr. Schreber seems to be saying that as parents raise their power over their children they will be "rewarded" by the possibility of greater power still; the goal is for the child to be in a sort of trance in which he experiences each glance of the parent as a command. Why is that relationship wonderful? And for whom?

Although Dr. Schreber thinks the child must be rewarded or punished not only for his acts, but for the sentiments underlying them, he thinks the child must not obey in order to get praise or reward. He thinks a wish for praise or reward is a "degraded" and "impure" sentiment. Nor must the child obey because he fears punishment. *And* he must not obey while secretly *wishing* to disobey; that would be dishonesty—a bad sentiment. He must obey because he knows it is right to obey, no matter how whimsical is his parent's wish.

To tailor his consciousness to meet the demands of this system, a child would have to deny, repress, split, project, displace, etc., much of his experience. Even having done so, it is hard to see how he could think, in some situations, any thought without breaking a rule.

Schreber in his *Memoirs* says that God, whom he experiences as irresistibly attracted to him, is able to withdraw from him only when he, Schreber, stops thinking. He may be remembering his relationship with his father without realizing it; to realize it would be to think a forbidden thought. The father sought to crush so many thoughts in children that his son might have thought, had he been allowed to think it, that his father would leave him alone only if he stopped thinking.

Frequently, Dr. Schreber advises parents to make their children unaware of their own experience, if it is of a sort he thinks is bad. He tells parents to stage this scene with their children, three to five years old, as a training exercise after punishing them; the aim is to induce the children to feel what he thinks they should.

"It is generally salutary for the sentiments if the child after each punishment, after he has recovered, is gently prodded (preferably by a third person) to offer to shake the hand of the punisher as a sign of a plea for forgiveness. . . . From then on everything should be forgotten."

"After this prodding has occurred a few times the child, feeling his duty, will freely approach the punisher. This ensures against the possibility of residual spiteful or bitter feelings and mediates the feeling of repentance (the next goal of punishment) and the benefit that results from it, and generally gives the child the salutary impression that he still owes the punisher something, not, the other way around, even if maybe a word or a blow more than necessary should have befallen the child. Generally, any plea for love must come from the child, and only from the child. . . . If one forgets about the repentance process here one risks always that the main aim of each punishment, the true serious feeling of repentance, will not be reached but instead a kernel of bitter feeling will stay stuck in the depths of children's hearts. If one were to omit this procedure altogether one would permit the punished child the right of anger against the punisher which is certainly not consistent with an intelligent pedagogic approach."⁵⁷

To clarify all Dr. Schreber's implicit premises here, and other premises that these imply, would take us off our course. Briefly, here are a few that are apparent:

Punishment of a child is proof of his guilt. Although punishment can be excessive, it can never be unwarranted. Its aim is to bring about an acknowledgment of guilt which he calls "repentance."

It is a child's duty, not his choice, to ask for forgiveness. He is not allowed not to ask to be forgiven, i.e., he cannot harbor a feeling that he has been punished unfairly, even if he has, or, feeling he has been fairly punished, to endure his feelings privately and to cope with them as he wishes.

Only the punisher can forgive a punished child.

One acts in the light of what one sees. Each of these premises is a constraint by which Dr. Schreber limits his vision. He forces the child's view to fit his view of what the child's view should be. This he can do only by altering the child's experience. Any "spite," "bitterness," or "anger" the child feels towards his punisher must be repressed.

Repression, in the psychoanalytic view, is an *intra*-personal defense built to ward off real, imagined, or fantasied harm. Freud said that a person represses experience if he fears it may lead him to act in ways for which he remembers (or imagines, or fantasies) he has been punished, or for which he perceives (or imagines, or fantasies) he will be punished. Repression can also be a *trans*-personal maneuver. I am distinguishing one's operation upon another's experience (*trans*-personal) from one's operation upon one's own (*intra*-personal).

A person (often a parent) orders another person (often a child) to forget thoughts, feelings, or acts that the first person cannot, or will not, allow in the other. This is standard practice in some relationships (especially in families with a schizophrenic offspring). If the first person's aim is to protect himself from experience of which he fears the other may remind him, if the other experiences too much, the

order serves as a trans-personal *defense*. A trans-personal defense can be an *attack* on another person's experience.

Dr. Schreber recommends repression as a trans-personal maneuver. It could have served as a trans-personal defense for him if he feared his un-"repentant" feelings towards his parents. His son thought that someone might think God could resort to what I am calling trans-personal defenses:

"Whoever has taken the trouble of reading the above attentively may spontaneously have thought that God Himself must have been or be in a precarious position, if the conduct of a single human being could endanger Him in any way and even if He Himself, if only in limited instances, could be enticed into a kind of *conspiracy against human beings who are fundamentally innocent*."⁵⁸

Later, he says he "had become a danger to God Himself."⁵⁹ In a postscript to his book he notes:

"God is a living Being and would Himself have to be ruled by egoistic motives, if other living beings existed who could endanger Him or in some way be detrimental to his interests."⁶⁰

Is he ascribing operations to his father's mind, to explain his father's behavior, without naming him?

Freud's Analysis

Freud, in his analysis of Schreber, chose as data certain of Schreber's conscious experiences. To explain his data—Schreber's conscious experiences—he inferred that Schreber had had other experiences of which Schreber was unaware, and of which he kept himself unaware by operations of which he also was unaware.

He saw Schreber as paranoid. In his paper on Schreber, he said:

"What lies at the core of the conflict in cases of paranoia among males is a homosexual wishful phantasy of *loving a man*. . ."

Freud thought that the paranoid man contradicts his love for a man by hating a man and replaces "internal perceptions—feelings—" by "external perceptions."

"Consequently the proposition 'I hate him' becomes transformed by *projection* into another one: '*He hates (persecutes) me*, which will justify me in hating him.' And thus the impelling unconscious feeling makes its appearance as thought it were the consequence of an external perception:

'I do not *love* him—I *hate* him, because HE PERSECUTES ME.'"
(Italics in the original).⁶¹

To paraphrase Freud, if a man loves a man and feels he is forbidden to, he denies his love and changes it to its opposite; "I love him" becomes "I hate him" by denial and reversal. If he feels forbidden to hate a man, he changes his hatred to its inverse: "I hate him" becomes "He hates me" by projection. A man who thinks he is persecuted gets

to that position by making three operations upon his homosexual love: denial, reversal, and projection. These steps keep him unaware of "bad" feelings. He is unconscious of loving a man, of the steps he takes to keep himself unconscious, and, I presume, of his motives for keeping the love unconscious and for keeping the steps to keep it unconscious, unconscious.

Whether Freud's theory explains why some men feel persecuted I do not know. His theory of why Schreber felt persecuted neglects much of what probably occurred between Schreber and his father.

Given what can be reasonably inferred about how the father treated his sons, it is likely that they would have *hated* him if they could have. The father taught parents to stop children from feeling "spite," "anger," and "bitterness" towards their parents; these feelings can be classed as *hatred*. Therefore, his sons may have needed to be concerned with how not to hate their father. Karl Menninger,⁶² referring to Freud's analysis of Schreber, said:

"The man who feels himself persecuted is obviously defending himself not against his love of someone so much as against his hate for someone, someone whom the persecutor represents. He defends himself by saying, 'It is not I who hate him, but he who hates me.'"⁶³

His conclusion, reached by reasoning unlike mine, is compatible with my findings.

Of course, in Freud's view, to hate or love someone means to hate *and* love him. Did Schreber fear his love for his father? Perhaps; however, I see no need to assume it, since his feelings of persecution can be adequately explained as *transforms* of his *real* persecution.

Paranoia and Persecution

Dr. Schreber told parents to persecute their children. He does not seem to have seen it as persecution himself.

Consider a matrix with two columns and two rows, yielding four possibilities:

One is not persecuted and 1) knows it 2) does not know it (that is, one thinks one is persecuted when one is not).

One is persecuted and 3) knows it 4) does not know it.

The first position is "normal." The second is ascribed by psychiatrists to people they call paranoid. What of the last two, especially the fourth? There is no term in psychiatric usage, or in English, for "is persecuted without knowing it." Since there is no name for this condition, one can suffer from it without risk of being labeled.

(Note: When I say "is persecuted," I also mean *has been* persecuted. Some persons, persecuted by parents in childhood, are also persecuted by them in adulthood. Some unwittingly find, or induce, others to persecute them, often in ways remarkably similar to their childhood experience. And many, like Schreber, are persecuted by *memories* of past persecution.)

I think many people whom psychiatrists call "paranoid" have been persecuted, and know it, but they do not recognize their real persecutors, nor how they have been persecuted. They belong to the last two groups. To call them paranoid which presupposes they are not "really" persecuted, but imagine it, is false and misleading.

What is clinically called paranoia is often the partial realization—as through a glass darkly—that one has been or is persecuted. One may never have realized it before. "Paranoid" thoughts can be *images* of events which originally, days or decades earlier, were seen, heard, felt, smelled, or tasted.

Paranoia (*para* beside, beyond + *nous* mind) means literally the state of being besides, or out of, one's mind. If a person called paranoid sees the truth that he is persecuted (without seeing by whom, or how), he is partly "in" his mind; the label is partly a misnomer. It is ironic that one may be regarded as ill for the first time in one's life, just upon emergence from a lifelong, deeper, ignorance.

Some people do not see who their real persecutors are or the methods of persecution, because their persecutors do not let them. The persecutors may persuade or force their victims to see their persecution as love, especially if they are the parents, siblings, spouses, or children of their victims. It is easier for the persecutors to lie if they believe the lies are true. The persecutor may see his persuasion or force as an act of love too and may try to convince his victim of it.

Here is a schema which is simpler than family life *in vivo* ever is:

Parent persecutes child.

Parent sees parent's persecution as love.

Child sees parent's persecution as persecution.

Child may or may not see that parent sees his persecution of child as love: usually he does not.

Parent wants child to love, honor, and obey parent, for child's sake. If child does not, parent must force child to, for child's sake.

The more child sees parent's persecution as persecution the more parent persecutes child, and sees his persecution as love.

Child tries to conceal that he sees parent's persecution as persecution, and to conceal that he is concealing anything.

Parent tells child: "Dishonesty is wicked. I will punish you, for your own good, if you lie."

A variation is: "You *cannot* hide your feelings from me."

I am distinguishing "You should not hide your feelings from me" from "You *cannot* hide your feelings from me." The first is an order; the second an attribution that masks an order. The second is like the hypnotist's induction and is a stronger technique of control, probably because the order is hidden. For more discussion of this point see Laing⁶⁴ and Haley.⁶⁵

Child sees that parent will persecute child most if parent sees that

child sees parent's persecution as persecution, and is concealing that he is, and is concealing that he is concealing anything.

Child conceals from *himself* that he sees that Parent persecutes him, and conceals from *himself* that he is concealing anything.

If this schema, or one like it, summarizes some of what has occurred between some "paranoid" people, when they were children, and their parents, it would shed light on why they so mistrust others. It would also explain Robert Knight's finding,⁶⁶ that ascribing homosexual wishes to a "paranoid" patient "not only does not relieve the patient but often makes him more paranoid than ever."⁶⁷

Substitute son for child and father for parent. I deduce from my study of Schreber's father's ideas that this situation, or one like it, existed between father and son.

The writings of the father and son show that what the father saw as love, his son saw as persecution. Note the opposite values each gives to "rays":

Father says:

"Once the childish mind is completely penetrated by *love* and *respect* and all the warm *rays* which gush forth from them, the will of the child is ruled more and more from this perspective and is led gently towards the pure and noble direction."⁶⁸

Son says:

"In itself a state of affairs must be considered contrary to the Order of the World in which the *rays* serve mainly to *inflict damage* on the body of a single human being or to play tricks with the objects with which he is occupied—such harmless miracles have become particularly frequent latterly."⁶⁹

"Naturally I am referring only to *my own case*, that is to say a case in which God entered into continual contact by *rays* with a single human being, a contact which could no longer be severed and which therefore was contrary to the Order of the World."⁷⁰

Father and son use the same word, *strahlen*, translated as "rays."

Schreber feels harassed by God's attraction to him and would like God to withdraw from him, a perfectly intelligible wish in view of his father's behavior towards him as a child. He is not attracted to God, as Freud thought; he is *attractive*, and would like not to be. It is not "I love him" that bothers him, but "He loves me."

Baumeyer,⁷¹ in his report of Schreber's hospital records, says that Schreber "often declared that he had to put up a strong resistance against 'the homosexual love of certain persons.'"

This passage of the father links with the last steps of my schema:

"... If one does not secure in the child's heart adherence to truth by imprinting of a *holy fear*, of each glimmer of untruth, how can one wonder when later in life, with thousands of temptations to lie frequently demanding one's whole power to resist, the domination

of the lie spreads its rule, already having been prepared in youth . . . *the child should be permeated by the feeling of the impossibility of locking up something in his heart knowingly and permanently from you. Without this unconditional openheartedness, any upbringing will lack a safe foundation.* But to get there an additional condition must be fulfilled. You have to come to the help of the child so that he can take in and secure the courage often necessary to hold strictly to the truth, i.e., this means in the case of a freely offered, open and full confession of guilt the guilt must be judged and punished recognizably more mildly, taking account of the openness, but in the opposite case the guilt is punished onefold, the untruth connected with it is punished tenfold."⁷²

This is how an able persecutor controlled his victims in the name of truth, openheartedness, and courage. Big Brother was incarnate long before Orwell wrote 1984.

Many psychiatrists and psychoanalysts have said that the people they call schizophrenic suffer from an inability to distinguish "I" from not-"I," that they lack "ego boundaries." I suggest that some of these people have been taught by their families they should not, or cannot, live with an "I," as Schreber's father apparently taught him. Note that Dr. Schreber does not say children should not keep things from their parents; he says they should be "permeated by the feeling of the impossibility" of it, i.e., they must feel that they cannot.

What the German playwright Lessing said could apply to a man brought up by Dr. Schreber's methods: "A man who does not lose his reason over certain things can have no reason to lose."

THE CONTEXT

Nearly everyone who has studied families of persons labeled schizophrenic agrees that the irrationality of the schizophrenic finds its rationality in the context of his first family. In what context does that family context find *its* rationality? What is the social network around the family of a schizophrenic, and what are its properties?⁷³ Where do the patterns of thought, word, and deed of parents of mad offspring fit in? We would be wise, I think, to confess we do not know.

A man renowned as a great pedagogue—Freud said his activities "exerted a lasting influence on his contemporaries"—has two sons. One kills himself and the other goes mad. In what social context can Dr. Schreber's system of child-rearing find its rationality? Why was his system so highly esteemed? Since his *Medical Indoor Gymnastics*⁷⁴ has sold nearly forty editions, and is translated in seven languages, his behavior has been part of a very large network indeed. Remember that Hitler and his peers were raised when Dr. Schreber's books, preaching household totalitarianism, were popular.

Much scholarship has been devoted to understanding Schreber; all of it until recently ignored his father's writings as data. Why?

Schreber says, "*God did not really understand the living human being . . .*"⁷⁵ (Italics in the original.) This is the closest he gets to telling the plain truth about his father. Why did no one else get closer? Possibly, had he seen the truth about his childhood, he would have found no one to appreciate what he saw.

Schreber's father was a key figure in a conspiracy of certain German parents against their children. The conspirators did not see themselves as conspirators. Were they treating their children as their parents had treated them?

Edwin Lemert,⁷⁶ an American sociologist who studied the interpersonal networks around people considered paranoid, found that

"The general idea that the paranoid person symbically fabricates the conspiracy against him is in our own estimation incorrect or incomplete. Nor can we agree that he lacks insight, as is so frequently claimed. To the contrary, many paranoid persons properly realize that they are being isolated and excluded by concerted interaction, or that they are being manipulated. However, they are at a loss to estimate accurately or realistically the dimensions and form of the coalition arrayed against them."

Schreber was born into a conspiracy against him. Those who tried, while he lived and after he died, to render his experience intelligible failed to see the conspiracy. In failing to see the conspiracy, they sustained it, unwittingly. We need to know how to render *their* failure intelligible.

ADDENDUM

I am not alone in intuiting a possible link between the micro-social despotism of the Schreber family and macro-social despotism of Nazi Germany. Elias Canetti, a novelist and sociologist, also did. He does not know of my views of Schreber's father (nor did I know of his ideas about Schreber when I wrote this paper), and he does not mention Schreber's father; he thinks of the link with Nazism, using only the *Memoirs* as data. He says Schreber gives us

"a very distinct picture of God: he is a despot and nothing else. His realm contains provinces and factors. 'God's interests,' as they are bluntly and summarily designated, demand the increase of his power. This, and this only, is why he would not deny any human being the share of blessedness due to him; human beings who hinder him are done away with."⁷⁷

Later Canetti says,

As no-one today is likely to deny, his (Schreber's) political system had within a few decades been accorded high honour: though in a rather cruder and less literate form it became the creed of a great nation, leading . . . to the conquest of Europe and coming within a hair's breadth of the conquest of the world. Thus Schreber's claims

were posthumously vindicated by his unwitting disciples. We are not likely to accord him the same recognition, but the amazing and incontrovertible likeness between the two systems may serve to justify the time we have devoted to this single case of paranoia; . . .⁷⁸

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FEARS OF SEXUAL LICENSE DURING THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

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Curiously little has been done with Freud's ideas on religion as a defense against repressed impulses. Most scholars go no further than the use of psychoanalytic interpretation of religious symbolism. Yet if the theory is correct, there are some very real historical consequences which should be evident when religious ritual is adopted or changed. William Saffady picks one point in time, the English Reformation, and gives evidence that Freud's theories may yet be useful in explaining some of the emotions of the people involved.

One of the most important and exciting things about the new psychohistory is its refreshing reaffirmation of the complexity of historical events. Psychoanalytic interpretations of historical events are not intended to invalidate or replace traditional ways of understanding the past. The psychoanalytically-oriented historian advocates no mysterious law that sees the unconscious moving covertly but significantly through history. He does see unconscious motives in all human actions whether present or past. He never claims that the unconscious motives he uncovers are always and in every case more significant than the more easily recognizable conscious ones. He knows, however, that the significance of a motive, whether conscious or unconscious, can never be determined until the motive is identified. All he wants to do is make the unconscious conscious so it can be examined, understood, and evaluated alongside other explanations for historical events. His great strength lies in his adherence to the principle of "over-determination," an awareness that historical events, as human acts, have many causes—political, social, economic, and emotional. Because psychoanalytic insight often

uncovers suggestive implications in words and actions that traditional historians consider inconsequential, the psychohistorian can make effective use of source materials that have been studied intensively, sometimes finding things beyond the scope of other researchers.

Let's examine a case in point. There is a draft of a 1535 royal proclamation with notations in King Henry VIII's own hand describing the activities of "sundry strange persons called anabaptists and sacramentaries" who were spreading Protestant ideas in early sixteenth century England. The anabaptists were almost exclusively foreign immigrants. The sacramentaries were native Englishmen who were essentially identical with the medieval heretics called Lollards. Although the ideas of the two groups differed in some important respects, both preached a form of Protestantism that differed from the beliefs of the King and English clergy in its demands for the abolition of all traditional sacraments and religious ceremonies and their replacement by a religion based solely on the ethical teachings of the Scriptures. Their preachers attracted large audiences and pamphlet literature condemning traditional church services and religious rituals enjoyed a wide circulation, but for all the interest they aroused, their ideas never seem to have gained anything approaching general acceptance. During the reign of Elizabeth, when a religious settlement was finally made, the end product we call Anglicanism resembled medieval Catholicism a lot more than it resembled either anabaptism or Tudor Lollardy. This is something of a puzzle. Why weren't anti-ceremonial Protestant ideas able to gain a more secure foothold and more directly influence events during a period of English history when traditional ideas were being challenged?

Professor A. G. Dickens, who has studied Tudor Lollardy and its relationship to the English Reformation more intensively than anyone, argues that Lollardy, or sacramentarian ideas, "fell victim to its own qualities." It preserved the image of a personal, nonsacramental religion only at the cost of a theologically inferior negativism that led to incoherence and, sometimes, unbelief.² Mr. K. B. MacFarlane maintains that Lollardy was so thoroughly monopolized by the lower-middle classes that its appeal and influence were severely limited.³ Both explanations, the one theological, the other socio-political, are supported by an impressive array of citations from official documents, pamphlet literature and personal correspondence. Both are important, but neither rules out the possibility that other factors might be involved. Both historians do touch on, but do not fully develop, another line of thought best expressed in an anonymous sixteenth century sacramentarian pamphlet intended to meet objections to Protestantism. Writing in 1534, the author claimed that many Englishmen were disturbed by the new religious ideas so much in the air and that many complained that "it was a merry world before men spoke of such matters."⁴ Here is something never fully explored. Certainly in a period of sweeping historical change we would expect some indication of uneasiness in the

face of widespread challenges to traditional values, but a close examination of the sources indicates that these fears went beyond that. There is impressive evidence indicating that some Englishmen felt that the abandonment of established religious rituals would result in unrestrained violence and sexual licentiousness.

Since the late fourteenth century, Englishmen had associated attacks on religious ceremonies with violence. Throughout the Middle Ages and into the sixteenth century, heretics were punished as criminals.⁵ The language of royal pardons demonstrated a persistent linking of anti-ceremonial ideas and lawlessness in men's minds. In 1546, for example, Richard Mannock of Suffolk received a pardon for "felonies and heretical opinions."⁶ William Owskey, a Lincolnshire serving man, was absolved of heresy and "other crimes" in the following year.⁷ Fifteenth century chronicles stressed the relationship between unorthodox ideas about the eucharist and the outbreak of the peasant's revolt in 1381.⁸ The Tudor pamphleteer Henry Brinkelow complained that suspected sacramentarians were condemned as "causers of insurrection."⁹ Bishop Longland contended that the preachers who condemned traditional church services in his diocese of Lincoln were engendering "contrariety and dissention."¹⁰ Bishop John Hooper insisted that anti-ceremonial ideas must "lead to sedition and violence."¹¹ In the introduction to his translation of one of St. Augustine's theological treatises, Nicholas Lesse maintained that the end result of all religious change was "the utter confusion and subversion of whole commonwealths."¹² The most widely read English account of continental Protestant beliefs described the anabaptists and all other German reformers as "seditious persons" invariably motivated by anarchistic designs.¹³ A popular English translation of the Swiss reformer Heinrich Bullinger's attack on anabaptism deplored the "tumults which did spring in times past" from religious deviation on the question of sacraments and ceremonies.¹⁴ The political theorist Thomas Starkey cited the example of the German peasant wars as an indication of impending danger from religious changes in England.¹⁵ Both the poet Edmund Beke¹⁶ and the dramatist John Bale¹⁷ condemned unorthodox ideas about the meaning of the rituals involved in the administration of the sacrament of baptism as seditious. A varied group of sacramentarian ideas were labeled seditious by an ecclesiastical commission in Kent in 1546.¹⁸

Many Englishmen were frightened by the prospect of replacing traditional church services with a religion based on individual interpretation of the Bible. John Standish, a staunch Catholic opponent of the vernacular Bible and a defender of traditional church ceremonies insisted that the only possible results of having the Scriptures translated into English were "obstinacy, disobedience, loss of devotion and swarms of errors."¹⁹ Sir Thomas More maintained that the independent interpretation of Scripture demanded by Lollard opponents of traditional church services encouraged recalcitrance because to expect a

man who could interpret the Bible without assistance and question the propriety of religious ceremonies to remain obedient to church authority "standeth as well with reason as to make a man drunk and bid him be sober."²⁰ Bishop Longland complained to Cromwell that in areas of his diocese where Lollard groups met regularly to discuss the Scriptures and criticize religious ceremonies, robberies had increased.²¹ The Catholic preacher Roger Edgeworth warned that he himself had known men who were led into a life of idleness and crime through the study of Scripture in English.²²

Equally significant was the feeling that opponents of traditional religious services and ceremonies were "full of wild liberty,"²³ a sixteenth century phrase denoting an absence of all sexual inhibitions. Bullinger's treatise against the anabaptists, for example, described the "beast-like carnal liberty" of anti-ceremonial heretical groups.²⁴ Many readers were frightened by William Barlow's report that sacramentarian and anabaptist groups held their prayer meetings in the nude.²⁵ A royal commission appointed to examine sacramentarian and anabaptist heretics in Kent in 1552 indicted two persons on charges of unspecified sexual misconduct.²⁶ Rumors that sweeping changes in marital patterns would accompany the abolition of familiar church services were common.²⁷ Bishop Gardiner complained that such sexual libertinism was intimately related to violent social upheaval because, while opponents of ceremonies and rituals made much of the importance of the religious spirit, "all is for the flesh, women and meat with liberty of hand and tongue," an attitude that could only lead to the "dissolution and dissipation of all estates."²⁸

These ideas bore little relationship to reality. Certainly there was some violence and sexual excess associated with sacramentarian and anabaptist groups. Anyone familiar with the way in which images were destroyed during the early years of the Reformation knows that there were some cases in which religious ideas precipitated violence. Individual sacramentarians and anabaptists were no less given to criminal acts than the rest of the population of sixteenth century England. William Flower, an opponent of religious ceremonies, for example, assaulted a priest at mass in 1555.²⁹ A young man in the London parish of St. Mary Woolnoth was whipped for throwing his cap at the host during the consecration.³⁰ John Fishcock, a Kent heretic arrested in 1546, threatened to strike the children who carried the pax in religious processions.³¹ London Lollards made a number of threats on the life of a man who arrested a popular Protestant preacher.³² There is some connection between certain opponents of traditional religious ceremonies and ideas about sexual freedom. John Champneis, a rabid opponent of all traditional church services, maintained that God granted his chosen people all of their "bodily necessities" in a way that seemed the very embodiment of the idea of carnal liberty, condoning "theft, fornication, adultery, murder or any other sin."³³ The author of *The Revelation of AntiChriste*, a staple on

lists of forbidden books, insisted that "the people of Christ doth nothing because it is commanded but because it is pleasant and acceptable to them."³⁴

These were isolated instances and unrepresentative statements, however. Even the most hostile witnesses often admitted that sacramentarians were persons of exemplary character. A Catholic priest of the college of Winchester praised Anne Askew, the notorious heretic burned during the reign of Henry VIII, as a devout woman who spent many hours in fervent prayer.³⁵ An anonymous Canterbury man accused of denying transubstantiation was condemned as a "good and holy" person.³⁶ Hugh Latimer reported that the anabaptist George van Paris was a "great man" renowned for his piety.³⁷ Sacramentarian writings traditionally insisted on the necessity of a stern sexual ethic. Many heretics felt that it "was not convenient for a priest to hear the confession of a woman."³⁸ Early Protestant drama, like the anonymous *Hye Way to the Spittel House*, condemned clerical licentiousness.³⁹ The anonymous author of the *Supplication to the Poor Commons*, a popular Protestant pamphlet written during the reign of Henry VIII, complained that clerical vows of celibacy were meaningless because unaccompanied by sexual restraint.⁴⁰ The author of the mid-century poem *Robin Conscience* adopted a puritanical attitude toward female sexuality, even condemning the dying of hair in a passage reminiscent of Tertullian.⁴¹ Far from being violent, many anabaptists and sacramentarians were pacifists. The so-called "Twelve Conclusions," a fifteenth century Lollard document that enjoyed a wide circulation during the first years of the Reformation, contained a statement of pacifism.⁴² Anne Askew maintained that the King had no right to impose the death penalty for crimes because "neither Christ or his apostles put any creature to death."⁴³ The author of the *Revelation of AntiChriste* maintained that "no man is compelled but of his own will, therefore Christ teacheth that a rebel should not be killed but avoided."⁴⁴

These citations indicate that the fear that changes in or a complete abandonment of traditional religious rituals would result in unrestrained violence or sexual licentiousness was rarely, if ever, based on observations of what opponents of traditional church ceremonies said or did. They lacked a firm basis in reality, but that doesn't mean that they should be rejected as insignificant, especially in view of the fact that they had a considerable influence on the resistance to anti-ceremonial ideas that affected the final form Protestantism would take in England. The psychohistorian knows that fantasy can have as important an effect in history as reality. What are the roots of these fears and how can we understand and evaluate them?

