



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Research Commons

<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

Research Commons at the University of Waikato

Copyright Statement:

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

The thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of the thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from the thesis.

**From the Unknowing to the Sexualised Subject: The Development
of Childhood Sexuality within the Modernist Era through the
works of Henry James, Anais Nin, and Vladimir Nabokov.**

A thesis

submitted partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Arts in English

at

The University of Waikato

by

Shaynah Jackson



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2016

Through the works of Henry James, Anais Nin and Vladimir Nabokov, this project shows how the modernist child develops from the unknowing to the sexualised subject.

It begins with Henry James's proto-modernist conceptualisation of children as unknowable: childhood cannot be represented with any certainty because children lack the means to represent themselves. They are objects within discourse, but, in James, their status as subjects is epistemologically ambiguous. This unknowable child foreshadows the modernist reimagining of childhood sexuality. Chapter Two turns to Anais Nin, whose relationship to Freudian psychoanalysis underscores her vision of childhood. She articulates that vision through a series of short stories in which childhood becomes increasingly estranged from the familiar symbol of innocence, and trends toward its perverse sexualisation. Chapter Three demonstrates the dangers of childhood as a blank conceptual space in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. In her departure from innocence, the late modernist child find herself re-embodied as a sexual fantasy for the adult gaze.

This thesis considers representations of childhood that treat children as conceptual spaces rather than as human subjects. The narrative production of silent children who present no challenge to the imposition of adult desire simultaneously produces adults with an unchecked prerogative to inform the terms of childhood. The premise of the sexualized child was then, as it is now, an alarming cultural force.

Acknowledgements

A special debt of thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Alys Moody. For teaching me to always try again, fail again, and fail better. For her kindness and her faith, ever thanks.

To Dr. Sarah Shieff for her generous supervision and sharp editorial eye, many thanks.

To the ever-kind Dr. Kirstine Moffat. Whose words of encouragement and dances of triumph saw me through this project, thanks and thanks and thanks again.

To my friends, family, and Partner in crime. For keeping me sane, supplying me with coffee, and their endless patience. All my love and all my thanks.

To the Department of English at the University of Waikato. Many thanks for the constant support, inspiration, and for being a home away from home.

To my literary cohort. For the brilliance and the laughs. It is an absolute privilege to call them my people, and this project would not have happened without them. Endless thanks.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 - The Ambiguous Children of Henry James.....	17
Chapter 2 - The Perverse Children of Anais Nin.....	48
Chapter 3 - The Hyper-sexualised Child within Nabokov's <i>Lolita</i>	85
Conclusion.....	110
Bibliography.....	114