In a 1907 paper prepared for the *Zeitschrift fur Religionspsychologie*, Freud pointed out some similarities between religious ceremonies and obsessional rituals, both of which "seem to have the significance of defensive and protective measures" designed to ward off repressed instinctual impulses.⁴⁵ Admittedly, this has never been one of Freud's

most widely accepted ideas, probably because, as Philip Reiff explained, it has the disturbing effect of transforming piety "all too easily into neurosis."⁴⁶ But even if it fails to consider the positive role of religious ceremonies to religious persons themselves, or fails to appreciate the rich and meaningful symbolism of much ritual, the analogy does say something very important about the appeal of religious rituals. Pointing out their unconscious attraction need not negate their conscious importance. The analogy has important implications for historians who want to understand periods of religious change because if, in some persons, religious ceremonies fill unconscious needs, the prospect of abandoning them will provoke fear and even panic. Helene Deutsch reported a case, typical in psychoanalytic literature, describing her efforts to induce a young woman, whose sense of guilt enslaved her to a number of compulsive rituals, to abandon her obsessional acts. Every time the suggestion was made, the patient experienced "a severe oppressive condition" accompanied by anxiety.⁴⁷ The evidence indicates that something similar provoked some of the fear described in the sixteenth century sources cited here.

Both Bishop Hooper and Nicholas Lesse described the relationship between adoption of anti-ceremonial religious ideas and the outbreak of disorder as one of cause and effect. The abandonment of religious ceremonies in favor of an anabaptist or sacramentarian religion of the spirit would produce, they implied, a change in the personality of a Christian man, transforming him into a beast. This is exactly what obsessional neurotics feel will happen to them if they abandon their compulsive rituals. They use the prescribed routine of ritual to hold their instinctual impulses in check, to protect themselves against the dangers of spontaneous actions. The idea that these repressed impulses stem from the anal-sadistic phase of psychosexual development was established in the earliest psychoanalytic literature. The same anal-sadistic orientation is clearly seen in the types of fears expressed in the sixteenth century sources. Out of all of the possible real and imagined consequences of abandoning religious ceremonies, opponents of the anabaptists and sacramentarians stress violence, obstinacy, and general lack of control. All have roots in the anal phase, when the demands for bowel training necessary for civilized life introduce the young child to an environment that demands control of the instincts, while encouraging obstinacy and even rebellion. Both Standish and More significantly single out obstinacy as an important consequence of abandoning traditional ideas about the Scriptures in English. The word "obstinare," as Otto Fenichel points out, expresses the idea of holding a position in spite of someone else, an effective form of defiance used by young children who tighten the sphincter muscles in response to parental demands to empty the contents of the bowel.

Bishop Gardiner's complaint that opponents of rituals were advocates of "liberty of tongue" suggests that rituals were used as a defense against severe oral needs as well. In view of recent studies by his-

torians of childhood indicating the prevalence of oral deprivation as a distinguishing characteristic of the first three years of childhood in the sixteenth century, the opposition to anti-ceremonial heresies may have been more deeply rooted in the oral than in the anal phase of psychosexual development. Many rituals, like the ceremonies surrounding the dispensation of the eucharist, had roots in the oral phase. Much of their appeal stems from that fact. The records dating from the early sixteenth century cited above do not, however, provide the kind of clear documentation of oral aggression that they do for instinctual impulses rooted in the anal phase, but in-depth biographical data for a sixteenth century Englishman like Thomas More offers great promise in this area. More was never able to abandon the belief that the body of Christ was actually eaten in the Eucharist and he condemned heretics for doing so.⁴⁸ The Lollards, of course, had long opposed transubstantiation and the Anabaptists, with their insistence on the importance of adult baptism, posed a threat to medieval catholic rituals by undermining the primacy of the eucharist among sacraments.

All of this indicates that religious ceremonies associated with medieval Catholicism enjoyed an appeal that went beyond the conscious for many sixteenth century Englishmen. They seem to have served as defensive measures in the ego's struggle with repressed instincts resulting from fixations of the libido at the anal and oral phase of psychosexual development. The anabaptist and sacramentarian ideas that advocated abandonment of traditional rituals in favor of a religion based on Scripture provoked anxiety. Behind the anxiety was the anticipated "return of the repressed," the fear of acting on repressed impulses previously held at bay with the aid of religious ceremonies. This interpretation neither negates the importance of Dickens's contention that Lollardy was theologically inadequate or MacFarlane's insistence that its association with a disreputable sector of English society prevented its general acceptance. It merely indicates the need to consider other factors. It seems that there was an unconscious factor involved in the resistance to these two radical forms of Protestantism in sixteenth century England. It is impossible to evaluate its importance without more intensive investigation. Dickens himself has insisted that the most complete history of the English Reformation cannot be written until thoroughly researched local studies have been completed. The same thing applies to the psychoanalytic study of the period. This short examination of some suggestive implications in familiar manuscript material merely points out the need for more intensive biographical study of Reformation leaders to determine the importance of the unconscious element in their lives. Like other applied psychoanalytic studies, psychohistory often raises more questions than it answers. Much of its value comes from these indications for further study. Until this is done, we will never have the fullest possible picture of what happened in sixteenth century England or any other historical period.

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45. Sigmund Freud, "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed., James Strachey, 9 (London: Hogarth Press, 1959): 115-29.
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47. Helene Deutsch, *Psychoanalysis of the Neuroses*, trans. W. D. Robson-Scott (London: Hogarth Press, 1951), p. 193.
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INFANTICIDE IN FLORENCE: NEW SOURCES AND FIRST RESULTS

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It is increasingly becoming evident that high rates of infanticide, both of legitimate and illegitimate children, may not be the sole province of Asian history, and that the whole question of infanticide in the West, from antiquity right through the nineteenth century, requires an enormous amount of detailed reexamination of sources, both literary and quantitative. Richard Trexler here begins a discussion, which will be continued in future issues of this Journal, of infanticide in the West, with new material drawn from Renaissance Florence as his focal point.

How many infants, born against their [mothers'] will, are thrown into the arms of fortune! Look at the hospitals! How many more of them are killed before they sip the mother's milk! How many are given over to the forests, how many to the wild animals, and to the birds! So many perish in these ways that, everything considered, the least of [these women's] sins is having followed their appetite for lechery.*

Male-dominated Western Christian society has traditionally associated infanticide with sexual or cultural inferiority. When it has reared its head within Europe, child-killing has been regarded almost exclusively as a female crime, the result of woman's inherent tendency to lechery, passion, and lack of responsibility. Infanticide was an unnatural act in a society whose soldiers and merchants were busy exporting the idea that the individual human life was valuable. What man, a seventeenth century writer asked, would eat his child? Only women were capable of that.¹

Oriental or primitive societies' control of the infant population was

more comprehensible. They were godless and culturally inferior. Missionaries appealed to the shocked sensibilities of Europeans to raise money to buy Chinese infants so their souls and bodies could be saved. Ironically, the good people of Europe contributed to the cause at the very time when Europe could no longer ignore its own infanticide. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a very significant literature addressed itself to the widespread abandonment and murder of European children.² Missionary pleading and welfare concern were two ships passing in the night, ignorant of each other. Despite all the evidence, it was as if infanticide in the West *could not be*.

The act was common among ancient Roman and Germanic forbears and, presumably, would have been difficult to suppress among the scattered populations of the Middle Ages. Its diffusion in the eighteenth century suggests that child-killing had been practiced in the intervening millennium. The folklore was there: old women who suffocated children;³ ghost-children haunting their murderers;⁴ the myth of the unwed mother who abandons or murders;⁵ the good women who guarded the cribs.⁶ In the high and late Middle Ages translucent projections of infanticide appeared in judicial motifs: the Jewish ritual murder trials and the prosecutions of witches. A *prima facie* case does, therefore, exist for continuity. Nevertheless, most scholars have been as ready to consider infanticide culturally alien as has the general population. Some writers think infanticide was rare in the Middle Ages because Christian idea and law was incompatible with it.⁷ Tertullian and other church fathers had spoken against it. Constantine, Theodosius, and Justinian had codified prohibitions. Germanic chieftains had stricken infanticide from the rights of free men.⁸

Its "reappearance" in the eighteenth century provided not a challenge to this view, but a confirmation. Eighteenth century Europe was religiously divided and secular in its cultural tone. Infanticide, so runs this view, was to be expected.⁹ While recent scholarship has sought more prosaic factors for modern infanticide, few have considered the possibility of substantial infanticide during the preceding centuries.

The present paper presents two pieces of quantifiable evidence which suggest that infanticide was a fact of life in the dominion of Florence during the quattrocento and cinquecento. It adds to a mosaic of studies (Nürnberg,¹⁰ Nördlingen,¹¹ Paris and the Ile-de-France¹²) on infanticide which will one day provide a better idea of the facts of infants in Western society.

Widespread infanticide and abandonment of children were responsible for the spread of founding homes in the late Middle Ages. It had been so during the early Carolingian period (in 787 the first foundling home was established in Milan because there were as many infanticides as there were infants born out of wedlock);¹³ it was thus at the end of the twelfth century: Innocent III instituted the hospital of the Santo Spirito in Rome because so many women were throwing their children into the Tiber.¹⁴ Florence was no different. The earliest laws

avored these asylums because men feared the alternative. Petitioning in 1294, a communal commission told the government that the asylum of San Gallo was "utile and necessary to the salvation of the souls of the persons of the city and *contado* of Florence, and of the whole province of Tuscany . . . to avoid the many crimes which were committed against infants, and also to sustain the poor. . . ."15 A century and a half later, the rector of the new foundling institution of the Innocenti proclaimed that "if the receptacle of this hospital does not remain in operation, what will without doubt happen is that the majority of these children will be punished with death."16 In 1484 the same institution warned of the infamy and "great inconveniences" which would result if the home were closed. "Many children would soon be found dead in the rivers, sewers, and ditches, unbaptized," and therefore condemned to an eternity without God.¹⁷ Contemporaries viewed foundling homes as the answer to a major social problem.¹⁸ The great size of the Innocenti (started in 1419, opened in 1445) reflected the scope of the problem which Boccaccio had described in withering terms almost a century before.

Wet-nursing, however, itself fed on death. The only good *balia* was one whose child had died and made her milk available. Thus a procurement agent of the late *trecento* complained: "It seems the world is emptied of [nurses], for not one is available. Their children, who were expected to die, have recovered."¹⁹ Death was good for one child, bad for the nurse's. In a happier vein, the proctor wrote: "I found one in the church square with fresh milk, two months [after giving birth]. . . . And she promised that if her infant girl who is on the brink of death, died tonight, she will come [to me] after the burial."

Animal milk was not used in these times, but otherwise, foundling homes operated in much the same way in the Middle Ages as they did in the nineteenth century. Having arrived in the house, infants were promptly sent into the countryside with a wet-nurse (*balia*) who cared for the infant as long as her supply of milk lasted.

These institutionalized *balie* entered into a contract with the hospital or foundling home much as the wet-nurses did with private patrons in the city. Nursing reliability was absolutely critical, for any interruption of care meant the death of a helpless infant. From an early point, the commune took an interest in their behavior. In 1344, the wages and contractual obligations of wet-nurses were under communal supervision. By 1415 legislation forbade *balie* from relinquishing their charges before they were thirty months old. Violators were either fined or publicly whipped.²⁰

Before mid-quattrocento and the opening of the Innocenti, however, there is no acceptable method for judging their performance. Some indication that the *balia*'s market for her product was good and that a new foundling institution was badly needed may be gained from the data in the Florentine Catasto of 1427. In the city at this date, at age 0, there were 114.60 boys per 100 girls, as compared to the 105 males

of age 0 in the normal population. At age 1, there were 118.43, as compared to ca. 101 @ 100 in the normal population. The disparity holds; at age 2: 119.28; 3: 119.50; 4: 119.42.²¹ In the whole dominion, the figure for those 0-4 years old was 119.72. The ratio for the rich was still more striking. Those assessed more than 400 florins had a ratio of 124.56.²² Whatever the qualifications which would reduce such startling figures, it seems evident that the rural areas had proportionately fewer girls than the city, and that in both areas, the number of girls was abnormally low. In future decades the nunneries would absorb increasing numbers of unwanted girls from the more prosperous families of the city, and the Innocenti would care for large numbers of bastards of established families and for the legitimate children of the poor.²³

A key indice ascertaining the balie's performance with infants after the Innocenti opened in 1445 is the death rate of children, distinguished by sex. Over the nine year period from the Asylum's opening until February 12, 1454, 41.1% of those entering were boys, and 58.9% girls.²⁴ The ratio for deaths till November 1452 slightly favored girls: 43.1% of total mortalities were boys, 56.9% were girls. The slightly lower death rate for girls reflects their greater biological resiliency in the earlier years.²⁵

Once a distinction is made between deaths in the hospital and at *balia*, however, a significant fact emerges. A disproportionate number of girls died with wet-nurses and a surprisingly high number of boys perished in the hospital.

TABLE I²⁶
DEATHS BEFORE THE FIRST BIRTHDAY, 1445 TO 1452

<i>Entered In</i>	<i>Hospital</i>		<i>Wet-Nurses</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>
1445	1	3	1	11
46	5	2	2	5
47	6	4	7	8
48	9	3	10	15
49	3	9	10	18
1450	2	11	10	11
51	21	12	7	11
	47	44	47	79

During these years, 42% of those dying before their first birthday perished in the hospital, 58% with wet-nurses. Of those dying in the hospital, only 43% were girls, even though they made up an average of 58.9% of the entrants. If one had predicted deaths commensurate with these entry ratios assuming an even distribution of sexes among hospital and wet-nurses, 53.6 girls would have died rather than the 44 who did. The greater resistance to disease of girls in this first year might account for part of this disparity. But that same female resil-

iency and male vulnerability must have accompanied the two sexes into the countryside. Even if we postulate that girls should have died at the same rate as boys when with the wet-nurses, however, the disparity remains: as against 74.2 predicted female deaths, 79 actually died.

The most evident cause of this phenomenon would be that a disproportionate number of girls were sent to *balie*. If, for example, infant boys made up a majority of those whose fathers either subvented the hospital or promised to redeem the child, or at least left some identifying mark encouraging hospital administrators to think that the child might be reclaimed, the hospitallers would have exercised more caution in assigning them to wet-nurses. While the matter does need further study, mid-quattrocento records make clear that the abandonment of boys more often led fathers to write explanatory and promissory letters than was the case with girls.²⁷

According to this hypothesis, hospitallers would have had more reason to preserve the lives of boys than of girls, since to redeem a child, one had to pay the cost of upkeep. They could do this by assigning such boys to trusted wet-nurses who resided in the asylum rather than outside the city. This would have resulted in boys being in the hospital more often and for longer periods than females, under the eyes of administrators and close to doctors when the need arose. The reverse situation in the countryside shows the vulnerability of girls in that setting.

This hypothesis could be tested by a painstaking analysis of the movement of the different sexes. If it is wrong and the sex distribution was even as between hospital and countryside, then the explanation lies in preferential treatment of infant boys by the *balie*, rather than by the hospital.²⁸ Only the lawyer would want to distinguish in this situation between infanticide and malicious neglect. Disproportionately high death rates of female infants reflect either a social or individual premeditation in the quality of care. The same prejudice in abandoning female infants to the foundling homes (ca. 60%) was at work in their care. Antifeminism was a matter of life and death.

In mid-quattrocento, the rate of admissions to the Innocenti had been between 50 and 100 children a year. The hospital was large, the matriculation small. By the early cinquecento much had changed. A large residual population of innocents over ten years of age now shared the premises with the infants. Annual admissions ran about 500 infants.²⁹ In the 1520s, the city was plagued by hordes of abandoned young children too old for admission to the Innocenti, too young for productive lives.³⁰ Worse, the older foundling institutions in the dominion of Florence were closing their doors, and no accessible child-refuge was available for thousands of destitute people in the countryside.³¹ Finally, the period of the Italian Wars was one of almost intolerable military turmoil in the countryside. Is it purely fortuitous that in the early sixteenth century, the otherwise steady sex ratios in Florentine baptisms suddenly show a lack of girls?³²

The child-politics of this period deserve a separate study. But even at this primitive state of our knowledge, it is not difficult to predict what will be found. The countryside was increasingly turned into a milk farm for the Innocenti. In the villages of Tuscany, this putting out system could only result in neglect and death for the innocents of Florence, the children of wet-nurses,³³ and those for whom no refuge could be found in the countryside. It was common to abandon one child in order to sell milk to another.³⁴ Can it be doubted that the same circumstance stimulated young girls to seek pregnancy in order to sell their milk?³⁵

In this setting around 1500 the bishop of Fiesole (Florentine Dominion), perhaps encouraged by the Innocenti and government of Florence, issued a constitution setting fines and punishments for those involved in the suffocation of infants. Further, his vicar issued a decree against those who kept infants in bed with them.³⁶ In the same year, the bishop began to absolve laymen from the excommunications they had incurred through the crime and sin of suffocating. In 1517 the Florentine synod spoke out not only against parents but "others" who suffocate children. The following table summarizes the absolutions from 1500 to 1540.³⁷

A substantial amount of infanticide was being practiced in the diocese of Fiesole; there are simply too many cases to suggest that most of them dealt with accidental, unintentional suffocations.³⁸ Almost all of the absolved parties were married couples. No unmarried females were heard. A solid majority of female infants died in all decades but the last, when male deaths predominated. The absolutions were highest in the 1530s, a period of almost continual civil war in the countryside. These few statements summarize what is certain. Beyond this lies uncertainty.

The sudden appearance of these absolutions for suffocation does not necessarily imply an increase in incidence. Other historians, seeing the beginnings of secular prosecution of infanticide at the end of the fifteenth century, have concluded that the crime was undergoing a dramatic upswing.³⁹ Readers of this article, seeing the congruence of the episcopal absolutions with the German evidence, might conclude the same. At this point there is simply no evidence for this. Prosecution and incidence of a crime are not automatically related.

What is certain is that in the late fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe, homicide against children was becoming a distinct judiciable crime. The criminous groups were two: the imperial and royal law attacked the unwed mother. If she had concealed pregnancy and birth, the death of her infant was presumptively infanticide.⁴⁰ The law of the church attacked witches. Infanticide was far and away the most common social crime imputed to the aged witches of Europe by the demonologists.⁴¹

Before this time, most of Europe was without the requisite legal means and, perhaps to some extent, the moral conviction to prosecute

TABLE II
EPISCOPAL ABSOLUTION OF SUFFOCATION AT FIESOLE, 1500-1540, BY SEX

1500.	M F		M F		M F		M F		M F	
	5 & 2 = 7		1510.	4 & 4 = 8	1520.	0 & 0 = 0	1530.	(3 & 2)† =		
1.	1 3 4		1.	6 5 11	1.	0 0 0	1.	5 3 8		
2.	0 0 0		2.	6 6 12	2.	4 8 12	2.	4 1 5		
3.	1 5 6		3.	2 9 11	3.	(3 3)*	3.	5 4 9		
4.	2 7 9		4.	2 0 2	4.	books	4.	13 8 22 & 1§		
5.	1 1 2		5.	5 4 9	5.	missing books	5.	12 11 23		
6.	0 0 0		6.	2 1 3	6.	missing books	6.	7 9 16		
7.	0 0 0		7.	0 3 3	7.	missing books	7.	8 5 14 & 1§		
8.	1 0 1		8.	1 2 3	8.	missing books	8.	6 5 11		
9.	10 6 16		9.	2 1 3	9.	missing (8 14)**	9.	9 8 17		
							1540.	(2 1)†		
	21 24			30 35		15 25		74 57 & 2		
Totals: M:	140									
F:	141									
Total:	281									

* Jan. 1-Feb. 20.

** Jan. 1-Sept. 13.

† Sept. 16-Dec. 31.

‡ Jan. 1-July 30.

§ Sex unknown.

for infanticide, a word rarely if at all used before the later sixteenth century.⁴² It was also without the medical means to determine the cause of a new born infant's death. Autopsies on infant corpses were unknown before the mid-seventeenth century.⁴³

The law and conscience of Europe in the sixteenth century vented its force upon old women and unwed mothers. There was no attention given to married women and their spouses. How could one prove infanticide within the walls of the family home? Who would want to?⁴⁴ It was more reasonable to assume that witches passed through locked doors in the dead of night to suffocate infants than to believe that man and wife, whether parents or *balii*, would do such a thing. The inquisitor of Como not only blamed witches for deaths at home. He blamed the high death rates of the foundlings on them too.⁴⁵ To the modern, the witch craze and the terrible punishments inflicted on unwed mothers must appear in part as the projection onto unsocial elements of a crime no longer psychically tolerable within the social and familial order.

There were, of course, recriminations against those couples who deserted their children, but little complaint that the family, the womb of the social whole, conspired against itself (parricide), or against the commonwealth (homicide). The unmarried mother was forced to go to all lengths to prove she had not been pregnant. If this were proved she claimed that the child was stillborn. If this were disproved, she would state that the child suffocated or was accidentally overlain. The married couple would rarely need to involve themselves. With little or no risk, parents or wet-nurses could claim accidental suffocation. Or they could indict old women. The peculiar merit of the episcopal absolutions of Fiesole is that they almost all involved married couples.

The legal foundations for absolutions were few: first, since early in the trecento the bishop of Fiesole, like his Florentine brother, had reserved to his curia absolutions of parental suffocations.⁴⁶ This meant that a penitent confessing to his priest that his child had suffocated or been suffocated—in the latin, the active voice was always used—could not be absolved by that priest in the forum of conscience (*forum poli*) until the penitent had gone to the bishop's vicar to be absolved in the external forum of the curia (*forum fori*). As old as this reservation was, however, the *nota causarum* or daily court diaries of the see of Fiesole—extant for the trecento and early quattrocento and again from 1495 on—record no absolutions until 1500.

Secondly, canon law and episcopal constitutions of Florence excommunicated those parents, and after 1517, those third parties who kept infants in bed with them. This created levels of guilt and presumption. If the child died in bed the guilt, suspicion, and punishment were greater than if it died in a cradle.⁴⁷

The third legal basis for absolution was that until the sixteenth century the secular forum could rarely prosecute infanticide, for it

could not prove premeditation (*dolus*). The process of accepting concealed pregnancy as presumptive evidence was slow;⁴⁸ in the period with which this paper deals, Florence had no such law. Like France and the Baltic countries, the city on the Arno simply left prosecution to church courts except in those unusual circumstances where infanticide was "atrocious," public, and scandalous, and where a suspect was present.⁴⁹ The forum of the church dealt with what the canonist Hostiensis called the ambiguity of duplicity.⁵⁰

Finally, canon law alone had a specific rubric "on those who kill children."⁵¹ True, Roman law included specific single laws against infanticide (without using the word), but the law was equivocal at several points.⁵² In any case, Florentine communal judges only prosecuted *ex officio* violations of the municipal law. And the Florentine statutes possessed no specific law against either abortion or infanticide.⁵³ Without forensic medicine, without a law of presumptive infanticide, without municipal law, it was left to the church to defend the infant. And yet, if the Fiesolan registers are any guide, it did nothing for centuries. Infants had no natural defenders. Their death rarely provoked suits by third parties for damages and rarely effected testamentary dispositions.

What then accounts for the sudden activity around 1500: the new constitution, a vicarial decree, then the absolutions? The impetus may have come in part from the commune or from the Innocenti, which knew better than anyone else which *balie* had repeated "misfortune" with their charges. A painstaking comparison of the names of the absolved with the names of the wet-nurses of the Innocenti could help to settle this point. Short of this, however, it is possible to partly determine the origins of the suffocated children through internal evidence.

The evidence suggests that the majority of the children were not the offspring of the absolved. In general, it seems that the notaries specified when that was the case. Over the whole period, 23 sets of parents (of 281 cases) were absolved in cases involving 14 girls and 9 boys. In the period 1531-40, when the notaries' formula was most standardized, only 14 children (seven of each sex) of a total of 128 were said to be the children of the absolved. There are points in the documents which seem to question the assumption that most of the children originated elsewhere. In 1503, for example, all six deceased were listed as the children of the absolved, and five of the six were females.⁵⁴ Still, considering the clear distinction made in the canon and civil law between parricide and homicide, and the fact that the notarial form indicating parentage, "*eorum filia*," was in use, one would have to conclude that the majority of cases dealt with children other than the parents'.

The only other specification in the documents as to the origins of the children was the occasional note that the child had been at wet-nurse. In two cases, the absolved parties were serving as nurse for a

private party. Thus a Lombard and his wife of Figline were absolved of suffocating the daughter of the Florentine Tommaso di Lorenzo de' Martelli—the one mention of a Florentine father.⁵⁵ A wet-nurse and her husband were absolved of suffocating Angelia, the daughter of a man of Rubana.⁵⁶ In two other cases the suffocators and their victims were definitely associated with the Innocenti: Donna Betta, a wet-nurse in the Innocenti, was absolved of the suffocation of a female innocent.⁵⁷ A couple from the village of Ponte Sogno was absolved from the suffocation of another girl.⁵⁸

Presumably, the older the child the better the chance he or she was a foundling, for parents tend to suffocate infants before they cry.⁵⁹ Thus the age of the infants might be of help. Unfortunately, only in the early years when the notarial formula was still uncanonized, do such odd notes as age and names of the decedents appear. Those that do are older: five different children were listed as either four, three, or two months old during these early years, while not one was listed as newborn, and not one child was said to have died unbaptized. A further hint that the victims were not (new born infants) can be found in the notes for the years 1504–1513, when the scribes made some attempt to distinguish between infants and children. Sixteen were called *infanti* or *infantule*; 52 others were designated *pueri* or *puelle*.⁶⁰

The social origins of the absolved do not rule out the possibility that the wives absolved were mostly wet-nurses. Some were so poor that the vicar excused them from the modest pecuniary penalty usually levied.⁶¹ Only a rare couple had a family name, and the recorded occupations of the husband were humble. In the period 1532–1540, 14 occupations were listed. Eleven were field laborers. One laborer worked with horses, another was called simply a laborer, and the thirteenth was a nuncio of the town of Turichio. With the exception of the three *balie* listed above, the women were identified only as wives, with the regular appellation “domina.” Perhaps this latter derives from their nursing profession. It certainly cannot refer to their humble familial circumstances.

The absolutions give no further information on the provenience of the couples or the infants. Nor do they contain many specifics on the conditions of death. In three cases, the vicar's inquiry into the question of premeditation made its way into the record, and all disclaimed intent. One child was suffocated by his parents in bed when they were not paying attention.⁶² Another couple insisted that they suffocated their child “accidentally while sleeping, and without any consciousness on their part of killing.”⁶³ The third couple stated that they were awake with the child at their side when he died; he had not suffocated.⁶⁴

No mention was made in any case of medical consultation, let alone of surgical dissection. The vicar had no choice but to accept the penitents' denial of homicide, and mete out penance according to his judg-

ment of guilt or negligence. To complicate matters, he was prepared to waive the one safeguard which the church—not the commune or the civil law—had long insisted upon, the prohibition against infants being in bed with elders. In the one such case the vicar licensed a Florentine couple to keep their child in bed with them, but burdened their consciences in the event they did not use due caution.⁶⁵

The place of death was only mentioned one time, but when it was, the child had died in a bed, and not in a crib. Consequently, though the documents refer regularly to *absolutio a suffocatione*, it would seem that these cases of suffocation refer only to overlying in bed, a violation of canon and episcopal law, and did not include suffocation incurred in cribs. The active voice always used to describe the deaths (the absolved suffocated the child) would also seem to indicate death by overlying, rather than asphyxiation by the covers.

Accidents did happen, and to guard children, Florentine craftsmen of the cinquecento built a contraption called an *arcuccio*, little arch, which fitted over a crib and prevented the covers from smothering the child. The crib itself had a semicircular hole on the side through which the nurse could breastfeed the infant. The advantage was that the child could be kept in bed alongside the nurse with no danger of suffocation from nurse or covers.⁶⁶

The existence of the *arcuccio* suggests that it filled a need for nurses concerned about suffocation. Yet one should not jump to the conclusion that accidental death, and not premeditation, was the problem solved by the *arcuccio*. It is possible that nurses used them to avoid the suspicion of the authorities, who wanted to deprive suspected nurses of the excuse of accident as well as to protect children. At a later time, nurses were required to keep their charges in these boxes, *under pain of excommunication*.⁶⁷ In an age when medical jurisprudence concerning infanticide was still unreliable, the *arcuccio* became another mechanism used by the ecclesiastical authority—not the duchy of Florence—to permit presumption of infanticide.

These absolutions raise two final questions. First, what was gained by bringing these couples before the episcopal court? After all, the sentence of the court could not involve the shedding of blood, and there is absolutely no evidence that any of the couples was handed over to the secular courts. In fact, the bishop's absolution (*absolutio in foro fori*) seems to have amounted to a guarantee against prosecution in the secular forum.⁶⁸ The curia did not benefit financially from the absolutions. What then was gained?

The answer lies in the penance itself. In roughly half the cases, absolved couples paid not only a sum of money to a specific charitable organization, but a public penance as well.⁶⁹ Usually this involved standing in front of the parish church on the next Sunday or holy day with candle in hand, showing a crib as an emblem of their sin, and wailing their repentance.⁷⁰ They remained there from the first bell until the Introitus, during the time local people arrived for Mass. The

penalty was difficult to avoid, for the parish priest was permitted to complete the absolution *in poro poli* only upon fulfillment of the public penance. Such a procedure involved the humiliation of the couples and of their older children, many of whom had been implicated in the suffocations and been absolved. The purpose of the curial actions was to discipline the faithful by exposing them to the ostracism and humiliation of fellow villages. The striking widescale use of public penance in an age when, according to all authorities, its use had all but disappeared, is but another earnest of the seriousness with which infanticide was viewed by authorities.⁷¹

Finally, it may be asked if these documents show the extent of infanticide in the dominion of Florence. Unfortunately, they simply indicate that infanticide against one's own and against other children was common enough. The trouble lies in the lack of identification of the couples involved. If the majority of the cases involved traditional reserve procedures, in which the original impetus came from a confession to a parish priest, then these absolutions must be only a particle of the actual crimes. Few of the faithful would have spontaneously confessed to a dutiful priest a delict which could involve a trip to Florence and public humiliation. A significant number of the absolved, roughly one-tenth, definitely were parents of the suffocated children and probably were absolved through this route. If on the other hand the government and Innocenti were fostering prosecution of specific wet-nurses, the absolutions would be no guide at all. In that case, the only sure statement would be that the government believed that many of the Innocenti's *balie* were disposing of the foundlings. Either way, the nature of these documents will never allow a statistical measure of infanticide. This must be left to analysis of census, and family reconstructions.⁷²

With all their excruciating uncertainty, these documents retain great value. It is perfectly true that genuine accidental suffocations may be included among them. If the suspicion that suffocations were often premeditated was widespread, so too was the belief among doctors that such suspicions were often unfounded, and that faulty pediatric procedures were to blame.⁷³ It is just as possible that the physiologically unexplained "crib deaths" of today may have had their counterpart in the past. And of course, one may not ignore the recent evidence that foundlings suffer from "emotional dwarfism," and that such factors may explain their pronounced death rates.⁷⁴

Still, the evidence of extensive infanticide may not be gainsaid: the significant number of identified *parents* under suspicion (including in one year the suffocations of five girls and one boy); the sudden appearance of the episcopal procedure along with the new episcopal regulations; the change in the Florentine rubric on parents killing children to cover third parties; and finally the number of children involved.

In the early years of the Innocenti, the fact that too many girls were dying at *balia* led us to conclude that evidence of sexist attitudes did

not stop with the greater abandonment of girls. A still higher percentage of girls died with wet-nurses. In three of the four decades covered by the cinquecento absolutions for suffocation, a clear majority of girls died. Perhaps it can be shown that the latter and the former superfemininity merely reflected the greater number of girls at *balia*. I have stressed that this simply avoids the problem. In law, in the family, and in the foundling home, European society preferred boys. This meant more deaths for infant girls. It preferred adults to infants. The infants died at a frightening pace. How many died of prejudice, of hunger, of disease?

To the charge that public begging damaged the honor of the community, sixteenth-century Franciscans argued that if beggars were removed from the streets, they would be forgotten. Worse, they said, the very heart of charity, the individual contact of two unequal human beings, would be annihilated. The Franciscans lost. Modern Western society has ever since been zealous in hiding inequality from the public eye, whether the destitute poor, its women, or the perished child who only in dreams and tales returns to haunt the guilty. (Societal *cannibalism* was not fit to even contemplate.)

The reason for this lies in a fundamental ambivalence between two central ideological postulates of modern Western man. Beyond all questions of the distribution of property, the effects of plague, drought, and common human desperation, the West for centuries has assumed that its main cultural values were on the one side reason, calculation, order, balance and harmony, on the other the sacredness of each individual life. For centuries the family was viewed as the source of balance and the seat of unlimited generativity. The two are at odds. As Malthus saw, something or someone must consume a generativity threatening order. If fifteenth-century parents could not support the new infant without starving themselves or their older children, they had to act. Charity, said the medieval lawyers in touching on the problem, begins at home.

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REFERENCES

* G. Boccaccio, *Corbaccio*, in *Opere*, ed., C. Segre, (Milan, 1966), p. 1212. I would like to thank colleagues and friends who have helped me in thinking about infanticide, before all Emily Coleman, David Herlihy, Christiane Klapisch, Thomas Krueger, Richard Mitchell, David Ransel, Patricia and John Ruoff, and John Tedeschi. I am also grateful to the direction of the Newberry Library for a grant-in-aid to pursue this research.

1. "Trovosi mai huomo tanto crudele, e che posto fra la pietà, e la fame, si divorasse il proprio figliuolo?" G. D. Tomagni, *Dell'eccellentia de l'huomo sopra quella de la donna* (Venice, 1565), f. 129v. "Mulier," said a contemporary, "non est ad imaginem dei"; Johannes de Nevizanis, *Silva Nuptialis* (Montferrat, 1524), f. 22r. The silence of medieval sources on such "shameful" matters as infanticide comes from the source itself. F. Van Der Meer noted the unwillingness of the loquacious Augustine to address the problem of exposure and infanticide from the pulpit; *Augustine the Bishop* (New York, 1961), p. 189.
2. Recent works with substantial bibliography on modern abandonment and infanticide are W. Langer, *Political and Social Upheaval, 1832-1852* (New York, 1969), pp. 195 f.; "Checks on Population Growth: 1750-1850," *Scientific American* (Feb., 1972): 92-99; E. Shorter, "Illegitimacy, Sexual Revolution, and Social Change in Modern Europe," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2 (1971): 237-72; D. Bakan, *Slaughter of the Innocents* (San Francisco, 1971), provides some interesting insights into the psychology of infanticide and child-battering. The most recent work on contemporary infanticide is J. Léauté ed., *Recherches sur l'infanticide (1955-1965)*, (Paris, 1968).
3. On the transmission of the classical *lamiae* (child-wrecker) to the Christian Middle Ages, see H. C. Lea, *Materials Toward a History of Witchcraft*, 3 vols., (Philadelphia, 1939), 1, pp. 109-14, 172.
4. J. Penlikäinen, *The Nordic Dead-Child Tradition* (Helsinki, 1968).
5. Z. Kumer, *Balada o nevesti detomorilki* (Ljubljana, 1963).
6. C. Girzburg, *I benandanti* (Turin, 1966), pp. 72, 90, 99, 101, 135, 140, 162.
7. J. Noonan, *Contraception* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), pp. 85 ff., contrasts Roman and Christian attitudes toward human life. F. S. Hügel, *Die Findelhäuser und das Findelwesen Europa's* (Vienna, 1863). See also below, n. 9. Tertullian himself asserts how ineffective law and ideal could be: "The laws forbid infanticide but, of all the laws, there is not one eluded more easily or with more impunity," cited in E. Semichon, *Histoire des enfants abandonnés depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris, 1880), p. 292.
8. A precise chronology of the Roman laws on the subject is in Hügel, *Findelhäuser*, pp. 7-13, 24-34. Also Noonan, *Contraception*, pp. 20-29, 85 f. In Iceland, there was significant opposition to abolishing infanticide at the time of the conversion; *Njal's Saga*, ed., M. Magnusson and H. Pálsson, (Baltimore, 1966), chapter 105, p. 226; Ari Thorgillson, *The Books of the Icelanders*, ed., H. Hermannson, (Ithaca, 1930), pp. 66 f.
9. "Dopo l'avvento del Cristianesimo, l'Infanticidio nelle sue diverse forme andò gradatamente diminuendo fino a quasi scomparire. Solo in questi ultimi tempi, con l'offuscarsi delle idee religiosi, esso ricompare più minaccioso; già nel 1905 il Surbled non temeva di scrivere "che più della metà dei bambini concepiti è vergognosamente sacrificata"; "Infanticidio," *Dizionario Ecclesiastico* 2 (Turin, 1955), p. 427.
10. H. Bode, "Die Kindestötung und ihre Bestrafung im Nürnberg des Mittelalters," *Archiv für Strafrecht und Strafprozess* 61 (1914): 430-81.
11. A. Felber, *Unzucht und Kindsmord in der Rechtsprechung der freien Reichsstadt Nördlingen vom 15. bis 19. Jahrhundert* (Bonn, 1961), pp. 94-99.
12. Y.-B. Brissaud, "L'infanticide à la fin du moyen age, ses motivations psychologiques et sa répression," *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 50 (1972): 229-56. In a forthcoming issue of *Annales E.S.C.*, Emily Coleman will publish an important article on the demography of

- the Abbey of St. Germain-des-Prés in the ninth century. It has the provisional title "Peasant Population Control." I would like to thank Professor Coleman for permitting me to read the final draft. For now, see her "A Note on Medieval Peasant Demography," *Historical Methods Newsletter* 5 (1972), pp. 53-58, and "Medieval Marriage Characteristics," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* II (1971), pp. 205-219.
13. A. Pertile, *Storia del diritto italiano* V (Bologna, 1966), pp. 586 f. Also H. Bergues *et al*, *La prevention des naissances dans la famille* (Paris, 1960), p. 166.
 14. Hügel, *Findelhäuser*, p. 47.
 15. *Archivio di Stato, Firenze* (hereafter ASF), *Provvisioni*, 4, f. 8r (May 19, 1294); printed in L. Passerini, *Storia degli stabilimenti di beneficenza e d'istruzione elementare della città di Firenze* (Florence, 1853), pp. 935 ff.
 16. "Nisi receptaculum eiusdem hospitalis vigeret, accideret procul dubio quod maior pars puerorum necis dispendio mulctaretur"; ASF, *Prov.*, 147, ff. 169v-171r (Dec. 29, 1456).
 17. "Le quali senza baptesimo spesse volte et pe fiumi et per cloache et fosse sarebbono trovate morte, se no fussi suto talluogho constituto"; *Ibid.*, 174, ff. 157v-161r (Feb. 18, 1483 *stilus florentinus*).
 18. In mid-nineteenth century, the relation between foundlings and infanticides was a standard evaluative formula; Hügel, *Findel-häuser*, pp. 537 *et seq.*
 19. I. Origo, *The Merchant of Prato* (New York, 1957), pp. 214 ff. I would like to thank Judith Ross for this reference.
 20. G. Masi ed., *Statutum bladii Reipublicae Florentinae* (1348), (Milan, 1934), pp. 135 f, 161 f, 172. For the law forbidding unauthorized surrendering of the infants, see *Statuta populi et communis florentinae* (1415), II, (Fribourg, 1778), pp. 267-270.
 21. David Herlihy was kind enough to send me these figures.
 22. This may be due to a greater willingness and ability of rich couples to keep a male bastard of one partner than a female illegitimate.
 23. Leonardo Bruni is said to have convinced the city fathers to build the Innocenti by arguing its practical utility in absorbing the illegitimate children of their sons and preserving family honor; F. Del Migliore, *Firenze città nobilissima illustrata* (Florence, 1684), p. 308. Perhaps some progress on that score is reflected in the incomplete baptismal records of San Giovanni, starting in mid-quattrocento, where the residents of Florence had their children baptized. The ratio is absolutely normal, about 104 males per 100 females; M. Lastri, *Ricerche sull'antica e moderna popolazione della città di Firenze per mezzo dei registri del battistero di S. Giovanni dal 1451 al 1774*, (Florence, 1775). For the higher ratios in the early sixteenth century, see below. See also C. Klapisch, "L'enface en Toscane au début du XVe siècle," to be published in a forthcoming number of *Annales de démographie historique*. I thank Mme. Klapisch for permitting me to read this paper before publication.
 24. *Archivio degli Innocenti, Firenze* (hereafter AIF) 14, 1, f. 65v.
 25. However, a comparison with some modern mortality rates in the first year shows that overall, too many females were dying.

	overall	males	females
Sweden	15.4 @ 1,000	17.6	13.1
Italy	41.8	45.7	37.8
Spain	41.6	46.0	36.9
Greece	40.4	43.2	37.4

"Infant Mortality," *Demographic Yearbook* 19 (1967).

The comparable figures for those Florentine Innocents dying before their

first birthday between 1445 and 1452 are overall: 410.2; 432.3 males; 394.7 females.

26. Based on *AIF*, 14, 1.

27. Given the type of bookkeeping in the Innocenti, it would be most involved to determine average percentages per sex in the Innocenti and at *balia*.

28. The economics of the *balia* need careful study in order to explain when she would find it in her interest or necessary to waste or kill a child. Pay was all-important. Within a few years of opening, innocents died of starvation when pay was not forthcoming; *ASF, Prov.* 147, ff. 169v-171r (Dec. 29, 1456); *Ibid.*, 157, ff. 21v-22v (Apr. 16, 1466). Secondly, the supply of children was critical. In the eighteenth century, the Englishman J. Hanway refuted the argument that the wet-nurses had no financial interest in poisoning infants: The supply from the parish wardens was unlimited. As for the officers, so for the nurses; it was easier to let them die than live; *Letters on the Importance of the Rising Generation of the Laboring Part of our Fellow-Subjects I* (London, 1767), pp. 12 f. The same argument was rendered into poetry by Luigi Tansillo (fl. early cinquecento). If anything were refused the wet-nurses, "Attendete veder le poppe asciutte;" *La Balia* (Vercelli, 1767), p. 23.

29. In 1530, 549 infants entered the Innocenti, and by 1539 the figure had skyrocketed to 961; G. Bruscoli, *L'archivio del R. Spedale di Santa Maria degl'Innocenti di Firenze* (Florence, 1911), p. 11.

30. B. Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina I* (Florence, 1963), p. 433. Duke Cosimo I made serious efforts to deal with the plague of three to ten year olds; Passerini, *Storia*, pp. 800-9; A. D'Addario, *Aspetti della controriforma a Firenze* (Rome, 1972), pp. 465-69.

31. *ASF, Diplomatico, Spedale degli Innocenti*, June 9, 1513. In 1533, Cosimo ordered his rectors in the dominion to receive the foundlings in their hospitals and not send them to Florence; G. Bruscoli, *Lo spedale di Santa Maria degl'Innocenti di Firenze* (Florence, 1900), p. 50.

32.	1451-1470	104.22
	1471-1490	103.93
	1491-1510	104.89
	1511-1530	106.17
	1531-1550	104.31
	1551-1570	104.38

S. Somogyi, "Sulla mascolinità delle nascite a Firenze dal 1451 al 1774," *Rivista italiana di demografia e statistica* 4 (1950): 465.

33. Apparently, wet-nurses could not sell their milk if they were nursing their own child. Thus, the infant of an Innocenti wet-nurse had either died or in turn been put out to another wet-nurse, or been given to the foundling home. On the effects of nursing two infants, see T. Garzoni, *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* (Venice, 1665), pp. 614 f.

34. For examples, see *AIF*, 2, 9 (aa. 1433, 1435). These cases come from the justification records of the infant asylum of San Gallo.

35. In 1857, Finnish authorities complained that in the villages where foundlings were sent, mortality was high, family life was disastrously effected and young girls sought pregnancy to be able to nurse; "Vospitatel'nye doma," *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar* 7 (1892): 275-80. I owe this information to my colleague David Ransel.

36. Earlier Fiesolan synodal reference to suffocations provided no financial penalty. Thus the episcopal constitution referred to in the following quote must be recent: t 1 et s. 8 convertendum secundum et prout disponit constitutio sinodalis de hoc loquens; *Archivio Arcivescovile, Firenze (AAF)*, E.18.30, f. 53r (June 1, 1500). The vicarial decree: "Pro parte Antonii Roberti de Altovitis civis florentini, qualiter eius

uxor peperit quendam puerum masculum quem ipse contra conformam edicti dicti vicarii huc usque tenueret in lecto, propter quod ipsa mulier et dictus Antonius eius vir sententiam excommunicationis noscuntur incurrisse ipso facto ex forma ipsius edicti," *Ibid.*, f. 132v.

37. The synodal modification is in R. Trexler, *Synodal Law, in Florence and Fiesole, 1306-1518* (Vatican City, 1971), p. 127. The Table is based on the *nota causarum* of the see of Fiesole; AAF, E.XVII.30, and *Archivio Vescovile, Fiesole* (AVF), series XIV.III.A, regs. 52-3, 55, 58-9. The first volume, though in the Florentine curial archive, is of Fiesolan provenience. The see of Florence, for unknown reasons, did not regularly absolve suffocations. The only Florentine case I have found is in AAF, E.XVII.34, f. 12r (June 13, 1503). The intermittent volumes in the Fiesolan series (54, 56, 57), are not part of the series in question, but erroneously mixed in.
38. A. Thomson's *Barnkvävningen* (Uppsala, 1960) is the one book I know dealing entirely with suffocation. Thomson believes it would be hasty to consider the suffocations, subject of so much episcopal, papal, and secular concern in Scandinavia, as concealed homicides; see especially pp. 207-15, 230 f. 274.
39. Felber, *Unzucht*, p. 95.
40. Apparently the first law of this type is from Bamberg; J. Kohler and W. Scheel, eds., *Die Bambergische Halsgerichtsordnung* (1507), (Halle, 1902), arts. 43, 44, 156-58. With insignificant additions this was incorporated into the Caroline of Charles V (1521, 1529). There followed a French law on the subject (1556), a Lithuanian (1588), an English law (1623/24), and a Russian. See Kohler's comments on Bode, *Kindes-tötung*, pp. 481-84. *Litovskii statut 1588 goda*, ed., I. Lappo, 2 (Kaunas, 1938), 11, 7; *Litovskii statut v Moskovskom perevode-redaktsii*, ed., I. Lappo, (Iur'ev, 1916), XI, 57. I owe the information on East European laws to Benjamin Uroff.
41. The *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) was important in establishing the nexus witchcraft-infanticide for subsequent demonologists. See part I, questions 1, chap. 13, questions 10, 11; part II, question 2, chap. 1; part III, question 34. The belief of childkilling old women was, of course, extremely old; H. C. Lea, *Materials*, 1, pp. 109-37, 172. A slim article on the tie is M. Murray, "Child-Sacrifice among European Witches," *Man* 18 (1918): 60 ff.
42. Three of the foundation works of medical jurisprudence contain no mention of autopsy to determine the cause of infant death; F. Fedele, *De relationibus medicorum* (Palermo, 1602); Rodericus à Castro, *Medicus-Politicus* (Hamburg, 1614); P. Zacciae, *Questiones medico-legales* (Rome, 1621). The earliest works on the medical problem of infanticide appear in the late 1600s. See the extensive bibliography in "Infanticide," *Dictionnaire de Médecine* 16 (Paris, 1837), pp. 383-91. For some indication of the fantastic methods short of autopsy used in an earlier period, see *Aegidii Bossii patritii mediolanensis . . . tractatus varii, qui omnem fere criminalem materiam . . .* (Venice, 1574), f. 155r. A still earlier (1475) case of determination of death in a two and a half year old child is in "Simon of Trent," *The Jewish Encyclopedia* 11 (New York, 1916), p. 374.
43. In mid-seventeenth century an Italian was still urging that the killing of a child be called infanticide and not abortion; *Dizionario . . . Crusca*, "Infanticidio."
44. Parental love was presumptive evidence against infanticide. Thus Reginald Scot (1584), with only slight exaggeration, accused Bodin of teaching that no mother could be presumed guilty of killing her child unless she was assumed to be a witch; *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, ed., M. Summers, (Great Britain, 1930), lib. 2, c. 5.

45. Lea, *Materials*, I, pp. 391 f.
46. The reservation of 1306 is in R. Trexler, *Synodal Law*, p. 207. In the Florentine episcopal constitutions of 1327, the death of a child under five "per negligentiam vel causam parentum" was a reserve, and a special rubric was dedicated to "those who kill children," *Ibid.*, pp. 64, 126 f. The texts are in C. Guasti and A. Gherardi eds., *I capitoli del comune di Firenze II* (Florence, 1893), pp. 37, 46.
47. "Nota che ogni donna che tiene e figliuoli piccini a lato la notte, atti a potere morire, il nimico di Dio dorme co lei"; S. Bernardino da Siena, *Le predichi volgari inedita*, ed., D. Pacetti, (Siena, 1935), p. 67. If a child died in bed with the parent, "grave guilt" was incurred. If it died in a crib, then there was no guilt, but nevertheless a penance; Niccolò dei Tudeschi, *Lectura super quinque libros Decretalium* (Basel, 1487), X.V.10.3. But in the late quattrocento, Angelo de Clavasio argued that those in extreme poverty could keep their infants in bed with them; *Summa Angelica de casibus conscientiae* (Venice, 1487), f. 162r.
48. The new presumptions applied only to unwed mothers. The Roman law principle was that if premeditation (*dolus*) was doubted, child-homicide could not be prosecuted by that law; Bonifazio de' Vitalani, *De maleficiis*, in *Tractatus diversi super maleficiis* (Venice, 1560), p. 341.
49. For the French, Norman and Angevin tradition, see Brissaud, "L'infanticide," pp. 246 ff; for Scandinavia, Thomson, *Barnkvävningen*, pp. 210 f. The prosecution of a nurse's accidental suffocation of another's child was royal right in England by the early twelfth century: "Si quis alterius puerum, qui vel ei commissus sit ad educandum vel docendum, occidat vel dormiens opprimat, nichilominus reddat quam si virum adultum occidisset"; *Leges Henrici Primi*, ed. L. J. Downer, (Oxford, 1972), p. 270 (88.7). The known cases of Florentine communal prosecutions of infanticides are few enough; G. Brucker ed., *The Society of Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1971), p. 146 (1407); *Diario Fiorentino dal 1450 al 1516 di Luca Landucci*, ed., I. Del Badia (Florence, 1969), p. 267 (1503); *Chronicle of Antonio de San Gallo* (mw. Newberry Library, Case. 6A.28, f. 107v), (1544).
50. *Summa Aurea* (Turin, 1963), X.V.10 (c. 1552).
51. X.V.10. See also II.q.V. 20 and X.V.38.7.
52. D.25.3.4 (the one civil reference to suffocating a new born infant); D. 48.9.1, 5, 9.; C.9.16.8; C.9.17.1; I.6.18.5, 6.
53. Very few towns had specific infanticide or abortion statutes before mid-cinquecento; see J. Kohler, *Studien aus dem Strafrecht. Das Strafrecht der Italienischen Statuten vom 12. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert* (Mannheim, 1896), pp. 206, 333 ff. Statute law, said the lawyers, was to be strictly construed, and "infans autem homo nondum est"; see this cavil in the civil law in mid-cinquecento in the gloss of the Codex by Denis Godefroy (1583), *Codicis Iustiniani . . . libri 12* (Lyon, 1662), C.9.16.8 (p. 778).
54. AVF, reg. 52.
55. AVF, reg. 58, at date Mar. 4, 1527 sf.
56. "Quam puellam tenebant ad alendam"; AAF, E.18.30, f. 108r.
57. AVF, reg. 58, at date Apr. 10, 1529.
58. AVF, reg. 59, f. 470r.
59. P. Brouardel, *L'infanticide* (Paris, 1897), pp. 78, 83.
60. Apparently, this distinction between infant and child was similar to ours. But the word "infant" legally referred to anyone below seven years of age.
61. "Rimissa pena pecuniaria propter paupertatem eorum . . ."; AVF, reg. 55, at dates June 4, 1519, and Jan. 29, 1521sf.
62. AVF, reg. 59, f. 226r.
63. "Ex improvise et inter somnos et absque aliqua eorum conscientia modo

- aliquo necandi dictum Pierum"; AAF, E.XVII.34, f. 12r. This is the one known case of absolution in the Florentine curia.
64. "Asseruit eundem Antonium mortuum assio ipsis vigilantibus et non ex suffocatione. Ideo idem vicarius eos absolvit simpliciter et ita mandavit per se Nicolaum cappelanum Liccii admitti ad divina in ecclesia . . ."; AVF, reg. 59, f. 149v.
 65. "Et insuper dedit et concessit licentiam eidem Antonio [Altoviti] et uxori sue predictum dictum infantem in lecto usque ad tempus non prohibetur retinendi, non obstantibus . . . , conscientiam eorum nisi diligentia debita usa fuerit onerando. Propterea commisit absolutionem in foro poli, quia ipse eum absolvit in foro fori"; AAF, E.XVII.30, f. 132v. For a papal license to a foundling home to ignore this law, see G. F. Viviani, *L'assistenza agli 'esposti' nella provincia di Verona* (1426-1969), (Verona, 1969), pp. 122 f. (1548).
 66. The first reference to the *arcuccio* I have encountered is in Giovannibattista Gelli's *I Capricci del Bottai*, written before 1548; *Dizionario . . . Crusca*, at word. A picture of it is in Thomson, *Barnkvävningen*, p. 219.
 67. In 1732, the Royal Society of London was informed of this fact; *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* VII (1732), p. 528.
 68. *Forum fori* is not completely clear. For an analysis which equates it with the judicial forum (ecclesiastical or secular) as against the *forum poli* (the sacramental forum of conscience), see Jo. de Nevizanis, *Silva Nuptialis*, ff. 14rv.
 69. 57 of 128 cases between 1531 and 1540 included public penance. Some others were to be "the usual," others were left up to the parish priest, some were limited to financial penalties.
 70. "Permaneant ante hostium ecclesie predicte cum cunabula et candela aciensa una die domenica vel vestiva, a primo sono campane usque ad introitum emisse. Et hoc iniuncto eis pro modo culpe penitentia salutari"; AVF, reg. 59, f. 152v. Also "plerando eorum delictum"; *ibid.*, f. 74v. On the use of public penance for suffocation in Scandinavia, see Thomson, *Barnkvävningen*, pp. 233 ff.
 71. In 1553, Duke Cosimo I gave the *operai* of the Innocenti the right to prosecute the *balie* except in atrocious cases meriting capital punishment, when competence was reserved to the ducal judges. The motivation: "Spesse volte è occorso et occorre che per le balie o balii di epsi [puttini] et molti altri anchora si sono commesse et commettono varie et diverse fraude et inganni circa li detti putti, in danno et dishonore di detto spedale et preiuditio d'altre persone"; D'Addario, *Aspetti*, pp. 1469 f. Perhaps this ducal order is a continuation of the same struggle against unexplained infant deaths of which the episcopal absolutions were a first part.
 72. See E. Coleman's study of ninth-century St. Germain, to appear in *Annales*, referred to above, n. 12.
 73. S. Pinaeus, *De virginitatis notis, gravitate, et partu* (1579), (Lyon, 1650), pp. 16 f.
 74. L. I. Gardner, "Deprivation Dwarfism," *Scientific American* (July, 1972): 76.

FREUD AND THE DISCOVERY OF CHILD SEXUALITY

STEPHEN
KERN

The discovery of childhood sexuality, rather than being the sudden inspiration of one man, turns out to have been very much "in the air" at the turn of the century. While examining the massive amount of material on children from that time, Stephen Kern takes us on a tour of late 19th century attitudes, when the nature of childhood was beginning to receive widespread attention from doctors, educators and parents—a major step in the evolution of adult-child relations.

Freud's first systematic presentation of a developmental psychology appeared in the *Three Essays* (1905) under the heading "Infantile Sexuality." In the introductory paragraphs, subtitled "Neglect of the Infantile Factor," Freud offered an estimate of contemporary work on the subject and evaluated the historical significance of his own contribution. He wrote:

One feature of the popular view of the sexual instinct is that it is absent in childhood and only awakens in the period of life described as puberty. This, however, is not merely a simple error but one that has had grave consequences, for it is mainly to this idea that we owe our present ignorance of the fundamental conditions of sexual life. A thorough study of the sexual manifestations of childhood would probably reveal the essential characters of the sexual instinct and would show us the course of its development and the way in which it is put together from the various sources. . . . It is true that in the literature on the subject one occasionally comes across remarks upon precocious sexual activity in small children—upon erections, masturbation and even activities resembling coitus. But these are always quoted only as exceptional

events, as oddities, or as horrifying instances of precocious depravity. So far as I know, not a single author has clearly recognized the regular existence of a sexual instinct in childhood; and in the writings that have become so numerous on the development of children, the chapter on "Sexual Development" is as a rule omitted. *Note:* The assertion made in the text has since struck myself as being so bold that I have undertaken the task of testing its validity by looking through the literature once more. The outcome of this is that I have allowed my statement to stand unaltered. The scientific examination of both the physical and mental phenomena of sexuality in childhood is still in its earliest beginnings.¹

This article is a point-by-point evaluation of this summary against the historical record.

Freud's theory of child sexuality is actually a composite of many ideas about human development. In the literature that anticipated Freud's thought, the term "child sexuality" was used in a variety of ways. It could refer to sexual education, sexual feelings in children, masturbation, or intercourse; and sexual relations could involve another child or an adult, even a parent. This essay will focus on those aspects of child sexuality that are essentially biological in origin. No sexual activity is entirely biological. The sucking impulse, though biologically determined, is modified by social attitudes toward nursing as well as the particular psychological disposition of the mother: her feelings about physical pleasure, about her child, and about her own body. Anal erotic pleasure, though contingent on a biological process, is also influenced by parental and social attitudes toward toilet training and personal hygiene. But for the most part, the mainspring of these manifestations of sexuality is biological.

CHILD SEXUALITY: NORMAL AND ABNORMAL

In a note to the paragraph in which Freud announced his original ideas on child sexuality, he cited works by Bernard Perez (1886), Karl Groos (1899), Sanford Bell (1902), and Havelock Ellis (1903) which had made some reference to the subject. In addition to these, however, there were many other works that discussed child sexuality and did *not* consider it as either rare or pathological.

As early as 1867 the English psychologist Henry Maudsley described the manifestation of sexuality in children. He argued the issue as though it had already been widely debated. "It is necessary first to guard against a possible objection that this instinct is not manifested until puberty, with the distinct assertion that there are frequent manifestations of its existence throughout early life, both in animals and children, without there being any consciousness of the aim or design of the blind impulse."² This early reference by Maudsley explicitly denied the child's consciousness of the aim or object of his sexual impulse, but later discussions listed other children and parents as

possible love objects. In his autobiographical novel *The Son of a Servant* (1886) the Swedish playwright August Strindberg recalled an early memory of a seven-year-old boy who was accused of having had sexual intercourse with a girl of the same age. At the age of twelve Strindberg discovered that many children of eight or nine years regularly had intercourse with each other in the woods on the way home from school.

The earliest reference that Freud cited was in Perez, but Freud qualified Perez's position inaccurately by suggesting that he described merely *love* in childhood. In 1886 Perez explicitly referred to the sexual nature of the child's feelings. "It is certain that sensual impulses are felt early in children. . . . The voice of sexuality speaks to the child in a language that is but vaguely understood. One can cite examples of children of three years, and even more of five or six years, in whom this unconscious tendency is manifested towards persons of the opposite sex."³ Two years later Perez explained that "the art of pleasing, which is unconsciously motivated by sexual attraction, already exists in the child." This childish coquetry is especially important in connection with relations between adults and children where "the influence of sex still acts secretly, without our knowledge or theirs."⁴ In 1891 another French psychologist, Paul Sollier, wrote: "More often than one would imagine, the sexual emotion exists well before puberty in normal children, and therefore it is not the direct consequence of it."⁵

In 1892 the American psychologist Earl Barnes complained that most studies of sex focus only on the pathological, and "none of them make any attempt to trace the normal development of sex feeling and ideas in children, nor to examine the sex conditions actually existing in children's lives."⁶ But Barnes himself shied away from discussing the physical manifestations of sexuality in children and quickly turned rather to the less provocative subject of sexual education.

In 1894 appeared Max Dessoir's well-known article "On the Psychology of Sex Life" which described a pre-pubertal "undifferentiated sexual feeling." In some children, he explained, sexual feelings are directed at the opposite sex from the outset, but in most there occurs just before puberty an undifferentiated sexual impulse that is bisexual and can be directed at a person of either sex.

The most detailed and sophisticated pre-Freudian discussion of child sexuality was made in 1894 by the French criminologist Jules Dallemagne in a massive collection of clinical material on the causes and results of hereditary degeneration. It is therefore all the more surprising that Dallemagne, in a chapter entitled "Sexual Pathology," should speak of child sexuality as occurring normally in all children, and not explain it, as was so often done, as a consequence of hereditary degeneration. In some instances, he believed, early sexual feelings are the product of degeneration, but in most children such feelings are normal. "It may perhaps appear audacious," he wrote, "to speak of genital impulses in childhood; however they exist. Perhaps more than

we would believe, they form the foundation of subsequent sexual life." They are "unconscious genital impulses that provoke associations which frequently serve as a substratum for our feelings and volitions. Most of these associations are unstable and remain in the unconscious. The existence of a sub-personality, directing the conscious personality, is manifested in this manner with an undeniable clarity."⁷ Dallemagne thus anticipated Freud's theories of the unconscious, infantile sexuality, censorship, and infantile amnesia. The French psychologist Theodule Ribot, in his widely read *The Psychology of the Emotions* (1896), quoted these views of Dallemagne's as evidence for the existence of child sexuality.

In 1902 Sanford Bell, Fellow at Clark University, published the results of a questionnaire investigation of 2,500 children, "A Preliminary Study of the Emotion of Love Between the Sexes." Bell concluded that sexual love appears about the middle of the third year and then develops in five stages into adult sexual love. In 1903 Havelock Ellis recounted twelve case histories of normal individuals that reveal sexual experiences in childhood. And in 1905 the American psychologist Lewis Terman recorded "the indubitable fact that even in normal, healthy children the sexual instincts are often aroused very early."⁸

The sum of evidence that counters Freud's claim that he was the first to recognize the regular existence of sexuality in children is substantial. By 1905, statements affirming the existence of normal sexual feelings in children were made by Maudsley, Perez, Sollier, Barnes, Dallemagne, Ribot, Dessoir, Bell, Ellis, and Terman.

Short of these discussions of child sexuality, several authors concerned themselves with child love which did not imply the presence of genital excitations. In 1897 Karl Just explained that feelings of love appear in children as a consequence of "the holy power of beauty."⁹ In an early survey of the progress of child study between 1895 and 1903, published in 1906, Wilhelm Ament expressed agreement with Just's essay. Karl Groos's *The Play of Man* (1899) devoted a long chapter to "Love Play" in children. While denying that such play is sexually motivated, Groos gave several examples of play that is preparatory for the adult sexual function. Groos viewed love play, as well as all other forms of play, as the function of an imitative impulse that prepares children for adulthood.

Though there was enough literature that treated child sexuality as normal to refute Freud's claim to originality, far more literature did treat such manifestations as pathological. The literature on child sexuality—in particular masturbation and pre-pubertal intercourse—was extensive at that time.

The German physician Carl Westphal coined the phrase "sexual inversion" in his book of that title in 1870. He believed that the disposition for sexual inversion was innate and therefore present in childhood. This view was adopted by Charcot and Velentin Magnan in their article "Inversion of the Genital Sense" (1882). They described several cases

involving child sexual experiences. One man reported that at the age of six he developed a violent desire to see other boys naked. Another recalled being aroused sexually while sleeping with the family's thirty-year-old maid. In later life he could not have an orgasm without invoking the image of that older woman in her night cap.

In *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), Krafft-Ebing outlined the most widely accepted idea about child sexuality: that it is usually manifested in masturbation, and that whenever it occurs without any physical irritation such as a skin infection, it "may always be regarded as an accompanying symptom of a neuropathic constitutional condition." This unqualified and unremitting judgment guided many highly esteemed physicians who studied child masturbation. In 1891 Friedrich Scholz discussed some children who already at ten experienced love "with all the pathos, all the longing and jealousy of a more mature period."¹⁰ The major cause of such premature feelings, Scholz believed, was impure pictures that poison the mind.

Prudishness and fear of sexuality did not prevent discussion of the subject. Enlightened physicians recognized the need for understanding as a first step towards detection and control. Freud's future student and colleague Wilhelm Stekel published on child sexuality in 1895. He reported several cases in which children, in all other respects normal, found their way to performing intercourse "instinctively, along the path of the development of the sex drive." One of the patients reported that between four and five he found himself driven to perform intercourse with his young playmate. "We lay on the ground and performed coitus, and I was overwhelmed by new sensations of pleasure. Which one of us gave the first sign I do not know. It compelled us like a higher power." Such occurrences, Stekel believed, were immoral, but they were more common than most people thought. "If you ask any number of intelligent people to reflect, almost one out of every two will remember certain acts in his childhood, which were previously not understood, but which on closer reflection he will see as the first beginnings of the sex drive."¹¹ Stekel called upon physicians to understand the great frequency of sexual behavior in childhood, and then apply that knowledge to help parents prevent it.

In 1895 the German pediatrician Eduard Henoeh warned parents to watch for the slightest sign of masturbatory movement. "Any repeated persistent cradle-like movements of the upper part of the body in small children can be a masturbatory movement."¹² Most of the fears and superstitions about masturbation that had been collected throughout the century were assembled and published by a German physician, Hermann Rohleder, in a 320-page compendium, *Die Masturbation* (1899). Rohleder accepted the view that masturbation, in particular pre-pubertal masturbation, was the primary cause of sexual pathology and hysteria. Masturbation was a sign of degeneration, and though it occurred in over ninety percent of the children, it was to be combated and controlled with every human resource. In addition to the popular

prophylactics such as cold showers, Rohleder suggested the avoidance of long walks as well as prolonged sitting. And for the incorrigible he recommended the *Onanieverhinderungsgürtel*, a canvas vest with a metal cup over the genitals.¹³

In 1901 Rohleder published a more general collection of lectures on the sexual impulse. In review of this book in that year Stekel complained that Rohleder utterly failed to understand "the burning question of child sexuality."¹⁴ The sources surveyed above suggest that child sexuality was indeed a "burning question" by 1901—four years before the appearance of Freud's *Three Essays*.

One of the outstanding features of child study around the turn of the century was the high degree of temporal specificity according to which emerging physical and mental phenomena were observed and recorded. Observations of the development of the child's mental life were made with painstaking exactness. The emergence of the child's sexual feelings was not accorded so exact a measurement, and before Freud's rather precise definition of the "stages" of development—oral, anal, phallic, latency, and puberty—most descriptions of the development of the sexual instinct were precise only in assigning physical sexual maturity to the time of puberty. But four authors did make some attempt to be temporally specific before Freud: Dessoir, Fliess, Moll, and Bell.

Dessoir's 1894 study was specific to a two-year period. The "undifferentiated sexual feeling" appeared in boys between 13 and 15, and in girls, between 12 and 14. He considered these years to be those immediately preceding puberty. Only in a "second stage" of sexual development do the sensations begin to concentrate in the sexual organs. If the second phase appears too late, the sexual feelings remain "embryonic."¹⁵

Wilhelm Fliess described specific male and female periods of 23 and 28 days respectively. "The construction and destruction of our organism is completed by degrees during these sexual periods."¹⁶ Fliess was temporally specific only in the lengths of his periods, and he did not, like Dessoir, define consecutive periods when particular elements of the sexual function appear. Sanford Bell outlined five stages in which the emotion of love emerges. The first stage, the emergence of sexual feelings, is precise to the year: around the age of 2 1/2. These emotions develop during the second stage, 2 1/2 to 8 years. The third stage is from 8 to 12 years, when children begin to play kissing games. He did not assign temporal specificity to the final two periods.¹⁷

We have surveyed literature on the first two distinctive features of Freud's child psychology: that components of adult sexuality appear separately in childhood, and that they appear in some temporal sequence. We must now examine the literature that anticipates a third feature of Freud's thought: that these components emerge in connection with some particular bodily zone.

Freud believed that any part of the surface of the body could be the

location of sexual stimulation. The entire surface of the skin functions as an erotogenic zone for the masochist, while the eyes are erotogenic for the voyeur. The sadist indulges an independent component impulse for cruelty which has no particular bodily location though directed by preference to the anal region. The most important erotogenic zones are linked with three vital functions—oral, anal, and phallic. The intense pleasure derived from contact with these important zones gives them enormous power to shape adult character.

Freud's interest in the first five years of the child's life was focused on the fate of these localized stimuli and the characterological consequences that resulted from them. He believed that the particular character trait associated with each zone resembled the biological function it performed. Thus, during the "oral phase" the child learns to take in and accept nourishment; this determines his later ability to take in information or love. The nipple is the child's first really important external object, and his early intermittent contact with it forms the basis of his sense of self as distinct from the external world. If it is there in a regular fashion, if it is given freely, and if it brings pleasure, the child will grow up with a strong sense of the self, he will be trusting and will make separations easily. If the feeding is irregular and anxiety-ridden, the child will not develop a strong sense of self, will not be trusting, and will lack independence. During the anal period, at approximately one and a half to three years of age, the child may develop character traits related to that bodily function—orderliness, parsimony and obstinacy. These character traits resemble the anatomical function of holding back, often against the will of the mother, dirty but cherished waste material. The penis is the symbol of manliness. In the *Three Essays* Freud characterized the phallic phase of development in less detail than the first two phases. He merely said that the phallic phase engendered an "impulse to mastery."

CHARACTEROLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF EMERGING SEXUAL COMPONENTS

I. The Oral Stage

Literature bearing on the pre-history of Freud's theory of orality falls into three subtopics: nursing, eating, and sucking in children and their characterological consequences; the embryological link between the nutritive and sexual processes; and the direct link between oral stimulation and sexual excitation.

Recognition of the high rate of infant mortality at this time led to a surge of interest in the nursing and nutrition of children. In 1897 Siegmund Taussig, a German pediatrician, reported that 25 percent of the children in Austria-Hungary between 1880 and 1890 died in infancy. Similar alarming figures, exaggerated somewhat by unreliable statistics, were published time and again. Every manual on child care

devoted a long section to the nourishment of new-born children, and they all recommended breast feeding.

The first scientific and systematic treatise on infant feeding was by the German pediatrician Philipp Biedert, whose *Nutrition of Infants* in 1880 analyzed the chemical composition of human and animal milk, recommended a variety of alternatives to the preferred method of breast feeding, and classified the gastro-intestinal diseases of infancy. Drawing from this work, Ernst Brücke, a professor of physiology at the University of Vienna and director of the physiology laboratory in which Freud worked between 1876 and 1882, published what became a popular manual for parents in 1892 which recommended breast feeding for both nutrition and hygiene.¹⁸ And though he prescribed weaning in the tenth month, he warned against the sudden weaning that is practiced among the upper classes. Though most mothers were reluctant to breast feed their children, pamphleteer and textbook writers almost unanimously recommended it. The mothers' most frequently expressed fear was that nursing would ruin their figures and accelerate aging, but the real obstacles were psychological: disgust at their own corporeality and anxiety about the sensual pleasures aroused by nursing. The sexual nature of the child-parent relationship was then a fact that few could accept.¹⁹

Speculations about the characterological consequences of sucking punctuated many long studies of child development and child care. Wilhelm Preyer, in his pathbreaking developmental psychology, *The Mind of the Child* (1881), warned that sucking was a "vicious and highly reprehensible practice" encouraged by some people to quiet their child. By the 1890's psychologists began to view the practice with less suspicion and were inclined to see more constructive characterological consequences than did Preyer. James Sully speculated that greed is the expression of the nutritive impulse. He added that "the removal of the feeding-bottle before full satisfaction [is] the occasion for the baby's resentment of all human checks to its native impulses. In this outburst we have the first rude germ of defiance of control and authority."²⁰

In 1896 the French psychologist Gabriel Compayré offered a vivid picture of the characterological consequences of the oral experience. He speculated that "some of the defects of the matured character of man may have sprung from the breast of an irregular or sickly nurse." While this passage suggests that the problem was perhaps generated by nutritional deficiencies, he concluded with a statement that explicitly referred to the aetiological significance of the emotional component of the feeding process. "Lactation, with its accompanying caresses, is the most important agent in the development of sentiment. It is from 'this physiological source of the connection of the mother with her child,' according to [Jean-Baptiste] Fonssagrive's expression (*Leçon d'hygiène infantile*, 1882), that the future feeling of human solidarity and altruism spring."²¹

In 1899 an American psychologist, Will S. Monroe, speculated on a connection between the nutritive instinct and the feeling for property.²² In 1901 another American, W. B. Drummond admonished parents that bottle feeding, being "gross and unworthy deception," can engender "intellectual obliquity" and "moral perversion." He further warned that "the baby should never be allowed to go to sleep at the breast, nor should it sleep in the same bed as its mother."²³ Drummond recommended weaning at ten months. In 1904 Sanford Bell gave the results of replies to questionnaires distributed in the United States between 1895 and 1903 on eating habits and attitudes of children. Bell observed "an organic relationship between attention and hunger" in the sixth week. The feeling of hunger begins with "a limited and highly specialized [process] of sucking . . . and spreads gradually . . . until every organ in the child's body is highly animated. Such an experience is both physiologically and psychologically beneficial to the child." He concluded that sucking "entirely disappears from most children . . . [but] it is reclaimed in a number of sexual and other perversions in adults."²⁴

The most important forerunner of the theory of orality, one cited by Freud, was a Hungarian pediatrician, S. Lindner, who in 1879 published a study of sucking in children. Lindner said that the impulse to suck is inherent in every child and that under proper conditions he can be induced into "delirious sucking." He believed that thumb-sucking was sexual and that it could create special "voluptuous points in erotic life."²⁵ The child could suck not only the thumb but any other body part, or it could combine sucking and masturbatory manipulations of the body by the hands or feet. The engravings accompanying his essay show children engaged in a variety of combinations of sucking and masturbatory movements. (See example, Figure 1.) Sucking affected the adult by increasing the potentiality of his engaging in masturbation and of his returning to these "voluptuous points" that had been part of sucking and masturbatory play.²⁶

At the height of his friendship with Freud, Wilhelm Fliess mentioned Lindner on the link between sucking and sexual stimulation. Fliess elaborated Lindner's theory by implying that this experience determined later object choices. "With lips and tongue the child first tastes the sweet milk from his mother's breast; she gives to him the earliest experience of sexual gratification."²⁷

In 1898 Moll considered and rejected the theory that the sucking of the new born child is an instinct, akin to the sexual instinct: a theory that he credits to the German experimental psychologist Herman Lotze.²⁸ Moll concluded that it is the motherly instinct to care for the child that accounts for the regularity with which newborn children are nursed. Rohleder maintained that sucking can play a predisposing role for masturbation. The impulse to put things into the mouth, he said, is innate.²⁹

Anticipations of Freud's theory of orality ranged from the direct influence of Lindner to the relatively more remote literature on nursing



Figure 1

Reproduced from S. Lindner, "Das Saugen an den Fingern, Lippen etc. bei den Kindern," *Jahrbuch für Kinderheilkunde*, XIV (1897), 74.

and the embryological link between nutrition and sexuality. Material that anticipated Freud's theories on the two succeeding erotogenic zones, anal and phallic, comes from a similar variety of sources.

II. The Anal Stage

In 1894 a German chemist, Wilhelm Camerer, published a book which presented the results of a twelve-year study of the metabolism of his own five children. During the first two years of life of each of his five children he examined their stool six times every four days to determine its chemical composition. His work offered parents and physicians rigorously tested information on the metabolic processes of infants. Continuing Camerer's work, Siegmund Taussig in 1887 explained that the color of the child's stool tells if he is sick: yellow particles are natural, but green stool means that digestive troubles are present. White particles in the stool from undigested milk may also point to digestive trouble. In a popular child care manual published in Germany in 1906, Biedert described some tests to determine the health of a child from his stool. "The feces of a child nursed with normal mother's milk has a shiny yellow color, a soft pasty consistency, and a sour aroma, somewhat like butter. It turns litmus paper red, indicating a strong acidic composition."³⁰ A healthy child, he explained, should excrete 80-120

grams of fresh excrement daily. These detailed accounts suggest that at this time conscientious mothers *did* examine the stool of their children and report their findings to the physician, and perhaps they made some connections between their child's digestion and bowel patterns and his temperament.

Understanding of the connection between digestion and mental processes was intuitively perceived, no doubt, by the first victim of nervous indigestion. The history of psychiatry reveals frequent observations of this phenomenon. In the late nineteenth century, however, physiologists and psychologists began to describe the connection between excremental functions and mental processes as a particular instance of the general interaction of the mind and the body. These developments in psychosomatic medicine partly prefigure Freud's theory of anality.

Henry Maudsley, one of the founders of modern psychosomatic medicine, admitted to having been somewhat baffled about the connection between mental and digestive processes. Though he believed himself to have understood the connection between many organic and mental processes, he confessed that "we cannot yet refer any special mental symptoms to the influence of the abdominal organs." Nevertheless he reported some cases of insanity "in which there are delusions that food will not enter the stomach, that there is no digestion, that the intestines are sealed up." His rather sketchy explanation was that "the delusion is not the cause of the feeling of despair, but is, as it were, a *condensation* from it, and an attempted interpretation of it. The same thing is observed in dreams."³¹

The connection between digestion and mental phenomena was perceived most clearly when both conditions were severely affected. In 1883 a French physician, Marie Bra, concluded that certain states of hallucinatory insanity induce constipation. In one specific mental disorder, "general delirium," constipation is the rule. Another French physician, Marius Féyat, treated the subject at length in a dissertation. Féyat surveyed the history of the study of constipation and its treatment. He quoted Voltaire, who wrote that those favored with regular bowels are "gentle, agreeable, gracious, kind, compassionate, helpful. A 'no' from them is more charming than a 'yes' from someone who is constipated." From his clinical observation Féyat discerned the "symptomatic triad"—constipation, headaches, and insomnia. He further speculated that constipation influences the moral and intellectual faculties and that "constipation and mental life follow a parallel course."³² In 1897 a professor of children's diseases in Cincinnati, H. Illoway, considered the possibility that constipation might be an aetiological factor in mental illness. He concluded tentatively that "constipation could, *per se*, when long continued, cause a more decided perversion of mental balance."³³

A professor of philosophy at the University of Breslau, Karl Albert Scherner, offered an account of the symbolic representation of digestive processes in dreams. Scherner focused on the many somatic sources of

dreams and then speculated how these stimuli are transformed into symbols: a house symbolizes the body, water symbolizes the urinary process, and fire symbolizes respiration. In a section on the dream stimulated by intestinal activity he constructed a typical dream with the appropriate symbolic representations. The dream begins with a meal, after which the dreamer walks out into the night: darkness representing the intestinal tract. Suddenly he is in a town square which represents the stomach. After a pause in the square he begins to make his way out on a small road. This symbolic representation of the lower intestines becomes progressively narrow, winding, and muddy. At the end of the road the mud becomes so thick as to make the road almost impassible and the traveler encounters a tangle of branches which represent the anal sphincter.³⁴ This interpretation of anal symbolism is strikingly similar to the kind that Freud employed forty years later in his own interpretations of the symbolic representation of somatic processes. That there were psychological consequences of digestive and excretory functions was by 1900 an established fact, part of an evergrowing body of literature on psychosomatic medicine.

Most writers who reported on children who had been seen playing with or eating feces considered such occurrences as highly unusual and pathological. In 1867 Maudsley registered surprise and intense disapproval as he recounted the case of an insane girl who "would rarely pass her excrements into the proper place, but reserved them for the carpet or the sitting room, or for her own clothes."³⁵ This apparently rare case Maudsley gleaned from a study of J. C. Pritchard, published twenty-five years earlier, *Different Forms of Insanity* (1842). A Fellow in Pedagogy at Clark University, E. W. Bohannon, reported five examples of children who "seem to have a love of dirt and filth."³⁶ Karl Groos tells of the odd child who plays with, or even attempts to eat, mud. "Sometimes when he has concocted various dainties out of mud, he cannot resist the temptation to bite into the brown mass, although in his calmer moments he well knows that mud is not edible."³⁷ Hans Rau described a compulsion, "Kopralagnie," which drives certain people to smell or even eat excrement. And in 1904 both Sanford Bell and Theodor Heller diagnosed children who smell and eat their feces as highly disturbed or insane.

A British naval officer, Captain John G. Bourke, published a collection of ceremonial practices in 1885. It was, as the subtitle said, "a dissertation upon the employment of excrementitious remedial agents in religion, therapeutics, divination, witchcraft, love-philters, etc. in all parts of the globe." For over ten years the captain sailed about the world observing and recording these practices that he personally found "disgusting" and "repugnant." Describing one religious ceremony in which it was customary to eat sausages on the altar, he speculated that "the rite may well have been sublimed from eating pure excrement." Not just excrement, but "all excretions, solid or fluid, were invested with mystic properties." Bourke maintained that the Christian religion has

retained such scatological practices in the Eucharist, in which, according to cult of the Stercoranistes, "the host is liable to digestion and all its consequences, like other food."³⁸ The great quantity of evidence that Bourke collected suggested that perhaps the practice of eating or playing with feces, that had been so quickly dismissed as pathological, might be some transformation of universal impulses. Bourke's argument that Christian rites derive from pagan rites, which often made use of excrement, implied that scatological practices derive from instinctive properties of the human mind—in particular the impulse to value and preserve anything that comes from a human being.

Wilhelm Bölsche's endless rhapsody on the goodness and pervasiveness of love in nature, published in two volumes (1898, 1901), which surveyed the development of the sexual function from the simplest ingestive activity of unicellular organisms to the poetry of Goethe, also considered the anal function to be, like every other biological function, a manifestation of love life that evolved out of some primal ooze and remained ever after in some way linked with it. He stood by his theme—the beauty and goodness of all creation—when he railed against contemporary prejudices about the anus and excrement. Why, he asked, should we regard the anus and excrement as associated with hell, the devil, and evil? We should rather "allow ourselves to learn from the anus and its wisdom [*vom After und seiner Weisheit*], as from that of the mouth." Without the anus man would have to get rid of waste material through the mouth like lower animals, and, he punned, we should therefore learn to appreciate *Afterweisheit* (sophistry, but literally, the wisdom of the anus)!³⁹

The image of the overprotective mother, anxiety-ridden about her child's toilet training, has become part of a humorous stereotype of the mid-twentieth-century family life. The reasoning behind this peculiarity of our culture is that this first social experience greatly influences the child's personality. Though the full-blown elaboration of this doctrine was essentially a contribution of Freud's, there were some discussions by his immediate predecessors about possible characterological consequences of toilet training.

In 1874 the English psychologist William Carpenter urged the early habituation of the child to orderliness and regularity through the consistent control of bodily processes such as feeding and sleeping. This habituation constitutes part of the "moral atmosphere which impresses itself on the child unconsciously." Carpenter did not mention toilet training explicitly but implied that it should also come under control so that "in those later stages in which the *conscious* influence of Order and Regularity comes to exert itself, there is still an unconscious persistence of the habits early shaped upon them."⁴⁰ A German pediatrician, Julius Uffelman, recommended early toilet training to instill a sense of cleanliness and regularity. "After the first five months habituation may accomplish a great deal if it is pursued seriously and consistently."⁴¹

Friedrich Scholz outlined some possible characterological consequences of toilet training in 1891. He associated three character traits with toilet training: orderliness, cleanliness, and pedantry. Unclean children who cannot control their anal sphincter, he affirmed, are sick and must be treated as such. The opposite is the pedantic child, who "by nature loves order, whose aesthetic disposition, especially his concern for symmetry, has developed too early." His own recommendations for toilet training are simple and severe. "Toilet training should be carried out in such a way that the child cannot bear to have any dirt on his body or dress or in his surrounding for even the briefest time. It should be instilled in his unconscious that dirt is improper and that the lack of it is the most natural and most desirable condition. The child's physical sensibility should be heightened so that dirt on or about him causes discomfort."⁴² This explicit instruction is typical of Victorian moralizing: anxious, zealous, and repressive.

Matthias recommended early and regular toilet habits: "Right in the cradle one can compel Benjamin to be punctual and can continue making sure that the little ones voluntarily pay their respects to Madame Cloacina at a set time." Regular toilet habits, like regular eating habits, instill in the child three good qualities: orderliness, regularity, and temperance.⁴³ Matthias, like Scholz before him and Freud after, ascribed three character traits to toilet habits, but none anticipated one of the traits mentioned by Freud—parsimony. Biedert also related three character traits to toilet training and suggested that they will affect the child's future education. "After cleanliness, orderliness and punctuality are fundamental for successful infant care and insure the future of a systematic upbringing."⁴⁴

In 1892 a German philosopher and theologian, L. K. Moeller, observed a connection between physical and mental cleanliness and therefore urged parents to make dirty face and hands unbearable to their children. Outer cleanliness has also a higher moral meaning, for "whoever cannot bear a speck of dirt on his body, probably will not be able to bear any on his soul"⁴⁵ In the following year an American psychologist, Frederick Tracy, noted a connection between one child's control of his excretions at ten months and his first successful control of reflexes necessary in acts of volition. In 1908 the famous Austrian pediatrician, Adalbert Czerny, after recommending that toilet training begin towards the end of the first year, hypothesized how this experience affected the future functioning of the will.⁴⁶

The literature on toilet training at this time demanded that most rigorous toilet habits be instilled in children, but it also revealed an understanding of the characterological consequences which, though only outlined, constitute a striking approximation of Freud's own theory.

The most shocking aspect of Freud's theory of anality was the implication that adult sexuality was partly the derivative of infantile anal eroticism. This connection was pointed out before Freud in discussions of corporal punishment. In 1841 the English physician William Acton

cautioned against spanking children because it might cause unwanted excitation.⁴⁷ This warning was often repeated around the turn of the century with special emphasis on the potential for creating sexually perverse desires in later childhood and adulthood. In 1899 Charles Féré expressed agreement with Acton's sixty-year-old warning. In an article in 1901 on the dangers of corporal punishment Albert Moll complained that there are many teachers who enjoy whipping students in public, to the delight of all. Whipping can create perverse sexual desires, in particular a taste for masochism and homosexuality. Rousseau's confession that he enjoyed being whipped by Mademoiselle Lamercier when he was eight years old, and that the experience determined his sexual appetite thereafter, was often repeated as the classic example of the dangers involved in corporal punishment. In this period it was widely believed that spanking could create sexual feelings.⁴⁸

A few writers expanded the range of anal-sexual experiences to include stimulation of the anus itself as a sex object. Gustav Jaeger reported that nurses frequently stroked the anus as well as the genitals of children in order to quiet them.⁴⁹ Krafft-Ebing (1886), Moll (1898), and Féré (1899) wrote that excitation of the anal region creates an erotogenic zone. Though these discussions regarded anal sexual feelings as pathological, they nevertheless anticipated a good portion of the theory that Freud put together in his explanation of normal development.

In 1903 Havelock Ellis conceded that there is an analogy between the sexual impulse and the impulse to evacuate the bowels.⁵⁰ In 1906 Ellis discussed the sexual excitation produced in some individuals by the observation of scatological practices. After elucidating the sadistic nature of sexual practices involving urination, he considered the sexual excitation produced by the observation of the act of defecation. "In Parisian brothels . . . provision is made for those who are sexually excited by the spectacle of the act of defecation . . . by means of a '*tabouret de verre*,' from under the glass floor of which the spectacle of the defecating women may be closely observed." And he concluded with a theory of the transference from one scatological object to another: "The sexual charm of the nates progressively extends to the anal region, to the act of defecation, and finally to the feces."⁵¹

III. *The Phallic Stage*

The literature that bears on the prehistory of Freud's thought on the phallic stage falls into two subtopics: masturbation and phallic symbolism.

Freud believed that child masturbation established "the foundations for future primacy over sexual activity exercised by this [genital] erotogenic zone."⁵² Though he came to disagree with the contemporary view that masturbation was always pathological, the numerous available collections of case histories were a good source from which he

could draw. Female masturbation was considered even more repugnant than male masturbation, but the most heated debates concerned the latter.

The modern history of the study of masturbation begins with a most influential book by the French physician Simon-André de Tissot, published in 1760.⁵³ From that time until Freud's, masturbation was generally considered a vice and a sin. The only significant change in the literature on the subject took place towards the end of the nineteenth century when studies began to suggest that more and more children seemed to be engaging in it. Some attributed this change to the progress of civilization and city life, others began to speculate that it had always been more widespread than admitted and that recent studies merely made known what had been going on all along. One last infrequently proposed explanation was that since so many children and adolescents masturbated (figures in the 1890's spoke of 90-95 percent), then perhaps it was not as evil as was feared or was even normal.

The journal literature around the turn of the century contained numerous articles on masturbation. The most complete study of the subject was Rohleder's. In spite of the great number of false ideas about the causes and consequences of masturbation that pervade Rohleder's work, he made some speculations about masturbation that anticipate elements of psychoanalysis. He believed that sucking created a predisposition for masturbatory play. He recognized that masturbation in the first years of childhood was the outcome of some kind of "instinctual satisfaction of the sex drive."⁵⁴ And he believed that there was some connection between kleptomania and masturbation, but admitted that he did not understand what it was.

In 1898 Havelock Ellis published a collection of information on masturbation, which he classified as a subtopic of a larger phenomenon that he termed "auto-erotism." The American psychologist Francis Chamberlain (1902) anticipated exactly Freud's theory in *Three Essays* that "the foundations for the future primacy over sexual activity exercised by this erotogenic zone are established by early infantile masturbation." Chamberlain wrote: "In onanism the boy falls in love with himself, and his use of the sexual organs is a training-school for the future."⁵⁵ While the literature on masturbation focused on the use of the penis and its function in the development of the boy's sex life, other writers described its symbolic representation.

Karl Scherner (1861) interpreted numerous dream images as symbols of the male or female sex organs. The male organ can be represented by keys, pipes, towers, tops, branches, and knives. Children, especially when nursing, often accompany sexual excitation in women's dreams. The female sex organs might be symbolized by a purse, a cow, a grave, or a staircase. The interpretation of one dream reveals the extent of Scherner's insight into the mechanisms of sexual symbolism. A woman dreamt that she had to deliver a letter to a man; to get to

him she had to pass through a courtyard surrounded by houses. The path she followed was slippery and lined with bushes. Scherner interpreted the letter as a symbol of the secret of her sexuality, hidden in an envelope. The courtyard and the narrow path symbolized the narrow passage of her sexual organs. The slipperiness corresponds to the condition of stimulated female genitals, and the bushes represented pubic hair. The motive for the dream was the woman's desire to deliver her sexuality to the man.⁵⁶

John Bourke, Robertson Smith, Colin A. Scott, and G. Harold Ellis all used the term "phallic symbol" before Freud to describe certain objects of religious worship that symbolically represented the male phallus.

Bourke (1886) suggested that the sausages that appeared on the altar in one ceremony and had been "sublimed" from pure excrement were "very probably phallic symbols also." In another ceremony, Bourke speculated that the horns used to sprinkle water in the anointing of the king "may represent phalli, and the water may be a substitute for a liquid which to the present generation might be more objectionable."⁵⁷

In 1889 the English anthropologist Robertson Smith took exception to the theory of another anthropologist who speculated that certain religious objects had phallic origins. Smith wrote, "Another view taken of sacred pillars and cippi is that they are images, not of the deity, but of bodily organs taken as emblems of particular powers or attributes of deity, especially of the life-giving and reproductive powers." In a note, "The supposed Phallic Significance of Sacred Posts and Pillars," Smith elaborated: "That sacred posts and pillars among the Semites are phallic symbols is an opinion which enjoys a certain currency, mainly through the influence of [Fritz] Movers; but, as is so often the case with theories of that author, the evidence in its favor is of the slenderest."⁵⁸ G. Harold Ellis also described certain religious pillars as "phallic symbols" in 1902.⁵⁹

Another exposition of a theory of the phallic origins of religious objects was given in 1896 by Colin A. Scott. When the sexual impulse is worshipped in religion, it is often embodied in a symbol of the male organ. Worship of the generative organ is behind the legend of the Holy Grail and is an "irradiation of the sexual passion." "Ancestor worship, tree and serpent worship are phases of phallicism." The goat, bull, serpent . . . pyramidal stones . . . obelisks, uprights generally . . . church steeples, the globe, the cross . . . are interchangeable with the human phallus." And the story of the fall of man from the bite of a serpent "is an undoubted phallic reference." Scott concluded with a plea for a "Modern Phallicism"—"a religious and artistic spirit that goes out to meet the sexual instinct. . . . We need manly courage and noble love which are able to protect and to enshrine the beautiful body and soul of woman."⁶⁰

NON-LOCALIZED MANIFESTATIONS OF CHILD SEXUALITY:
EXHIBITIONISM, CRUELTY, DESTRUCTIVENESS,
POLYMORPHOUS PERVERSITY

Freud was able to explain a large portion of the child's character development as a psychic derivative of stimulation of the three major erotogenic zones. But other elements did not fit into this scheme. In the *Three Essays* he explained: "It must, however, be admitted that infantile sexual life, in spite of the preponderating dominance of erotogenic zones, exhibits components which from the very first involve other people as sexual objects. Such are the instincts of . . . exhibitionism and cruelty, which appear in a sense independently of erotogenic zones." These two component instincts were considered with avid interest by some of Freud's contemporaries. Awareness of the polymorphous perverse disposition was implicit in much of the literature, but was not spelled out in any detail. The child's destructiveness was recognized by Freud many years before he considered it as an independent instinct, the negative counterpart to Eros.

One of the most persistent reminders of the unnaturalness of civilized morality is the child's inclination to be naked and expose himself. In the Victorian era, when clothing covered as much of the surface of the body as was possible, the impulse to expose oneself must have been intense and deeply repressed. Many spoke out for clothing reform or nudism. August Forel, a leader in the campaign for reform of sexual mores, remembered of his childhood in Switzerland: "My bashfulness in front of other people was so indescribable that I would never consent to bathe in the open. My instinctive prudishness was so extreme that I never ventured to make use of a privy or a closet into which I could not lock myself; I would have ruptured my bladder first."⁶¹

In 1898 Christian H. Stratz published a study of female beauty which included over three hundred photographs of naked women, and he itemized many body parts that contribute to female beauty. Individual chapters on the beauty of the neck, breast, thigh, and ankles defined the range of proportions and contours that he regarded as beautiful.⁶² In 1903 he published a similar study of children's bodies which praised the beauty of the naked child and prescribed exercises and clothing for its proper care and development. He believed that children ought to go naked.⁶³ Another spokesman for the new morality was the Englishman Edward Carpenter, who in 1897 complained that modern man's skin has become sickly and corrupt. Little boys bathing on the outskirts of town are hunted down by "idiotic policemen, apparently infuriated by the sight of a naked body, even of childhood."⁶⁴ Though exhibitionism or nudism was not conceived by these writers to be an independent component instinct, they did recognize clearly that the child especially delights in nudity.

The child as a living critique of morality is most conspicuous when he indulges his desire to inflict pain. The impulse for cruelty in chil-

dren was recognized by several observers. James Sully (1895) explained that the child's cruelty to animals was the product of "the childish impulse to hold, possess, and completely dominate."⁶⁵ In 1899 the German psychologist Hans Kurella interpreted children's cruelty as an erotic phenomenon that accompanies fighting. The child's enjoyment of cruelty stimulates erotic feelings and thereby forms a strong association between fighting and sexual excitation.⁶⁶ Iwan Bloch (1902) regarded the child's cruelty as a carry-over from our evolutionary pre-history.⁶⁷ Chamberlain (1902) accepted the theory that cruelty in children is inherited from savage ancestors, but added that perhaps it is a consequence of the child's inability to conceive of pain in others. He further theorized that the child's cruelty is adaptive in preparing him for social life. In 1904 both Scholz and Heller wrote that cruelty is inherent in children. Heller added that the impulse for cruelty also leads children to steal and lie.

Freud believed that the destructive impulse is a component of sexuality and can be manifested in two possible ways: directed inwards in masochism or outwards in aggressiveness. In the *Three Essays* (1905) Freud believed that outer-directed aggressiveness was the first manifestation of the destructive impulse, but in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) he began to view masochism as primary, from which he concluded ominously that the death wish is prior to the life-affirming force of Eros. Though his contemporaries did not ponder the first object of the child's instinctual aggressiveness as deeply as did Freud, several of them did view it as a natural impulse manifested in early childhood.

In 1867 Maudsley rejected the myth of the innocence of childhood with a forcefulness that implied that such a reinterpretation was long overdue. "The purity and innocence of the child's mind is a part of that poetic idealism and willing hypocrisy by which man ignores realities and delights to walk in a vain show. The purity and innocence of the child's mind, insofar as they exist, testify to the absence of mind: and the impulses which actually move it are the selfish impulses of passion."⁶⁸ They have an inborn destructive impulse which drives them to destroy whatever they wish. The child is an animal and as such reveals its passions without shame.

An early reference in German literature to the existence of a destructive instinct (*Zerstörungstrieb*) in childhood was made by Friedrich Scholz in 1891.⁶⁹ In 1904 Scholz again pointed out the child's destructiveness and commented: "The destructive instinct is so frequently observed in children that one may almost regard it as normal."⁷⁰ Biedert mentioned the *Zerstörungstrieb* in his handbook on child care in 1906 as a chronic problem in children. Nordau (1892-93) regarded the destructive instinct in children as normal and accepted Paul Sollier's speculation that it is a first manifestation of the child's power of movement.⁷¹ Sully (1895) explained the destructive instinct as the consequence of the child's curiosity and love of power. As a historical

example he recalled Goethe's childhood memory of having hurled his mother's china out of the window of their house. This episode, that Freud interpreted in 1917 as a symbolic effort by young Goethe to throw his newly born younger brother out of the window, is again cited by Compayré (1896) and Groos (1899). Groos explained that Goethe's pleasure came from the sounds produced from the crashing dishes. Groos was the first to link the destructive *impulse* (*Zerstörungslust*) with sexuality. This pleasure in destroying he interpreted as related to the joy of fighting, which originated in the species' most important fight—for a sexual partner. Much in the same way that Freud would later oppose the destructive and binding impulses, Groos opposed destructive and constructive play in children. Groos explained: "The veriest infant shows its beginnings in his desire to tear paper, pull the heads off flowers, rummage in boxes and the like: and as the child grows older he displays more clearly this analytic impulse." He contrasts this destructive play with "Constructive (Synthetic) Movement-Play," a derivative of an impulse to imitate which is funded by "the overflow of dammed-up energies which the new psychology emphasizes." This constructive play is "the essence of artistic work."⁷²

A similar contrast between the two forms of play was made by Compayré in 1896. He wrote, "Not only has the child the instinct of construction in his play, but he also shows a mania for destruction." Compayré expressed a harsher judgment of the moral consequences of this destructiveness than did Groos. In the heart of the child, he wrote, are "the seeds of malignity, of hatred, of evil inclinations, and a certain need of destructiveness." The child has a need "to disturb, to undo, to tear, and to kill."⁷³

Compayré's judgment of what he considered the seamy side of children was characteristic of a large portion of the literature on childhood that we have so far sought to avoid. Moral judgments of children or adults, Freud believed, only confused psychoanalysis, and he conscientiously sought to keep them out of his own work.

Numerous historians and critics have erred in considering that Rousseau popularized the idea that children are innocent and that Freud, 150 years later, refuted him. This is inaccurate for two reasons. First, behind Rousseau's repeated passionate affirmations of the innocence of the newborn child was his suspicion of the child's instinctual nature and his own deeply rooted guilt. His pedagogically cast developmental psychology, *Emile* (1762), was devoted primarily to controlling the child's passions, which, Rousseau feared, continually threatened to take over and corrupt. Secondly, Freud did *not* refute the idea of the innocence of the child. In his earlier work, until around 1900, he shared the view that all manifestations of sexuality in children were abnormal. But then he changed his judgments of all such manifestations save those that were unquestionably pathological: compulsive masturbation and pre-pubertal intercourse. Against widespread suspicions about children Freud insisted that the little child who sucks deliriously on a

pacifier, who plays with his feces, or who occasionally masturbates is not a wicked little sinner, destined to sexual perversion and moral degeneration. Freud's non-moral judgment of child sexuality should rather have earned him a reputation as the man who made the innocence of childhood once again possible.

Freud believed that the aptitude for perversion is active in everyone from earliest childhood and that it is a "general and fundamental human characteristic."⁷⁴ He described this disposition as "polymorphous perverse." During the course of development the polymorphous perverse disposition, by which the individual is able to enjoy sexual pleasure almost anywhere on his body, gradually gives way to the domination of the major erotogenic zones until puberty, when sexual pleasure becomes concentrated in the nerves in the genital organs. This unusual aspect of Freud's psychology was not directly anticipated by any of his predecessors, but among many of them there appeared to be a growing awareness that children have some special physical sensitivity that adults do not. Though this idealization of the child was more explicit in the literature on the imagination of the child, two authors noted children's heightened sensibility. Stratz wrote that "the sensitivity of children is deeper, purer, simpler, and more rapid than that of adults."⁷⁵ And Bölsche's suggestion that "we may, like children, learn from our bodies" implied that children are body-aware in a way that adults are not.

This survey has revealed that almost every element of Freud's theory of child sexuality was exactly anticipated, or in some way implied or suggested, before him. Several observers asserted positively that children have normal sexual feelings before puberty, and the many who regarded these feelings as pathological also added to the understanding of child sexuality. Freud's claim to have been the first to recognize the regular and universal existence of sexuality in childhood is inaccurate. His contribution was rather to detail the course of its development through the oral, anal, and phallic stages to puberty and its effect on adult mental life. While his early contemporaries' theories of sexual development were sketchy, they did explore the elements of the child's sex life that Freud ultimately integrated into his full developmental scheme.

The widespread concern with the child's feeding directed attention to the sucking impulse and led to speculations about the characterological consequences of this early vital function. Compayré, Monroe, Drummond, Maudsley, and Bell noted characterological consequences of the infant's sucking and nutrition, and Lindner asserted that sucking generates sexual excitation. Although Freud's theory of anality was most original, fragments of it can be found in a variety of studies. Maudsley, Bra, Féyat, Illoyay, and Bain speculated on character traits associated with digestion and constipation. Literature on children playing with or eating feces implied that perhaps waste material has some importance for the child which previously had been overlooked. Several child care

manuals pointed out characterological consequences of toilet training. Among Carpenter, Uffelmann, Scholz, Matthias, Biedert, and Moeller the following traits were recorded: cleanliness, orderliness, punctuality, temperance, pedantry, and "mental cleanliness." Debates about corporal punishment frequently alluded to the possibility of generating sexual excitation in the anal region, and Krafft-Ebing, Moll, Bloch, and Féré referred to the anus as a potential erotogenic zone. The vast amount of literature on masturbation focused attention onto this dominant mode of sexual activity of the phallic stage and suggested possible characterological consequences of it; however, most observers foresaw only adult sexual pathology. Scherner interpreted phallic symbols in dreams, and Bourke, Robertson Smith, Scott, and G. Harold Ellis discovered the "phallic symbol" in various myths and religious practices. The non-localized manifestations of child sexuality as viewed by Freud were anticipated piecemeal. That the child likes to run naked was universally known, although not always willingly admitted, and this fact was often cited in literature decrying body shame. The child's cruel and destructive impulses were described repeatedly and Kurella explicitly linked the child's cruelty with sexuality.

This summary of Freudianism before Freud in the matter of infantile sexuality does not diminish the importance of Freud's contribution to child psychology; rather it indicates the nature of the "climate of opinion" from which he drew and to which he contributed. None of his early contemporaries put all of this information and insight together, but their increasing approximation to Freud's thought suggests that psychoanalysis was the convergence of many lines of thinking, some of which Freud was perhaps not consciously aware.

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51. Havelock Ellis, *Erotic Symbolism* (Philadelphia, 1912), p. 63. Freud's major sources for his theory of anality were the dreams and neurotic symptoms of his patients. On January 24, 1897, he wrote to Fliess his first insight into what became the theory of anality. "I read one day that the gold which the devil gave his victims regularly turned into excrement; and the next day Herr E., who reports that his nurse had money deliria, suddenly told me (by way of Cagliostro—alchemist—*Dukatenschiesser*) that Louise's money was always excrement." In the same letter Freud mentioned some of his paranoid patients who complained that excrement was put into their food. The theory of anality was no doubt the product of interpretations of this type of dream and neurotic material. One possible literary source was Bourke's *Scatological Rites* (1885). In a preface to the 1913 edition, Freud credited Bourke

with supplying "most of our information on the role of scatology in the life of mankind." However, Freud did not associate this material with his theory of anality, but rather with his theory that the progress of civilization has led man to deny his corporeality. Freud also credited Rousseau with the association of spanking and erotic pleasure. "Ever since Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*, it has been well known to all educationalists that the painful stimulation of the skin of the buttocks is one of the erotogenic roots of the *passive* instinct of cruelty (masochism)." Though he allowed that Rousseau first perceived the sexual potential of the anal region, he did not see this as an anticipation of the theory of anality.

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JAMES OTIS, JR.: AN AMBIVALENT REVOLUTIONARY

JOHN J.
WATERS

What makes an effective revolutionary? The question has never really been asked. But the usual notion that revolutionaries are just acting out childhood battles with authorities runs up against the clinical observation that only people who have reasonably nurturant childhoods and reasonably intact egos can effectively oppose irrational authority later in life.

In this psychohistory of James Otis, Jr., John Waters effectively weaves what facts can be known of Otis's childhood and adult attitudes toward authority, producing a compelling portrait of an important figure in the American Revolutionary period. In our next issue, there will be two more psychohistories of "Ambivalent Revolutionaries," one Russian, one Polish, who had almost identical family patterns to Otis, Jr.

James Otis, Jr., the first "Patriot" of the American Revolution, has been credited by John Adams as the inspired orator who brought forth the "child Independence." In his short lifetime young Otis authored brilliant pamphlets which dissected parliamentary authority, affirmed the higher law principle of natural rights, condemned slavery, and raised the possibility of Independence from Great Britain. Yet his contemporaries, even those such as Adams who acknowledged his genius, considered him politically unstable: they charged him with writing on both sides of the most pressing political issues of his day.

Yet to continue this tradition and to call Otis, Junior simply a patriot, or an opportunist, or a visionary, or a recreant—as modern historians have done—is to do violence to the complexity of that revolutionary's personality. Otis is important because for a time his anxieties reflected

the doubts of his culture; at a critical juncture his ambivalences mirrored the inchoate needs of a colonial society when it first contemplated independence from Great Britain in the 1760s.

In this essay my focus is on how Otis reacted to authority throughout his life. Simply stated, my findings are that Otis's family experiences patterned his perceptions of authority, thus forming the matrix of his lifelong consistency in responding to those in positions of power. Just as young Otis looked for help from the elder Otis to solve his ambivalent feelings toward his own mother, so he saw in George III a "father" whose duty it was to help the "true born" American sons resist unnatural maternal dependency. James Otis, Jr. clearly did not fear paternal or royal authority. On the contrary, he desired it as a prop against the "mother country," which he both loved and feared. He protested that mother Britain favored her English children at the expense of the Americans, and he believed that the good father king would aid his true sons to stand firm against the illicit tax demands of the all-engulfing mother. Otis thus conceptualized the American Revolution as a search for the just and strong father who would treat all of his sons equally. The "new nation" shared this vision when it substituted the godlike George Washington for the weak George III. Certainly the presidential powers affirmed the belief in patriarchal order while specific provisions of the Federal Constitution guaranteed equal treatment for all states within the Union.

In this exploration for meaning my theoretical framework derives from the analytical and psychohistorical writings of Sigmund Freud, Otto Fenichel, and Erik Erikson. As a historian I am concerned with the formal meaning of what James Otis, Jr. said and wrote; at the same time, like the psychoanalyst, I give particular attention to young Otis's choice of words, metaphors, slips of the pen, figures of speech, and fantasies.

IMPORTANT FIGURES IN CHILDHOOD

It is axiomatic in psychoanalytic theory that "family relationships become the prototypes of subsequent relationships throughout life." This postulate receives support from the recollections of James Otis, Jr., who credited his father with having taught him to love the British Empire.¹ And in fact he praised his father "more than any one man in America" for supporting Britain during the French and Indian War. In the same idealistic vein young Otis called George III the "father of Mankind" and referred to the Elder Pitt as "Divine Man." The overidealization of paternal authority is evident in all of these references; and this habit was known to Otis's contemporaries who saw that he was always in a "reverie when he speaks of Majesty." Yet during Otis's formative years his father spent most of his time traveling the legal circuits and serving the General Court of Boston.

Mary Allyne Otis was the ever present reality James knew, and

she dominated him just as she directed the Barnstable household in the absence of his father. Moreover, young James, the first born, had to share his mother with an ever-increasing brood of brothers and sisters.² Her children remembered her as moody, and there remained a tantalizing distance in her relationships with them. Hence, the anecdotes from this formative period show James's disposition marked by "petulance and forwardness," and a hypersensitivity to insult.³ Likewise, in later life we have many references to Otis's rage-like conduct when frustrated. Analytically, the roots of these rages, his deep and primitive oral fixation, and his chronic fear of separation and suspicion about the "mother-country," are to be found in the long-term relationship between mother and son.⁴ The traumas of displacement, sibling jealousy, of love and hate for the mother, and the need for a protecting father are prototypical elements in the career of James Otis, Jr.⁵

Obviously we would like to know more about the early home life of James Otis, Jr., for it is analytically certain that this period played a central part in shaping his ambivalence toward depending upon mother figures. All of the children of Mary Allyne and James Otis, Sr. were cared for by servants and custom as well as circumstantial evidence argue also in favor of wet-nursing. For one, the close spacing of children in this marriage precluded long-term nursing on the part of Mrs. Otis; moreover, the customary belief that milk was in reality the mother's "own Blood" turned white explains why the wealthy tended to hire paid substitutes to perform this unpleasant duty.⁶ Young James's own birth occurred within eight months of his parents' nuptials and puritan Barnstable noted such events. Not only was James born early but he was also displaced within thirteen months by another sibling. Then he became subject to the rule of household servants in an age when the dominant axiom said that to spare the rod would spoil the child. In fact the only adult who did not beat young James was his schoolmaster, Uncle Russell, and he was criticized "in suffering him to escape the correction of the *ferula* and *birch*."⁷ This society also believed that as the twig is bent so will the tree grow. John Locke, in his 1693 *Thoughts Concerning Education*, had recommended to parents that they wash the feet of their children "every Day in cold Water," that they wear "Shoes so thin that they might leak and let in Water," and that sleeping quarters be chilly. Considering that these were the general standards of character formation it is not accidental that James both raged and used his fists as an adult. James's favorite sister Mercy in her autobiographical "Memoir" recalled that their mother taught them to pray and accept every adversity with religious passivity. As a parent young Otis reacted to this regimen by trying to raise his own children without either discipline or family prayer.⁸ And while Mercy remained "patiently" acquiescent toward the "supreme Governor," she too, in bringing up her children, placed no faith in those "Irkesome Methods of Severity" which had characterized childhood in the first part of the eighteenth century.⁹

CRISIS OF IDENTITY

If the foundations of James's personality were in place before he attended Harvard in his fourteenth year, there remained central elements in his identity with which he would have to come to terms. In fact, he would spend his next twenty years working this out for himself. His education made him aware of his triple heritage: first, he was an heir to the wisdom of classical antiquity; next, he was a reformed Christian; and finally, he was a British-American whose ancestors he believed had fought for their version of political and religious freedom. But what would he do with this heritage? What rôle models would he follow? How would he make these formulae his own?¹⁰ Would he follow his uncle into orthodoxy and the classics? Or would he follow his religiously unorthodox father into politics? How would he decide what was British and what was American in his political creed?

Young Otis's first gropings to find himself occurred in the revival winter of 1740 when he joined a small cell of impressionable students. They "prayed together Sung Psalms" and shared with each other their visions of "Hel Open" and themselves "dropping in." This representation of Hell as the pit which devours—symbolically a *vagina dentata* (a fantasy which includes oral hostility toward the mother as well as a repressed desire to be engulfed by the mother)—must have reinforced all of James's fears about being close to the opposite sex. After this his behavior became ascetic. At one point while on vacation James was dragged out to play the fiddle, but he fled the dance crying, "So Orpheus fiddled, and so danced the brutes."¹¹ I read this as an attempt on young James's part to suppress his emerging sexuality (Orpheus evokes the "beast with two backs," to use one of Shakespeare's metaphors for intercourse) and, in fact, prolonged puberty would mark his life for the next decade.

At the time of James's graduation in 1743 he declared that Harvard was under a "miserable, despicable and arbitrary Government." Twenty years later he had not changed his mind about the tyranny of college life when he recollected that in his day "the president directed the scholars how they should act, madam directed the president, Titus their black servant governed madam, and the devil prompted Titus."¹² Observe that in this revealing fantasy of hierarchy turned upside down Otis criticized Harvard's president for not being man enough to avoid manipulation by his wife and her two malevolent images, the black and the devil. In thus looking at Otis's college years, the larger pattern reveals continued dependency and concomitant resentment.

There is evidence that young Otis wanted to continue studying the classics after graduation, but that his father would not finance that activity and had decided on a law career for his son. Yet within these legal bounds, James, by simple failure in Plymouth, showed that he did not want to be a small town lawyer like his father. He preferred the larger world of Boston where he would function as the family factotum and political agent. And there, as was the custom of the times, he

lived with relatives. We know he purchased pamphlets, ordered writs, subscribed to the *Boston Gazette*, obtained his trousers from Barnstable, shopped for the family, and did literally dozens of other tasks, because he and his family kept elaborate financial records enumerating every cent they owed each other.¹³ In fact, the elder Otis had recorded the entire cost of Junior's education with the intent of deducting it from his son's share of his estate. Analytically, these mutual family reckonings indicate a high degree of anal retentiveness in the Otis clan; the macabre exists here also when one brother charged the cost of attending another brother's funeral against the estate.¹⁴ In this family affection meant dispensing money. James chaffed under these golden strings, and once, in a tavern (drinking was his favorite activity), when liquor had weakened his inhibitions, he exploded against his uncle and father, calling them "infamous fellows." This sounds like a teenager's outburst, with the crucial difference being that Otis, Jr. was almost thirty years of age, still single, still living with relatives, still fiscally dependent, and still treated as the family errand boy. Given his class and station this continual dependency did not depart from the norm of that society.

When Otis did choose Ruth Cunningham as a wife in 1755, it followed on the heels of the marriage of his favorite sister Mercy to his friend James Warren. Perceptively Katharine Anthony saw Ruth as a sister substitute, and, in fact, the portraits of Mercy and Ruth show striking resemblances.¹⁵ Yet the strong-willed sister Mercy, one of the few colonial women to become an authoress and political commentator in her own right, resembled the mother in personality. Thus, as I see this "Family Romance," both the sister and wife were patterned after James's mother; the three were forceful women who defied the conventions of their day. And like James's mother, Ruth possessed strong religious sentiments; she entered into full communion with the Old South Church. Ruth brought to the marriage a dowry of £10,000 old tenor, impeccable connections with royal officials such as her uncle Charles Paxton, the Surveyor of Customs, and intense loyalty to the Crown.¹⁶ Moreover, Ruth showed a will of iron in 1775 when she backed her daughter's marriage against her husband's will to a British officer. Finally, she had the character to circumvent James's intention of disinheriting this daughter Elizabeth Otis Brown.¹⁷ But that was the hidden future. Now James held the profitable post of Advocate General of the Vice Admiralty Court, had started to write his essay on Latin prosody, and became a father four times between 1757 and 1764. This then was a time of strength, of basic agreement, and generativity. This couple's politics were imperial. If the future saw James in search of a specific American identity, it is because he changed. Ruth did not.

THE AMBIVALENT REVOLUTIONARY

In 1761 the writs of assistance case started James Otis, Jr. on his painful quest to plumb the meaning of the colonial-parent state relation-

ship. Baldly stated, the King's Customs declared that it had a right to this writ which would enable it to search any house suspected of holding smuggled goods; secret informers and bounties were part and parcel of this no-knock law. Now Otis viewed this case as an attack upon colonial autonomy. After all, it violated the right every Briton had to call his house his castle; it would make masters subject to the malice of their servants; and it meant that the Americans were slaves rather than subjects. Otis would oppose these writs in the name of George III, who had said that the "privileges of his people are dearer to him than the most valuable prerogatives of his Crown." He realized that these writs, in calling for unlimited search power, reduced the colonialists to the status of helpless children before powerful masters. The good king would not let his people suffer such administrative tyranny. At the same time James could not help but remind his auditors of the fate of bad kings, for in the past, the exercise of unlawful power "cost one king of England his head, and another his throne." As I see it Otis's own life experiences had made him extraordinarily sensitive to all the nuances of dependence. Now, to prove his sincerity and independence, he resigned his lucrative admiralty post and declared publicly in court that he would take no fee for this case. And personally this writs case appealed to him, for it afforded him the opportunity (and the words are his own) to become "the patriot, the man, and the hero."¹⁸

Naturally enough, when James Otis reflected upon the complex relationship between Great Britain and her American colonies, he turned to the metaphor of family. Here he cast Britain as a "tender mother" and George III as the good "father."¹⁹ These parents ought to realize that the Americans were "co heirs and joint heirs" with their British brothers.²⁰ The House of Commons, after all fellow Britons and subjects, ought not to try and constrain their American brothers who had now come of age. Otis asked, "Did you ever read of the growing pains of youth, which by a judicious observation have been metaphorically applied to the struggles of the colonists for a free air"?²¹ Even when he affirmed his belief in the British connection he could not help but express his fears. In July of 1764 he wrote, "We all think ourselves happy under Great Britain, and adore our king. And could the choice of *independency* be offered the colonies, or subjection to Great-Britain upon any terms above absolute *slavery*, I am convinced they would accept the latter."²² Yet Otis could not quite remove from his head the suspicion that the colonial structure favored the British sons and that "every inhabitant in America maintains at least two lazy fellows in ease, idleness, or luxury in mother Britain's lap."²³ It took a decade of exploitative British tax measures to convince Otis and his countrymen that they did indeed face slavery.

In the decade of the 1760s the British House of Commons asserted its sovereignty over the American Colonies by enacting three hated tax measures: the Sugar Act of 1764, the Stamp Act of 1765, and the Townshend Duties of 1767. Given the heavy base of oral and anal retentiveness in New England culture, no choice could have been more

calculated to bring forth resistance.²⁴ And the roots of defiance, as Freud realized, spring from the "narcissistic clinging to anal erotism."²⁵ Otis gave voice to this resentment in his famous motto "No Taxation without Representation." He declared that you cannot take tax money—and on the symbolic level gold is feces—without the consent of the subject; to do so reduces British Americans to a child-like status. Otis correctly read these tax measures as specific disregards of the American claim to autonomy and equality.

Publicly Otis, Junior responded to the Stamp Act crisis by taking the phallic pseudonym "Freeborn Armstrong" with its explicit counter-threat of strong arms to uphold the rights of freemen. Privately, again to prove the sincerity of his own motivation, he terminated profitable legal work for English firms, and told one correspondent it "is a very invidious employ to collect Debts for Gent[leme]n on your side [of] the waters." Yet Otis loved the empire and said of it "what God in his providence has united let no man dare attempt to put asunder."²⁶ Psychologically he could not face separation from Britain. It is precisely this fear of the "loss of a loved object" which constitutes melancholia.²⁷ He knew intellectually that the British tax measures, which the colonials saw as violations of their most essential rights, "can have no Tendency but to hasten on with great rapidity events which every good and honest man would wish delayed for ages, if possible prevented for ever."²⁸ In July of 1764 James had written of Independence; now in 1768 he resisted even using that hated, fearful term. But this was a bind of his own making, a reflection of his innermost needs; it was no longer an accurate reading of the sentiments of his countrymen.

In 1766 James Otis admitted to his beloved sister Mercy that he dreaded "irregularity" and "imprudence." He feared that radicals were waiting in the wings to take over the movement. Above all he considered himself "his majesty's liege, true and faithful subject." Yet it must have been obvious to Otis as to other colonial leaders that George III would not take their part against the British Parliament. Otis still insisted upon the use of "proper and legal measures to obtain redress" although he was back to illustrating his speeches with the histories of bad kings who had lost their heads.²⁹ Yet Otis needed a king to shore up his defenses against the mother. I interpret his wish that Britain were "sunk in the Sea, so that the King and his Family were Saved" as another example of irrational filial piety toward the father king combined with barely concealed elements of sadistic hostility toward the mother country.³⁰ He had nose bleeds, he found himself gasping for air; in short, he was breaking down.³¹ Gone was the phallic "Freeborn Armstrong," gone was the tax protester; and what remained was a primitive oral need and the desire for a protector.³² Otis took refuge in the bottle. He expressed himself in invective, four-letter words, and spoke of his monumental regret for the disservice he had done his country. Then in August of 1770, smelling of alcohol, Otis sought out his bitter opponent Thomas Hutchinson, the royal governor, and sub-

mitted himself to this representative of the all powerful father, declaring that he now rested "in the peace of God and the king," that he considered the governor the "Representative of the King, and the King, as the Representative of God."³³ In the final analysis Otis could not free himself from either his infantilistic dependence upon father surrogates or separate himself from the exploiting mother country.

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REVIEW
ARTICLE

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CLIO AND PSYCHE

The primary purpose of the disciplines of history and psychology is to increase understanding of human behavior. Though historians tend to work with larger events extending through longer time periods, the two disciplines share a similar logic: by reconstructing and analyzing the past, a better understanding of the present may be gained. Despite such apparent grounds for close collaboration, however, the two disciplines have generally ignored each other.

Any review of the relationship between history and psychology must recognize that, secure in its status as the senior discipline, history has until very recently maintained a cavalier, paternalistic attitude toward the substance of modern psychology; tolerant at best, simply xenophobic at worst. Apart from *hubris*, one primary explanation for this lies in a tradition of historiography that extends back to Herodotus and Thucydides: namely, that by definition the good historian is a good psychologist, good enough, at any rate, to use his own emotional and cognitive sensitivities as a means of elucidating the psychological functioning of remote historical figures. The historian's argument here comes down to a claim for the sufficiency of intuitive, common sense psychology, and can only be supported by rejecting (or ignoring) the counterintuitive findings of modern psychoanalysis and other branches of psychology.

A further reason for the disjunction between history and psychology derives from the historian's stubborn (and not altogether misplaced) allegiance to a methodology and a language of common sense. Hayden White observed that historians have not only been unable to meet the criteria of "hard" science, but also have failed to "probe the

more arcane strata of human consciousness."¹ This state of affairs has not gone unrecognized. In his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1957, William Langer called upon historians to learn from psychoanalysis.² During the past several years, however, young historians have shown growing interest in psychology (psychohistory, as it has come to be known), and the fact that such work has emerged as a legitimate element in the historical profession is evidenced by significant new publications and burgeoning interdisciplinary courses in many universities.

If a new trend toward interdisciplinary work is indeed developing, it seems all the more important to scrutinize prior achievements and failures and to place the use of psychology and psychoanalysis by historians into a historical context. Almost a century ago, Wilhelm Dilthey introduced the phenomenological concept of *verstehen* (understanding) as a tool for the analysis of historical events: he demanded that the historian immerse himself in his source material in order to gain an intuitive understanding of the past. At the same time he called for a psychology that rejected the methods of the natural sciences. He envisioned a psychological discipline that would not restrict itself to the investigation of sensations and feelings, but would attempt to comprehend the "structures by which the various functions of the human mind are organized." For this purpose introspective autobiographies, literature, poetry and historiography could be used as primary source material.³ Dilthey's works are characterized by discriminating perceptions and an uncanny sensitivity which is used to understand another person's thought. They are in Frank E. Manuel's words "elitist dramas in the passion of Great men's souls."⁴ Yet Manuel cogently observed that "nothing below the navel was mentionable."⁵ None of the perceptions of modern psychoanalysis which seek the sources for adult behavior in early experiences and which make sexual development central are used by Dilthey. His colleagues in the historical profession agreed with his rejection of positivism and empiricism, but had little use for any kind of psychology.

Most German historians accepted Heinrich Rickert's classification of scholarship; on the one hand, there were the natural sciences and those new disciplines that attempted to imitate their methods, such as sociology; on the other, the *Kulturwissenschaften*, which were not interested in discovering general laws, but sought to understand the unique experience—whether found in a work of art or in an historical event.

This concern for individuality and uniqueness by German historians was a defensive reaction to a perceived threat to conservative values. By emphasizing the constant flux of historical movement and seeing all values as relative to time and place, they maintained a philosophical posture opposed to democratic premises of the Enlightenment.⁶

Following Dilthey's unsuccessful effort to join history and psychology, the disciplines went in opposite directions. History remained true

to its time-honored common sense traditions, while psychology modeled itself on the methods of the exact sciences. The result has been that most historians have found academic psychology too narrow and simplistic to be useful in explaining historical events, while psychoanalytic theory appeared too speculative to be helpful in providing historical explanations.

For their part, most psychologists, usually trained either as natural scientists or as medical doctors, have rejected history as irrelevant to their concerns because it lacks both empirical standards of validity and a commitment to hypothetico-deductive methodology. Yet when it suits them, they have not hesitated to appeal to history. Thus, one may encounter the inconsistent but familiar arguments that Freud's ideas are only relevant to persons raised in the Victorian morality of *fin-de-siècle* bourgeois society, and that the human psyche has been unchanging through the ages. Academic psychologists have focused on those kinds of problems that would permit narrow quantitative solutions—precise study of the capacity of the eye to differentiate color, exact analysis of responses to pinpricks.

Interdisciplinary efforts conducted in the psychoanalytical tradition—never quite respectable in academia—stand in sharp contrast to “scientific” psychology. Two levels of analysis are involved: the socio-cultural and the individual. Psychoanalytic efforts at the socio-cultural level originate with Freud's works on religion and the origin of civilization. These metapsychanalytical works have generally been rejected by anthropologists and other scholars in “traditional” disciplines. Clinically oriented analysts trained to treat individual patients, but not to understand culture, regard *Moses and Monotheism*, *Future of an Illusion* and *Totem and Taboo* as sources of embarrassment, and of little or no value to their therapeutic concerns. There is a certain logic in the fact that the most exciting speculative works done in the Freudian tradition have been written by non-analysts: Norman O. Brown, author of the daring metapsychanalytical and philosophical works *Life Against Death* and *Love's other Body*, is a classicist; Herbert Marcuse, whose *Eros and Civilization* is the most sophisticated attempt to join Marx and Freud, comes to these questions from previous concern with the philosophical issues raised by Marx and Hegel.⁷

At the individual level, Freudian theory has been employed to explain the actions of great men. Freud himself started this line of development with his study of Leonardo de Vinci. Numerous significant psychoanalytical biographies of historical figures are now available.⁸ But until very recently most efforts to apply psychology and particularly psychoanalysis to history have at best been interesting failures, largely because their authors have given insufficient weight to the various elements defining the historical context. Such phenomena as shared life patterns and modal experiences, present at diverse levels of society, have typically been ignored in favor of psychodynamic interpretations of the individual. The historical personage is treated as

if he were a patient in analysis, with crucial diplomatic and political situations viewed only as triggers for some form of individual pathology.

Before 1914, when Freud wrote most of his seminal works, the world seemed so "normal" that a feeling of persecution had to be explained as a delusion. Most psychologists today still operate in accordance with this nineteenth century perception of reality, having failed to realize that in the twentieth century persecution, torture, and arbitrary imprisonment have become normative for a large portion of the world. Many persons feel persecuted because they are. Consequently, the first question that needs be asked about behavior patterns that conform to the textbook version of paranoia is whether the felt persecution is real or imagined. This is a historical and not a psychological question.

In their discussion of adjustment problems among blacks, for instance, Grier and Cobbs cite paranoid feelings associated with a sense of powerlessness to be typical.⁹ Other researchers report that blacks more often indicate weaker feelings of fate control—they see their lives dominated more by external than by internal events.¹⁰ Yet it is clear from their historical and contemporary status in our society that among blacks such perceptions are eminently reasonable. In fact, it may be those blacks who do not show some denotatively paranoid behavior who are out of touch with reality.

The close weave between historical events and nominally pathological descriptions of behavior is dramatized in Lifton's analysis of Japanese who survived the nuclear attack on Hiroshima.¹¹ He reports that psychiatric examinations reveal them to be relatively alienated, and suffering from a kind of unique nuclear "survivor complex" marked by paranoid overtones. But in a critique of Lifton's work, Paul Goodman asks, "Why shouldn't they?"¹² Should not alienation be understood as a healthy reaction among people who have reason to fear themselves damaged genetically and subject to other disorders associated with intense exposure to radiation? Should not paranoid suspicions characterize their adjustment to a larger society which on the one hand sets them on a pedestal with assurances that they are not forgotten, while on the other hand treating them as lepers? The fundamental issue here is that the definition of paranoia is not fully defined by behavior, but requires historical analysis to determine whether the feeling of persecution has an actual basis.

Some works have in varying degrees suggested how a sophisticated application of psychology can increase substantially the understanding of a historical event or process. In a hitherto neglected study published in 1931, Fedor Vergin analyzed the major political and social forces of the 1920s and 30s within a psychoanalytic framework. Particularly significant is his discussion of the subconscious anal-sadistic forces influencing Hitler.¹³

The experience of national socialism fascinated many. A book of

1943 expounded the thesis that Germany was suffering from paranoia.¹⁴ Both Leo Alexander and Elie Cohen attempted to explain the behavior of the SS by using such concepts as "tribal superego" and "criminal superego."¹⁵ Following World War II, a number of studies appeared offering psychoanalytic interpretations of German anti-Semitism.¹⁶ They attempted to explain anti-Semitism as a compensation for real or imagined inferiorities. The basic problem with much of this work is that the relationship between individual psychopathology and mass political behavior is generally not convincing. Kurth, for instance, found the origins of Hitler's anti-Semitism in the treatment that his mother was given by a Jewish physician, arguing that the dynamics of an unresolved Oedipus complex led Hitler to generalize his hostile emotions from his father to the physician, and from the physician to Jews in general.¹⁷ Some twenty years later, Waite has elaborated the theme that Hitler's fear of incest energized his hatred of the Jews.¹⁸ Valuable as they may be for heuristic purposes, studies of this type do not make a major contribution to the understanding of Nazi anti-Semitism, much less the "final solution," because they ignore the gross historical and situational factors that must inevitably influence relationships between individual psycho-dynamics and political action.

Two important works addressed themselves to the problem of the relationship between individual psychology and modern totalitarian movements.¹⁹ Published in 1950, *The Authoritarian Personality* stands as one of the most ambitious attempts to relate Freudian personality theory to politics at the level of everyday individual behavior. This study is not concerned with the "great man" but addresses itself to the relationship between early family experiences and personal adjustments and attitudes towards minority groups, war, democracy, and child rearing.

The work was all the more impressive because it offered a convenient empirical tool—the F (for Fascism) scale—which allows easy identification of those who hold a certain cluster of rigidly conservative and ethnocentric beliefs. This was shown by illustrative material in the original book. Subsequent studies demonstrated that many forms of retrograde political behavior can indeed be accurately predicted for persons with very high scores on the F-scale. Christianson reported that such persons held extremely conservative views of international affairs.²⁰ Henry Dicks's interviews with captured German soldiers and SS men also supports the reality of a basic authoritarian personality pattern.²¹ At the same time, however, studies showing that the F-scale could not be employed to predict the behavior of persons with moderate or low scores have given the original work an ambiguous status in contemporary social science. It is relevant, in this connection, to observe that Nevitt Sanford, one of Adorno's co-authors, now suggests that authoritarianism should be viewed as a "... psychohistorical concept, a pattern of personality and ideology that belonged to

its' time."²² Indeed, with the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the 1950 work on authoritarianism says little about situational factors which establish the basis for relationships between personality and socio-political behavior. Hence the problem of understanding how personality dynamics can lead large numbers of people into a mass movement is at best only partially illuminated by this work.²³

Compared with *The Authoritarian Personality*, Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* gives much more consideration to historical events mediating the relationship between personality and politics. Although it is explicitly concerned with the psychological basis for modern mass movements, particularly German National Socialism, Fromm's work is founded upon a broad interpretation of the psychological effects of the industrial revolution. Much of it is designed to give a psychological dimension to the Marxian concept of alienation. He provides a variant of Reich's *Psychology of Fascism*, with the Reichian radicalism now made palatable to middle-class sensibilities. (Reich had suggested that Fascism was a psychological escape from sexual repression.)²⁴

Fromm's fundamental thesis is that since the Reformation, and particularly since the rise of modern capitalism, the trend of European history has had two related effects observable at the everyday level of individual adjustment. People have gained increasing freedom from various communal institutions—the family, the guild, the church, etc.—but the cost of this freedom has been individual insecurity and loneliness. Western Man seeks substitutes for the social support these communal ties had provided. As a result, Fromm argues, modern men join mass movements which promise a new sense of belonging, and which reduce the heavy burden of freedom.

Fromm's thesis has been criticized by historians who point out that it is more of a diagnosis of the effects of capitalism than an explanation of national socialism. His later work tends to confirm this critique because in conjunction with more explicit statements about the psychological costs of a capitalistic, competitive style of life, he offers utopian solutions of how to achieve a better life in a "sane society." Setting other criticisms aside, however (it has been said that Fromm is the Norman Vincent Peale of the intellectuals), his ideas suggest only an individual basis for the appeal of mass movements; they explain why some people are willing to accept a follower's role in totalitarian organizations, but do not explain how such organizations can acquire almost unconditional allegiance from people.

Some of these questions are examined by Sanford and Comstock in their anthology *Sanctions for Evil*.²⁵ Written under the shadow of the My-Lai massacre, this work analyzes processes whereby members of one culture or group become persuaded that they may properly inflict injury or death upon people they regard as inferior to themselves. An important contribution of this material is the effort it makes to explain

the meaning of historical factors both at the individual level and the policy-making level.

Whereas Sanford examines evil from the perspective of its perpetrators, Bruno Bettelheim, a Freudian psychoanalyst who was imprisoned in a German concentration camp, sees it from the perspective of a victim. His experience led him to modify traditional Freudian views:

My experience in the camps taught me, almost within days, that I had gone much too far in believing that only changes in man could create changes in society. I had to accept that the environment could, as it were, turn personality upside down, and not just in the small child, but in the mature adult too.²⁶

Bettelheim has applied his newly found insight in his work with severely disturbed children. He has developed a technique known as milieu therapy, which is relatively successful and which depends upon a fine-grained evaluation of the psychological meaning of social and physical factors in a child's immediate environment.²⁷

Bettelheim's ideas are especially important because, while deploying psychological knowledge upon recent historical events, he breaks through the traditional pattern involving imitations or small extensions of Freud. Equally valuable here is the fact that Bettelheim's concern with the psychological properties of situations fits an increasingly broad stream of basic research. Thus:

1. Barker and Wright have produced a large volume of work showing how common "behavior settings" can be understood as constituting a psychological ecology which determines the meaning of much individual behavior.²⁸

2. Mental health experts see great value in transitional facilities. Whether used to help narcotics addicts, alcoholics or mental patients, increasingly popular "halfway house" operations all involve the same principle: they are environments specially designed for people with special problems.

3. Based on extensions of research findings concerning human learning, behavior modification therapists have shown that they can desensitize people to the threatening psychological properties of certain situations.

4. Various studies of international conflict show how decision-makers may be swept along by situations and events regardless of their personal inclination. De Rivera analyzes some of the diplomatic-military conduct of the Korean War from this perspective.²⁹ Osgood argues that the escalation and de-escalation of international tension depends upon the alteration of situational factors, while Anatol Rapoport has developed experimental evidence demonstrating the crucial role of situational factors which can determine whether or not persons will behave cooperatively or competitively.³⁰

These emerging trends in psychology mark a major change from past concerns and offer promising new ground for fruitful interaction between history and psychology. More specifically, the key factor providing a new basis for interdisciplinary cooperation is at once both prosaic and profound: childhood. Direct awareness of this may be found in Erik Erikson's pioneer efforts in psychohistory. Reflecting upon the lessons of his work on Martin Luther, Erikson suggested in 1968 that:

... historical processes have already entered the individual's core in childhood. Past history survives in the ideal and evil prototypes which guide the parental imagery and which color fairy tale and family lore, superstition and gossip, and the simple lessons of early verbal training. Historians on the whole make little of this; they account only for the contest of autonomous historical ideas and are unconcerned with the fact that these ideas reach down into the lives of generations and re-emerge through the daily awakening and training of historical consciousness in young individuals: via the mythmakers of religion and politics, of the arts and the sciences, of drama, cinema and fiction—all contributing more or less consciously, more or less responsibly to the historical logic absorbed by youth."³¹

A new generation of historians, many of them trained both in psychology and history, are recognizing childhood as a genuine psychohistorical phenomenon. Summerville observed that "although professional historians have long neglected the history of the child, and of the cultural constructs of childhood, the publication record of the past several years is evidence of a surge of interest in this field."³² Sessions at recent professional meetings devoted to the analysis of childhood and its historical setting have appeared with increasing frequency. The *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* has in the three years of its existence published a number of significant articles dealing with childhood and the family, while responses to the announcement of *History of Childhood Quarterly* provides further evidence of the increasing interest in childhood as a proper subject for historical investigation.

An analogous trend has emerged in the discipline of psychology. Here also, a dramatic rise in the empirical and theoretical literature concerning childhood has led to the publication of a new serial, the *Journal of Developmental Psychology*. Among contemporary psychologists, Jean Piaget's work on the intellectual development of the child is increasingly given the same high status that was once exclusively reserved to Freud.³³ There is, moreover, a serious recognition by many psychologists that understanding of human development requires a knowledge of its historical context.³⁴

Dramatic new perspectives on the meaning of childhood are being provided by historians scrutinizing hitherto neglected primary sources. For the first time, at least with reference to some historical periods

in Europe and America, we are beginning to develop a detailed picture of how children were treated, and it is becoming quite clear that throughout most of Western history, child-rearing practices were hardly more than brutal, often sadistic processes designed to break the child's will.

The studies of Ariès and Hunt form a vital center for current discussion.³⁵ First published in 1960, Phillipe Ariès's *Centuries of Childhood* is a groundbreaking analysis of changing child-rearing practices in the family and in the schools, as they evolved from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century. Ariès's study is in the tradition of descriptive historiography, aimed at explaining how the concept of childhood changed through time and came to be recognized as a distinct stage of human development. More recently David Hunt, in *Parents & Children*, examines similar phenomena in a more narrow chronological focus and in conjunction with a more self-consciously theoretical framework. Hunt's theme is the fundamental antithesis between Ariès's historical definition of childhood and current psychological theories of development that assume that parents are innately concerned with maximizing the welfare of their children. Acknowledging his debts to Ariès and Erik Erikson, he is critical of both. Ariès's work is judged to lack an explicit psychological dimension, while Erikson's theory of child development is criticized for lacking a serious historical context. Hunt specifically objects to Erikson's assumption of an innate generativity, a desire to look after small children, as a part of human nature.³⁶

The historical evidence presently available certainly justifies Hunt's critique, but he himself does not offer important new theoretical integration between the historical and psychological dimensions of childhood.

Cruelty towards children is the main substance of Gordon R. Taylor's *Angel-Makers*.³⁷ Utilizing hitherto unexploited primary sources concerning child-rearing practices in England during the period 1750–1850, he concludes that, caught up in the grip of puritan doctrine and ideology, many parents of this time almost literally sought to transform their children into angels, perpetrating some devilishly refined cruelties in the process. Parenthetically, it may be noted that R.D. Laing's writings on contemporary family life emphasize the frequency with which parents today do psychological violence to their children in the name of love.

The persistent pattern of cruelty and rejection of children—ranging from beating to ill-disguised forms of infanticide—is perhaps the main burden of all the salient psychohistorical childhood studies that are now current. This is in stark contrast to prevailing psychological assumptions taking parental love and concern for the child to be a universal norm. This new knowledge requires a theoretical integration which is not yet available, although a beginning may be found in a psychiatric study rarely mentioned in the literature: Joseph C. Rhein-

gold's *The Fear of Being a Woman*.³⁸ Based on the author's clinical observations of parental cruelties, this work concludes that "a large part of (child) rearing practices and parental acts and attitudes is predicated on hate. . . . (the child) lives in a world of threat and he responds to it with fear; he learns to hate defensively and in turn becomes a destructive parent."³⁹ Rheingold also suggests a bio-social theoretical framework for his observations which might well serve as a basis for interpretation of the psychohistorical findings mentioned earlier.

Finally, Peter Loewenberg's "Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort" must be singled out for its ingenious analysis of the relationship between childhood events and subsequent political behavior.⁴⁰ Based on a psychoanalytic interpretation of prototypical events characterizing the childhood of Germans born between 1900 and 1915, such as prolonged father-absence, near-starvation diet, and the collapse of the old order, Loewenberg cogently argues that the Nazi movement satisfied needs arising from the early experiences of this age group. Seeking compensation for their "lost" childhood, this generation fell prey to Hitler's manipulation of their hopes for warmth, security, and power. But, as Loewenberg states, instead of achieving these conditions, they recreated ". . . a repetition of their own childhoods. They gave (to Europe) . . . precisely the traumas they had suffered as children and adolescents a quarter of a century earlier."⁴¹

In general, it should be clear that recent efforts toward the integration of history and psychology have progressed beyond promise and have begun to yield significant results. Sophisticated use of psychological perspectives by historians is already an accomplished fact, and among psychologists there is a growing awareness of the need for historical interpretations of human development. Perhaps Wilhelm Dilthey's dream of a new science of man that can comprehend "historical man" in all his manifestations may yet be fulfilled.

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An earlier version of this paper was present at the 4th meeting of Cheiron: The International Society for the History of the Behavioral and Social Sciences at the University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta Canada, June 29, 1972. We wish to thank Professor Al Hamscher for his critical readings of this material.

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REVIEW
ARTICLE

**ADULTS AND
CHILDREN: AGAINST
EVIL OR AGAINST
EACH OTHER**

MARTHA
ELLIS
FRANÇOIS

Ronald Seth, *Children Against Witches* (London: Robert Hale, 1969). 190 pages.

George Zabriskie Gray, *The Children's Crusade* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1972). 191 pages. \$4.95. (Originally published in 1870.)

Books on children or the family and their role in history are few and far between. Only recently have some scholars begun to examine that topic as relevant to the better understanding of adult activities and achievements.¹ Perhaps the reason for this neglect is that modern "man" has prided himself on becoming just that—"a man"—thus putting away childish things and, for that matter, mother and the effeminate aspects of life, with the consequence that children and women have all too often been forgotten.

From the few books on children and their role in history published to date, two have been selected as the subject of this review article: George Zabriskie Gray's *The Children's Crusade* (originally published in 1870, now reprinted in 1972) and Ronald Seth's *Children Against Witches* (1969). Many thousands of children from Germany and France turned out for a crusade in 1212. Along the way to the Mediterranean thousands died, and those who finally did see the Moslems did so, for the most part, as slaves rather than as victors for the cause of Christianity. Such a tragedy would seem to warrant study; yet Gray's book is still the only serious examination of that topic, although many books on the crusades have been written since 1870.² There-

fore, its reprinting is indeed welcome. Likewise, since few of the many studies on witchcraft extensively examine the role of children as victims and accusers of witches, Seth's study of English witch trials in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is also welcome.³

It may seem odd at first glance to attempt to cover these two books in the same review since beyond the general topic of children they appear to cover such different events. However, there is a close connection between them. In the first place, both books deal with the child⁴ (and the adult's involvement) as an opponent of evil—the infidel and the witch (or the devil). Witch hunts and trials were a kind of crusade as much as those massive efforts against the infidel. In fact, on the continent they were viewed as crusades against heresy, although in sixteenth century England they were conducted more on seemingly legal grounds against murderers and destroyers of property. In the second place, it seems quite conceivable to this reviewer that in both instances the role of children and, for that matter, the role of adults may have served similar functions in terms of expressing not only aspirations but also feelings of hostility and frustrations.

In depicting the period in which these two sets of events took place, Gray's treatment seems more sensitive than Seth's, although it must be added that Gray's Victorian smugness caused him at times to over-emphasize the horrors of that era as opposed to his own. Gray cited the wars and uncertainties of life especially in the early thirteenth century as a large part of the explanation for the Children's Crusade, while Seth described only the background of witch trials on the continent with little explanation of England's state of tension in the reign of Elizabeth and in the early seventeenth century when the witch trials were especially abundant. The spread of ideas from the continent alone cannot account for the witch trials; otherwise they would have been present much sooner. Occasionally Seth did cite local conditions as contributing to the tensions in a community, such as in the case of the Pendle Forest Witches, but even there he mentioned the problems of Catholics *versus* Protestants without specifically linking that struggle to Pendle itself.

Gray's discussion of motives, both of the adults and children, seems surprisingly perceptive for the times in which he was writing, although now additions could, of course, be made because of the advancements made in psychology and psychiatry. His description of the role of adults included the idea that they were preoccupied with local problems which were then abounding and thus they felt unable to answer the call of the pope to go on a crusade. Therefore, they may well have projected their own desires onto their children to alleviate any guilt and/or frustration they may have felt. What seems to us, then, a despicable "slaughter of the innocents" might be explained as a true example of religious spirit during a period known as the Age of Faith. Certainly, as Gray pointed out, during the beginning stages of the Children's Crusade, adults seemed to have played an instrumental part

in stimulating its leadership. In 1212, Stephen, a shepherd boy around twelve years of age, encountered a stranger calling himself Jesus Christ (Gray suggested that he might have been a priest in disguise) who directed him to begin a crusade against the infidel in the East. From that meeting came Stephen's determination to lead the group from France. At least one other adult was deeply involved in that movement—Jacob of Hungary, who travelled around the countryside advertising the crusade with the hopes of getting as much support for it as possible. In Germany, Nicholas, who became the leader of one of the German groups, was said to have been influenced by his father, perhaps with a profit motive in mind.

It would seem that some parents were not pleased that their children were taking the vow, but they argued against it in vain. In an era in which children were expected to obey their parents without question, one wonders how strong their protests actually were to be so easily set aside. While there may have been some verbal protest, no armed methods were employed. It could be argued that it would have been awkward for the parents to protest too loudly since the Church and more particularly the Pope were not opposed to the venture, but, since armed methods were quickly mobilized against shepherds and others preparing for a crusade in 1250, there clearly could have been means to stop the Children's Crusade had the parents really wanted to prevent their children from going.

Although we know of only a few individual adults who participated in gathering the children together, there may well have been others, for as many as one hundred thousand people gathered together to form the three groups who very shortly left for the Mediterranean where they thought that the water would part to permit them to pass to the Holy Land. Included in that number were many peasant children but also some children from more wealthy homes, the vast majority of whom seem to have been boys around the age of twelve. Some adults, mostly the elderly, thieves, and prostitutes, were also part of these groups. Could this entire company be labeled those least valued or those without accepted identity in society? Gray quoted the children as saying:

Long enough have you, knights and warriors, so boastful and so honored, been making your fruitless attempts to rescue the tomb of Christ! God can wait no longer! He is tired of your vain, puny commission! He who calls can insure the victory, and we will show you what children can do!⁵

A most interesting statement indeed! Indeed some of the real feelings of parents and other adults were expressed when the few children who survived did return. Their trip home was made through a countryside no longer friendly and helpful as it had been when they set out.⁶

If tensions did, in fact, exist between adults and children, perhaps a demographic approach will assist in explaining their presence. The

crusades have already been interpreted by historians as economic ventures in disguise and as a way of occupying excess numbers of young men in an era of increasing population. Even Urban II's speech at Clermont in 1095, as it was reported by Fulcher of Chartres, suggested the latter interpretation. The year 1212 was right at the peak of the population increase. Could we not, then, fairly interpret the Children's Crusade and the support it received as an unconscious and perhaps even a conscious way of relieving the pressure of having too many children around?

So far only the desires of the parents have been dealt with—what of the children themselves? During the Middle Ages, children were certainly not held in high regard (boys and servants were called by the same names and children were frequently compared to animals). Nor would it seem that they could have had much sense of trust and autonomy from their early stages of growth, which Erikson would see as necessary for the well-balanced child of today. Numerous aspects of life in the Middle Ages must have contributed to the child's general feeling of insecurity: constricting swaddling clothes, difficulties in obtaining sufficient milk, and the expectation of corporal punishment if he did not obey his parents (especially his father) without question. Besides, many of the crusading children were twelve-year-old boys, at just the age when they should have begun the training necessary to take up adult roles. Perhaps their willingness to participate in the crusade is an indication of their wish to be free from their parents' authority, as Gray suggested.

Going in bands under the guise of a crusade would have provided them with enough sense of security to leave home which under normal circumstances they might not have done. The bands themselves might well have had great appeal to children of that age group, for they provided the children with a sense of belonging—an identity. Their make-shift uniforms, banners, and songs contributed to this sense of identity.⁷ Also, by assuming the role of a crusader, as Gray implied, they were assuming the role of an adult-hero type, whether it was an actual identification with a dead crusading parent or a more general type of identification. For the girls who went along, what a wonderful opportunity for them to engage in activities other than those connected with domestic chores and to be like brother at long last! In other words, while the adults can be blamed for sending so many children to a needless death as a projection of their own wishes, the children should not be seen as mere puppets of the adult world. They were engaged in the venture because of their own wishes, but it must be granted that those wishes were certainly shaped by their reactions to adults.

Seth was writing in the post-Freudian period; yet he also failed to take into account the child's views as fully as he might have. Wherever he could, he put forth the idea that adults had influenced the direction of the witch trials, by guiding testimony and even the hysterical behavior of the children involved. Undoubtedly the adult world did influ-

ence children's views on witches and may even have guided children in their testimony at times, but was that the only or even the most important influence which provoked children's participation in witch trials? Before answering that question more needs to be said about Seth's approach.

He made a distinction between those children who gave testimony but were not afflicted by the witches directly and those children—called impostors by Seth—who made accusations that they had been afflicted directly by the witches. Even Seth seems to have sensed the problems caused by that kind of distinction when he was discussing the Bury St. Edmunds case which he had placed in the first part of his book, which did not deal with the so-called impostors. His justification for that choice was that the children's behavior was real hysteria at the outset, but among the cases of impostors he also admitted that hysteria was real sometimes at the outset (see the "Case of the Wicked Children of Warboys"). In both parts of his book he gave instances of adult influence where the child did not seem as reprehensible as the adults. Some of the impostors were encouraged by adults, but here one gets the feeling that the children were the "naughty" element because of their fabrications.⁸

It might have been better to organize the examination of children's roles in witchcraft trials under the headings of the various capacities in which they appeared—as witches, as observers of witches who were not directly involved, but who were ready to testify against the so-called witches, and as victims of so-called witches (including those who suffered mild problems and those who were cases of hysteria—consciously or unconsciously induced) also ready to testify against the so-called witches. Since Seth's chief concern was the testimony of child-accusers of witches and not the self-professed child witches, we will concern ourselves with the last two topics, but it should be added that more research needs to be done on the child witches.

Seth was undoubtedly right when he claimed that children's testimony usually made the difference between conviction and acquittal in spite of the fact that they were legally too young to testify. That may well have been true, but their use as witnesses should not be too surprising since procedures so clearly stated today were by no means so clearly spelled out then.⁹ Special circumstances, as Seth pointed out, call for special procedures. In spite of the fact that much of the time adults think little of children, in times of social tension children seem to them an excellent medium through which to attack evils—they are so innocent that they are able to detect evil and speak the truth about it. That idea appears in a number of societies and was certainly expressed in sixteenth-century England. In the words of Robert Brain:

The most important function of children's accusations and confessions (both Anglo-Saxon and Bangwa) is to confirm in a clear, matter-of-fact fashion the vague beliefs of adults. Out of the mouths of innocent babes come minute descriptions of unbelievable

witchcraft excesses. Children do not lie; how can it be in their interest to fabricate such circumstantial stories? This explains why the delusions of the Bangwa children and the fantasies of the Salem girls are taken seriously; the adults need their inchoate beliefs substantialized.¹⁰

Thus, adults could see their own hostilities expressed by children without getting directly involved themselves, or, if they did, their own testimony seemed possible because of the testimony of children. The easy acceptance of children as witnesses can be explained in still another way. There were some writers, like Bodin, who realized that children had fewer societal inhibitions, especially with the support of adults, and thus could more easily be made to accuse others than adults could. The extent of their social development was still limited and they feared much less a departure from normal controls in society.

By examining many of the famous witch trials in England, Seth brought out the point, time and time again, that adult influence was frequently behind the children's statements. Yet the evidence did not always support him in that assertion. Also, he did not always fully investigate the motives of the children, especially among those who were not categorized by him as impostors. His treatment of the first Chelmsford Trial (Hatfield Peverell witches) is a good case in point. He felt that Agnes Brown, who testified against Joan Waterhouse, had probably been primed for it by her aunt and the minister. Is it fair to make that surmise without further exploration? Agnes Brown's tale of being attacked by a dog seems very childlike indeed. Dogs, horses, wolves—all these are frequently objects of phobias in children. Fantasies of that sort help children to handle anxiety. Through them, they can project their feelings with respect to the family onto something which they can avoid or which at least to them seems less immediate than parents do.¹¹ In that period when even the adult world thoroughly believed in witches and all that implies, Agnes's tale seems even more plausibly an expression by a child of her own frustrations and anxieties.¹²

What might these frustrations and anxieties have been? If the adult world in a place like Hatfield Peverell was suffering seeming loss of neighborliness¹³ and thus witch fears, think of how that problem would have been reflected in the handling of children like Agnes by the adult world. If studies of child beating in the twentieth century (in which the child in general is given much more consideration) are any indication, imagine what the child-adult relationship might have been like in the sixteenth century, a period which is supposed to have seen the use of corporal punishment increasingly advocated whether or not the child had misbehaved.¹⁴ Resentments and emotional problems must have been in evidence on all sides. Older women, perhaps somewhat strange in their behavior or ugly with age and skin diseases, perhaps even guilty of actual crimes, made perfect scapegoats for adults and children alike. By accusing them, the child could project his frustra-

tions against parents or guardians outside the home and gain some relief from his sense of hatred (mixed undoubtedly with a sense of guilt). In the trial itself, both children and adults could gain satisfaction and release because they could act out their aggressive feelings legally and gain a measure of praise, sympathy, and above all attention, at least for the moment.

The Second Chelmsford Trial seems to give an even better example of the frustrated child seeking release, this time by testifying against his own mother. Seth made the point that, perhaps because the child was a bastard (no father was mentioned) and thus more insecure, he was more easily prevailed upon by adults to testify. Yet being a bastard in itself would probably not have caused a severe enough problem to force a child to testify against his mother, at least not in that society. He seems to have had many more serious problems than that. Consider that he was brought up by his mother, a woman whose own mother was hanged for witchcraft five years before, and who may well have killed her own step-father when he came to live with her after her mother's death. This last point was left out of the story by Seth, but it seems necessary to include it, since it may help to explain why the boy was so willing to testify against his own mother. According to her step-father's account just before he died, he and his step-daughter had an argument over money and she had cursed him. Within an hour of the curse he could no longer keep anything in his stomach—a case of poisoning or of a death induced by fear and belief in the effectiveness of curses? We will never know for certain, but her son must have been aware of some of the details, or at least he was aware that his grandfather was no longer alive. It is possible, then, that he might have fantasized that his mother was responsible for his grandfather's absence and blamed her for it.¹⁵

While Ellen Smith, his mother, may have been hanged unjustly (she never confessed), there certainly seems to be enough evidence to suggest that she was a deeply troubled person who could not get on with her neighbors and may have caused the death of a child as well as the death of her father. If she was capable of killing another woman's child it seems that she might well have been capable of antagonizing her own son to the point of making him willing to retaliate by testifying against her, especially if he realized that the world to which he was testifying was ready to hear his statements. Nothing in his testimony was out of the ordinary for an angry and troubled child of thirteen to have said without direct adult prompting.¹⁶

From my knowledge of both the St. Osyth trial and the Pendle Forest trials, I would also suggest similar modifications to Seth's emphasis on the role of adults in children's testimonies. Brian Darcy, the justice of the peace and a man of considerable importance in the St. Osyth community, may well have helped to shape the way in which the trial progressed even to the point of making promises he legally could not keep in order to obtain testimony, but again the children's words seem

most fitting for their ages. Brian Darcy may have been attempting to further his ambitions, as Seth suggested, but the caption on his tombstone suggested that he was especially helpful to the poor and to his kin. His concern for the poor may have been one reason for his participation in these witch accusations. He certainly seems to have done very well by his family, although he did not represent the most important branch of the Darcy clan. He may have taken special interest in this case because he thought that the death of his kinsman, John, Baron Darcy of Chiche, may have been brought about by witchcraft, a point which Seth did not mention.¹⁷ Seth also failed to make clear that three of the accused witches who gave testimony about each other were related: Alice Hunt and Margary Sammon were sisters and Joan Pechy was Alice's step-daughter. Perhaps a problem of sibling relationships and an instance of the "evil" step-mother may have really been at the heart of this case, as much as Darcy's eagerness to prosecute.

With respect to the Pendle Forest trials, the Device family was clearly a very troubled one—the grandmother and the mother were self-confessed witches and the laborer-father fell victim to another witch because he failed to pay the yearly dole to her for protection. As for the three children, two of them confessed to being witches and one testified against them all. When we add to that scene a rival faction of "witches" in addition to possible economic and religious problems in the community, we can begin to understand how complex the situation was. While there is really not enough information to assess in any great detail what was actually going on, we can well appreciate that the family life of some of the participants was far from peaceful and not very conducive to producing "normal" children. In fact, delinquent behavior is not surprising, under the circumstances, from the older two children (Allison and James) who seem to have been willing to follow in their mother's footsteps. Nor is it too surprising to find the youngest child willing to testify against the family, since she probably had not been included in her mother's activities as much as the other two siblings. The mother, confronted with her children's statements against her, confessed at first but, when she heard her youngest child's full testimony, she

. . . according to her accustomed manner, outrageously cursing, cried out against the child in such a fearful manner, as all the Court did not a little wonder at her, and so amazed the child, as with weeping tears shee cried out unto my Lord the Judge, and told him, she was not able to speak in the presence of her Mother.¹⁸

It might be added here that this scene was the only time that Jennet, the youngest child, was visibly shaken, according to the contemporary accounts. Seth himself comments on Jennet's ability to avoid the traps set for her by the judge to verify her testimony. The contrast between her usual composure and her brother's appearance is most striking.

A contemporary, Thomas Potts, described him, at one point, in the following way:

This wicked and miserable Wretch, whether by practise, or meanes, to bring himself to some untimely death, and thereby to avoide his Tryall by his Country, and just judgement of the Law . . . was so insensible, weake and unable in all things . . .¹⁹

He seems, therefore, to have really suffered, but not so his sister who appears for the most part emotionless. But was she? Seth found her possessing:

. . . a precocious aplomb . . . She was capable of assimilating and reproducing all that was told her, and, by the same token, could invent what she had not been told. There is not the unwitting innocence of childhood here. The desire to attract attention and to hold it uncovered dramatic traits in her that doubtless would have brought her great success on the stage . . . I find in her much more of the monster than Thomas Potts found in her brother James.²⁰

That seems to be a very superficial judgment of her. Monster she may have been, but she probably had many emotional problems, not least among them the reputation which she helped to create about her own family. The stigma of the family seems to have continued in the memory of the community and perhaps in Jennet's own mind for a number of years. Rosen wrote:

One Janet Device was condemned for witchcraft, though apparently not executed, in the outrageous Lancashire trials of 1633; the evidence of the chief juvenile witness in that case is based on scraps of legend and gossip surviving from 1612.²¹

The irony here is sad, to say the least. It would seem fair, then, to theorize that Jennet's problems were much complex than Seth's summary of her as a lover of limelight and an extrovert would suggest. That she was coached by adults cannot be proved; that she was hiding feelings of deep inferiority and hostility toward herself and others behind a mask of composure might well have been the case.

While space does not permit an examination of all the cases involving children's testimony which Seth discussed, it seems fair to say that much more was involved in some of those cases than the following summary would suggest:

The children in the cases I cited in Part I, with the possible exception of the Bury St. Edmunds case, were made the deliberate pawns of adults in their unreasoning campaign against events for which they could find no rational explanation.²²

In the second half of his book devoted to impostors, Seth examined children who played at being victimized by witches, at least as he put it. His handling of individual cases seems more sensitive than in the first part of his book, since he was trying to understand the children

posing as impostors, especially insofar as their actions resembled hysteria. In introducing this section he made the observation that "... little girls . . . were more deadly in their inventions than the boys—which, I suppose, is not to be wondered at."²³ What did he mean by that statement? Was he thinking that hysterical outbursts were more frequently found in women than in men, and, in fact, that the early explanations of hysteria were almost solely on the bases of female problems such as the womb tilting, the onset of menstruation, and the coming of change of life. Sometimes hysteria was termed "mother" or "suffocation of the mother."²⁴ Or was Seth thinking of the greater difficulty girls have in making a resolution of the oedipal complex than boys because they have no one else but women to identify with and that identification only reminds them of their ambivalent feelings about mother?²⁵ We know very little about the age when children reached puberty, but it is possible that some of the female child-impostors might have begun to menstruate, perhaps even ahead of the average time. Since menstruating females and witches were frequently equated as having the same attributes, it is possible that some of these young girls may have feared that they were witches.²⁶ To alleviate that fear they may have played at being bewitched in order to reaffirm a more positive ego than they suspected they had.²⁷

While Seth dealt with a number of witch cases involving hysteria he did not use the case of Mary Glover of London in 1602, which is particularly interesting in this context, for it involved a fourteen-year-old girl, possibly old enough to be menstruating. Doctors were called in to examine her, and one of them, Edward Jordan, wrote a tract, on the basis of his questioning and examining of her, entitled: "A Brief Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother. Written upon occasion which hath beene of late taken thereby, to suspect possession of an evill spirit, or some such like supernaturall power. Wherein is declared that divers strange actions and passions of the body of man, which in the common opinion, are imputed to the Divell, have their true naturall causes, and do accompany this disease" (London: John Windet, 1603). After his examination of Mary, who was afflicted with speechlessness, blindness, and acute swelling of the throat and the neck among other symptoms, he declared that it was hysteria, not bewitchment. However, that did not deter the court, which sent the accused, Elizabeth Jackson, to the pillory and imprisonment.²⁸ Although he did not dispute the uterine theory as a source for hysteria, he suggested that other parts of the body were involved.

He mentioned the traditional physical approaches, but his real concern was to alleviate the perturbations of the mind which, he felt, were actually responsible for the disease. He was the first to advise anything resembling psychotherapy for hysteria.²⁹

Even Seth had to admit that at the outset the hysterical reactions may have been involuntary. With respect to Jane Throckmorton who

really started the vendetta against Mother Samuel in the Warboys case of 1589-1592, he theorized that she may have been angry and frightened at moving to a new place. Her father was a clergyman and had received a new benefice. She may have been acting out her feelings of insecurity and, thus, resentment toward her father by having a case of anxiety hysteria.³⁰ The onset of her hysteria was marked by sneezing, stomach swelling, and leg shaking. She was probably coming out of the initial attack of hysteria when Mother Samuel came to visit her, but she decided to continue her state of hysteria, perhaps because she enjoyed the company and the attention it brought her.³¹ Here Seth was using Kretschmer's theory that there are three stages in hysterical outbursts—the first one stemming from involuntary responses to threatening situations, the second stage involving a voluntary decision to carry on the outbursts, and the third when voluntary and involuntary actions are joined, even to the point of physical changes. However, Seth seems to forget that it is not really easy to snap out of the third stage by oneself. Neither Seth nor Kretschmer made it clear that the decision to carry on, made in the second stage, was arrived at by the same person who went into the involuntary stage in the beginning—that the problems which lay behind that act may not have been solved. The third stage may have seemed the only solution. So the psychology of the hysteria victim needs to be looked at very carefully, and also the atmosphere of the family in which that person finds himself. The fact that Jane gained some relief when she scratched and drew blood from Mother Samuel's face suggests that a good deal of hostility lay beneath the surface—hostility against her own parents which could be eased only be redirecting it toward an outsider. Nor was Jane alone in her hysterical outbursts, for her two sisters and even some of the household servants seem also to have succumbed to attacks of hysteria, a fact which suggests that all was far from well with the whole household! Clearly, every time people moved from one place to another in that period they did not indulge in hysterical outbursts and accusations of witchcraft! Mother Samuel herself seems to have had personal problems. Perhaps it was only the trying experience of being a suspected witch over a long period of time combined with old age that caused her to confess to witchcraft—even to confess to having a man (the devil?) who knew her carnally, but she must have been troubled from the beginning for her to demonstrate such an emotionally unstable personality by the end of the tale.

In his discussion of Anne Gunter's case, Seth brought out the fact that the doctors diagnosed her problem as "falling sickness" (epilepsy) and/or "suffocation of the mother" (hysteria), not bewitchment, just as had been the case of Mary Glover.³² In this case it may have been an act against her mother, for we are told that Anne and her father were working together.³³ Hysteria can serve not only as a release from anxiety but also—especially at the point when the person decides to

carry on in an hysterical state—as a kind of autonomy not felt in previous circumstances. With her father as her ally, Anne might have felt enough support to strike out independently from her mother. As large crowds assembled, she might have continued her hysteria because she sensed additional support. Maternal feelings toward children, especially daughters, may at best be ambivalent and may have included a good deal of open resentment.³⁴ If only we knew more about the circumstances surrounding the Gunter family!

Seth marvelled at the cleverness of these children (especially Anne Gunter's) to be able to carry on all sorts of tricks (like vomiting pins) which the adult world accepted as really happening. What he seems to have forgotten is that people in this age were very credulous. Thus, in some instances, a little deception would have gone a long way.³⁵

It is conceivable that some of these children were showing tendencies beyond just hysterical acting out, which we would call schizoid or schizophrenic in nature, especially those who spoke in different voices. Even their feeling of persecution could be the beginning stages of schizophrenia.³⁶ The only victim of schizophrenia I have seen developing first-hand showed great cleverness in building a case that someone was sending her threatening notes, knives, and razor blades. The psychiatrist at first could not tell whether or not she was telling the truth. It took a whole month before the story finally was made clear. However, this took place in the 1960s, not in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries!

While Seth made some excellent points, he stopped too often at a superficial level where he could see only the influence of adults on the testimony made by children or the charade-like quality of his so-called impostors.³⁷ Although he made some contribution to our knowledge on the subject, there is need for a systematic and properly documented³⁸ study of the relationship between parents and their children, before a clearer picture can emerge with respect to the psychological aspects of these witch trials.

What both Gray's and Seth's books have proved is the importance of comprehending as much as possible about childhood and parent-child relationships in various periods of time before we will really begin to understand many historical happenings. We may not be able to reconstruct the picture completely in some periods because we do not have the necessary documents, but that is no reason to disregard this most important topic entirely.

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1. See Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (New York: 1962); David Hunt, *Parents and Children in History* (New York: 1970), and J. Louise Despert, *The Emotionally Disturbed Child* (New York: 1965), as examples of some of these accounts.
2. Steven Runciman in his three volumes entitled *History of the Crusades* (Cambridge: 1951-1954) devoted only six pages to that topic. (See pp. 139-45 in the third volume.)
3. See John Demos, "Underlying Themes in the Witchcraft of Seventeenth Century New England," *American Historical Review* 75 (1970): 1311-26, for a quantitative analysis of those involved in the Salem witch trials, with some comments on children's role.
4. The word "child" or "children" has been employed throughout this article although in some instances the word "adolescent" would have been more accurate since no distinctions in terms were used in the early modern period. However, it is hoped that no confusions have been made in applying different theories to these now separable groups.
5. Gray, *Children's Crusade*, p. 47.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-4.
7. See Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: 1963), especially pp. 261-63.
8. Seth, *Children*, p. 180.
9. Even as late as the early seventeenth century the jury had not ceased to be witnesses themselves, as well as judges. See M. M. Knappen, *Constitutional and Legal History of England* (New York: 1942), p. 406.
10. Robert Brain, "Child-Witches," *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, ed., Mary Douglas (London: 1970), p. 176.
11. See A. H. Maslow and Béla Mittelmann, *Principles of Abnormal Psychology* (New York: 1951), pp. 322 ff; and Otto Fenichel, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis* (New York: 1945), pp. 195 ff.
12. See Brain, p. 177, for more on the child's fertile imagination.
13. See Alan MacFarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: 1970), where the author explored loss of neighborliness as a cause for witch scares.
14. Ariès, *Centuries*, pp. 258-60. There were, of course, a few persons writing contrary advice, but they seem to have been definitely in the minority. See David Bakan, *Slaughter of the Innocents* (San Francisco: 1971); and Fritz Redl and David Wineman, *Children Who Hate* (New York: 1951). Bakan's book is a general treatment of the problems evoked by child beating and Redl's and Wineman's is a specific study of some five "beaten" children.
15. See Fenichel, pp. 94-95. See Barbara Rosen, ed., *Witchcraft* (London: 1969), The Stratford-upon-Avon Library no. 6, p. 94, for an account of these events.
16. See Jean Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Physical Causality* (New York, 1930), and A. T. Jersild, Frances V. Markey and Catherine Jersild, "Children's Fears, Dreams, Wishes, Daydreams, Likes, Dislikes, Pleasant and Unpleasant Memories," *Child Development Monographs*, No. 12 (1933). Seth might have cited the case of Mother Sutton (1613) along with the second Chelmsford trial for there were similarities between the two cases. Mother Sutton, a widow of considerable age, was accused of witchcraft along with her daughter who lived with her. The daughter was not married and had three illegitimate children, one of whom testified against her. When the mother heard that testimony she confessed to being a witch. See Joseph H. Marshburn, *Murder and Witchcraft in England, 1550-1640* (Norman: 1971), pp. 151-53.

17. Rosen, *Witchcraft*, p. 131.
18. Seth, *Children*, p. 71.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
21. Rosen, *Witchcraft*, p. 364, footnote 18.
22. Seth, *Children*, p. 121.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
24. See Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (Chicago: 1965), *passim*.
25. See Fenichel, pp. 89 ff.; and Karen Horney, *Feminine Psychology* (New York: 1967).
26. See Joseph C. Rheingold, *The Fear of Being a Woman* (New York: 1964), p. 288.
27. See Veith, *Hysteria*, p. 274.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
30. See Ernst Kretschmer, *Hysteria* (New York: 1926), p. 13, where he wrote that hysteria has two main sources: "instinct of self-preservation" and "emotions and conflicts which accompany sexual life."
31. See Phyllis Greenacre, "The Relation of the Impostor to the Artist (1958)," in *Emotional Growth* (New York: 1971) 2, pp. 533-54, for some interesting comments on male adult impostors, especially the point that mothers of impostors are usually indulgent and that the action of an impostor is usually directed against the father. Might it be the other way around in cases of female impostors?
32. Seth, *Children*, p. 151.
33. See not only Seth, p. 150, but also George Lyman Kittridge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (New York: 1972), p. 322.
34. See Rheingold, *Fear of Being*, on the topic of maternal resentment and animosity.
35. See Greenacre, "The Relation," p. 538, who makes the point that impostors are most successful when times are tense and disturbed. The early modern period certainly exemplifies this.
36. See Kretschmer, *Hysteria*, p. 88, and Maslow and Mittelman, *Principles*, pp. 346-49, for the connection between hysteria and schizophrenia.
37. See Seth, *Children*, p. 103, as an example.
38. Seth included no footnotes in his book, which means that the reader is not certain where his material came from.

BOOK



REVIEWS

INFANTICIDE IN THE PAST

David Bakan, *Slaughter of the Innocents: A Study of the Battered Child Phenomenon*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1971. 128 pages.

Reviewed by EDWARD SHORTER, *Univ. of Toronto*

I was of two minds as I read this book, thinking one moment as a workaday historian, the other as an interested observer of what's-going-on-now-baby. In both minds I found Bakan's work lacking. It is confused, rambling and poorly researched, and is irritating as well in many of its opinions. The book is *engagé* in the manner of what we used to call "bleeding heart liberalism," and so it is relevant to say that Bakan comes across as a gentle, sensitive man. I also suspect, though as a relative outsider I cannot be sure, that he has made a substantive contribution to psychoanalytic thought.

Insofar as the book has a central argument, it is that infanticide has functioned as a method of population control. Far from being the work of isolated maniacs, child murder is present in the thinking of most of us, if not in the form of actual torture and deadly assault, then masked in such benign guises as spanking, so that a good cuff on the ear finds itself ultimately in the same category—according to Bakan—as dousing an infant in scalding water.

Underlying this argument is an integrated theory about the psychodynamics of child abuse. Here, Bakan, who teaches psychology at York University, is on his strongest ground and makes his most useful contribution: children are abused and murdered in the final analysis because parents resent unconsciously these tiny, squalling reminders of their own childhood impotence, and so try violently to banish them from view.

But as I don my historian's cap, I find the book of little value. Bakan appears to know not very much about anything that happened between Biblical times and the 1940s, and relies for the intervening period largely on Oscar H. Werner's 1917 Columbia dissertation on views of unmarried mothers in German literature in the period 1770-1800,¹ and on several collections of English nursery rhymes (wrongly, I believe,

taking references to the likelihood of infant death as allusions to child murder).

Infanticide is at the moment, however, of considerable interest to historians of the family because of the possibility that either (a) apparent shifts in fertility may have been in fact the result of changes in levels of infanticide; or that (b) a decline in infanticide may have heralded the onset of a new maternal tenderness, which in turn may have resulted immediately in a reduction of infant mortality and ultimately in a reduction of marital fertility (women proceed to have fewer children in order to care better for the ones they've already got.) But Bakan's work will help us with neither of these notions. He uses "population control" in a highly abstract sense, pointing out that infanticide is among the many means, including anal intercourse and covering one's genitals in public, that society has for keeping fertility from reaching its theoretical maximum. He fails to consider the more practical question of whether individual couples used infanticide systematically to control the sizes of their own families.

To go by recent work in historical demography, Bakan's thesis that infanticide was a form of population control is probably correct. One thinks, for example, of William L. Langer's argument that paid wet-nursing was merely a concealed form of infanticide.² Maurice Garden confirmed this hypothesis with eighteenth-century data from the Lyon area, specifically finding that children sent out to be suckled would in all likelihood perish in the hands of their wet-nurses, and that their parents fully realized their likely fate, for only under the assumption that these children had already been written off emotionally can we make sense of the complete absence of parental visits to the nearby villages during the period of wet-nursing.³

Bakan's "population control" hypothesis has been in fact brilliantly confirmed by a recent paper of Jean-Louis Flandrin's, who suggests on the basis of a careful study of episcopal "reserve" files that before the eighteenth century infanticide was the principal means of birth control in France: women pregnant out of wedlock would regularly murder their newborn bastards, and married couples had no compunction about smothering or abandoning unwanted children in hard times; the latter solution, though apparently more humane than outright murder, added up to the same thing for the chances were poor that an infant abandoned at the church door would survive the first year of life.⁴ Indeed, Jean-Claude Peyronnet, in a recent thesis on infants abandoned in Limoges, has discovered that the big increase in *enfants trouvés* during the eighteenth century was due heavily to married couples beset by poverty. The vast majority of abandoned children were legitimate, and the average age of the abandoned child tended to rise during years of high grain prices, suggesting that the tougher times grew, the older were the children of whom parents were willing to disembarass themselves.⁵ The historical evidence, therefore, is largely on Bakan's side.

Bakan didn't seek out this variety of data, I suspect, because he had other fish to fry: for example, a child-rearing philosophy that minimizes discipline and considers corporal punishment tantamount to child abuse and infanticide (parents who give their children swats on the bottom wish them sexually neutered or dead). I have not yet made

up my mind on the merits of this general philosophy, but Bakan's position seems to me somewhat lacking in balance. A persistent refusal to disentangle child murder, child abuse, child labor and corporal punishment runs throughout the book.

A kind of Panglossian optimism files through the work which is at the same time maddening and rather moving. Bakan thinks that the application of Article 25 of the UN's Declaration of Human Rights is the solution to the problem of child abuse. Moreover: "We must be prepared to believe that the current condition of mankind in the universe is in an early stage of evolution," so presumably the emotionally more mature generations to follow us will be kinder to their children. As I come increasingly to believe that the highpoint of civilization in the West was reached late in the eighteenth century, I find this kind of liberalism ever more depressing.

The book began as a series of radio lectures for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. But it has not ended up as a definitive treatment of child abuse and infanticide in any of the social sciences with which I am familiar. Given the subject's importance to the history of childhood, perhaps some other researcher will soon try his hand again.

REFERENCES

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2. William L. Langer, "Checks on Population Growth, 1750-1850," *Scientific American* 226 (Feb., 1972): 93-99.
3. Maurice Garden, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Les Belles-Lettres, 1970).
4. I am grateful to Professor Flandrin for permitting me to see a preliminary version of his forthcoming article.
5. Jean-Claude Peyronnet, "Recherche sur les enfants trouvés de l'hôpital général de Limoges au XVIIIe siècle." Thesis prepared for Professor Pierre Goubert, 1972.

A HISTORY OF THE BRITISH NANNY

The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny. By Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy. London, Hodder & Stoughton. 350 pp. £3.95

Reviewed by Priscilla Robertson

It was a brilliant idea of Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's to investigate the phenomenon known as the British Nanny. The system of raising upper class British children in special quarters, the nursery, under a special person, the nurse, was unique in history. It happened only in one country, and did not last quite a century, for our author believes that the nursery as a place was crystallized between 1800 and 1840, while the specialties of the child nurse were defined between 1840 and 1880. From that date until World War II, when the system broke down, he estimates there probably were a million and a half nannies in all, with, of course, many times that number of children in their charge. An institution so widespread must have had interesting ramifications,

and it is a high virtue of this book that it is not afraid of sociological and psychological speculation.

The sources for the speculations consisted not only of reading the many accounts of life in British nurseries, but intensive interviewing of old time nannies still alive, of various adults who grew up under nannies' care, and even of psychiatrists who have had those people as patients, to see if the nanny system left any special psychological marks. For example, it was quite common for a nurse to leave a family when a child was about five, either because a governess took over at that time, or because the nanny herself wanted new employment to feel she was in touch with infancy. The psychiatrists confirmed by examples Mr. Gathorne-Hardy's suspicion that "abandonment" at that particular stage of childhood was not only painful at the time but led to insecurity and withdrawnness later on. "Of all the people I interviewed I found that the four shyest and most difficult to talk to (all unmarried) had in fact lost their nannies and then lost the replacements at an early age." Although Mr. Gathorne-Hardy agrees that we cannot draw conclusions from four examples, this sentence is a sample of the scintillating hints he throws out on every page.

In the course of the book he makes three "sexual detours," describing the nanny as *oedipal object*, leading, he thinks, to an idealization of the distant mother, and a tendency in adulthood for nannied males to seek sex relations with lower class girls; as a deliberate *seducer*; or, on the other hand, as a *disciplinarian* in the field of potty training and the restraint of masturbation. Each of these chapters is fascinating, supported by theory and examples, and proposed in sufficient modesty to negate the criticism that the author goes too far.

Following Mr. Gathorne-Hardy, I referred to the system as "unique," and in a way it was, although he does not seem to realize that what is really unique in history is the twentieth century method of having upper class mothers bring up their own children. In previous periods and in other centuries children have always been brought up by servants, or by strangers, or by peasants; but it is hard to think of another time when children were in the charge of a specialized, trained person whose only job was to take charge of very young children, and who could rule the nursery with almost despotic power. It was an outcome partly of the British habit of engaging all their servants (footmen, scullery maids) for specialized, listed functions, while on the continent they were hired to help wherever needed at the moment. The Nanny was the epitome of this specialization.

It would be interesting to compare the British Nanny with the Black Mammies of the American old South. One of Mr. Gathorne-Hardy's points is that although in Britain, upper class children were being brought up by lower class people, in general the nannies adopted the language, manners and moral stance of the class they served, while I have the impression that Southern mammies retained their informal speech patterns and their lower class emotional warmth and spontaneity. I believe they were often wet nurses, which the nannies never were. (I once knew a Southern man who liked to shock people by talking of how many nights he had spent in a black woman's bed—his mammy's—but I don't know if he was unusual or not in that after-

wards, he could never feel that black girls were beautiful or become sexually attracted to them.)

To return to the British nurses. They came, of course, in a wide variety of personality patterns. Often the Nanny was the one person who made a child feel that life could be worth living, a prime example being Winston Churchill's Nanny Everest. On the other hand they could be terrible tartars, emphasizing the disciplines of eating up all that was on one's plate, and of potty training, maintaining rules for the sake of order, without imagination or flexibility. Rarely, there turned up, too, outrightly sadistic nannies, who usually escaped detection because an English child was rarely in the presence of his mother and his nurse at the same time. The book even includes one section on "the Nanny as murderess." Judging by my own reading in the field, I would say that most children remembered their nannies fairly kindly—but a substantial minority reflected in later life on their essential destructiveness, their lack of giving reasons for things, and their *routinier* quality. The author of the book believes that one of the worst effects of the nursery system was its inhibition of spontaneity on the part of growing children. Possibly so, but there are so many opposite cases, where really bright children, kept safe by the routines, were free to use large blocks of time to devise their own amusements and to fend off what one of them "the adult loony bin." Certainly it is rare for the super-organized children of today to enjoy any fraction of the time recalled in countless nursery memoirs, with family newspapers, elaborate unsupervised games, cultivation of hobbies, or just reflection.

A few points of disagreement with Mr. Gathorne-Hardy's sidelights, if not with his general conclusions: He says at one point that not until now has Father consented to come into the nursery. In my reading, fathers were involved with their children nearly as much as mothers, because under the nanny system the nurse would relieve the mother as much as the father of the physical chores of parenthood, leaving both freer to carry on, if they wished, the development of intellectual interest. The earliest literature exhorting interest in child growth, dating from the late eighteenth century, was addressed to both parents equally, and I believe that even though during the course of the nineteenth century an increasing number of men were drawn outside their homes to work, there was always a certain number who didn't need to work, such as country gentlemen and members of the aristocracy—or whose work at home allowed them an unusual amount of time with their offspring—such as self-employed craftsmen, writers, clergymen.

Another question. How does our author think the lower class background was exhibited, if his nurses adopted upper class ideas on schedule keeping and respectability? He points out the intriguing fact, without a full explanation, that the period of the nanny coincided with that period of English history when upper class women were supposed to have a curious lack of sexual feeling, buttressed by a strict effort to keep their knowledge of sexual facts at a minimum. His guesses about the counterattractiveness of lower class women to upper class men are suggestive but not convincing, especially as he does nothing to explain the psychology of the equally nannied girl children. Could it be that being brought up by an unmarried, sexually in-

experienced woman could be one of the inhibiting factors for English girls?

Among the social consequences of the nanny system was the enlarged freedom from physical care which enabled young mothers to use their time for culture and good works. It really was a private enterprise, non-socialist and unsocial form of day care centers—giving those nineteenth century women exactly what many are demanding today.

The book concludes that a system in which children might have the benefit both of a warm-hearted nanny and of an intellectually interesting mother could, and did, turn out thousands of secure and happy individuals (as we have seen, he rather tends to ignore fathers). The opposite potentiality—of alienation from the mother and a repression of the consequences, or memory, of misery was equally present, and led to the shyness and timidity and emotional coldness for which the English are often rebuked.

It is a splendid book, informally written but not carelessly conceived, and packed full of compelling incidents and insights.

BOOKS RECEIVED AND NOTED

Braun, Samuel J. and Esther P. Edwards. *History and Theory of Early Childhood Education*. Worthington, Ohio: Charles A. Jones Publishing Company, 1972.

A useful review of writings about early childhood education back to antiquity, with long quotations from each writer.

Buxton, Claude E. *Adolescents in School*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973. 180 pages, \$7.95.

Clinch, Nancy Gager. *The Kennedy Neurosis*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1973. 433 pages, \$10.00.

The only virtue to this unfeeling, heavy-handed bludgeoning of the Kennedy family is that it is all true, and we nearly all got blown off the face of the earth because of it.

Cottle, Thomas J. *The Abandoners: Portraits of Loss, Separation and Neglect*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972. 232 pages, \$7.95.

A little about abandoners; a lot about adolescence today.

Flescher, Irwin. *Children in the Learning Factory: The Search for a Humanizing Teacher*. Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1972. 180 pages, \$5.95.

Krogman, Wilton Marion. *Child Growth*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1972. 231 pages, \$7.95 (cloth).

Laslett, Peter and Richard Wall, eds. *Household and Family in Past Time*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972. \$37.50.

An expensive book with lots of charts, largely on family size in the past, showing that the extended family has in most places and times been a myth, thus invalidating decades of sociological theory. To be reviewed in our next issue.

Melton, David. *When Children Need Help*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1972. 257 pages, \$6.95.

Parker, Beulah. *A Mingled Yarn: Chronicle of a Troubled Family*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972. 333 pages, \$7.95.

In this brilliant study, Beulah Parker, a psychiatrist, has invented a totally new form of case study—the extended family analysis—which not only tries to show the generational pressures that led to the psychosis of one of its members, but also gives us a paradigm of analysis going far beyond the explanatory potential of the individual case study.

Payne, Robert. *The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973. 623 pages, \$12.95.

If Hitler had had as warm, gentle, loving, and giving a mother as this book and others assume, our Journal should quietly disappear. What is most unexpected is that so little curiosity is shown in getting the facts of his childhood, especially by Payne, who says here that Hitler was insane when he took power in 1934.

Robertson, Constance Noyes, ed. *Oneida Community: An Autobiography, 1851-1876*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1970. 364 pages, \$11.50.

Robertson, Constance Noyes, ed. *Oneida Community: The Break-Up, 1876-1881*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972. 327 pages, \$9.95.

Few today remember this early "communist" experiment, but many of its experiences and ideas—including child-rearing separate from parents—were identical to the kibbutz, only a century earlier. No one has thought to ask why these communal experiments are so lawful in development.

Sidel, Ruth. *Women and Child Care in China*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972. 207 pages, \$6.95.

A first-hand enthusiastic account of child care in the new China, by a champion of "multiple mothering." She reports never having seen an angry parent, a disobedient child or aggression among children playing, so of course, we have a lot to learn from them. Under her maddeningly cheerful prose, one can sometimes glimpse a picture of institutionalized neglect, routine abandonment and constant regimentation. In all, a perfect companion to Bronfenbrenner's glowing account of Russian child care.

Stillwell, Anne and Hart. *The Child Who Walks Alone*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1972. 195 pages, \$6.75.

Sutton-Smith. *The Folkgames of Children*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1972. 540 pages, \$12.50.

Talmon, Yonina. *Family and Community in the Kibbutz*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972. 225 pages, \$12.00.

When the parents of the first Israeli settlers lived in Eastern Europe, they used to pay little attention to the needs of their young children, often leaving their care to older daughters. When they came to Israel and established kibbutzim, they institutionalized this child abandonment, built separate nurseries, called the elder daughters nurses, and the world marveled at their revolutionary experiment in family organization. Now, with Israeli kibbutz, Russian boarding school, and Chinese commune each fulfilling their initial goal of being giant 19th century English nurseries with Marxist nannies, Talmon describes how

parents are beginning to pay more attention to their children, even (gasp!) having to live with them . . . and once again this development is pronounced revolutionary.

Turnbull, Colin M. *The Mountain People*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972. 309 pages, \$7.95.

This is a terribly important book. By accident, Colin Turnbull found an African tribe that is without love, kindness, social cooperation, or child care. The Ik routinely push out their children at age 3 to totally fend for themselves, laugh when their babies fall into the fire or ask for food, let their own parents starve, ripping food from their mouths, feed their infants to leopards, and are unable to work together to alleviate their condition of near-starvation. Turnbull assumes this psychological breakdown comes from hunger, and disappointingly goes off on a tirade against the frailty of human nature, predicting that America will undergo the same kind of breakdown (!) Yet since there are many other hungry tribes on record who nonetheless retain their humanity, the scientific question is obvious: how did they get into such a state? Turnbull's claim "for it certainly was not always so with the Ik" remains unexamined. Like most anthropologists, he is profoundly anti-historical; there is no curiosity as to what might have come before. Some aspects of their culture, such as their abandoning sky god, makes one suspect their psychic and family condition existed before their present poverty. It surely is worth a trip back by someone to find out.

Weber, Evelyn. *Early Childhood Education: Perspectives on Change*. Worthington, Ohio: Charles A. Jones Publishing Company, 1970. 202 pages.



FORTHCOMING ARTICLES

Rudolph Binion on the Psychological Basis of Hitler's Lebensraum
(A Symposium)

Joseph Illick on *Colonial American Childhood*

Elizabeth Wirth Marvick on the *Childhood of a King*

John Benton on Childhood and History in the Middle Ages

Herbert Moller on the *Punishment of Children in Germany*

J. B. Ross on Childhood and Personality in the Ricordi of Morelli

Edward Saveth on *From Filmer to Freud*

Michael Goodich on the *Childhood of 13th Century Saints*

Patrick Dunn on *Russian Childhood*

Bogna Lorence on the *Great Transition in Child Care in the 18th Century*

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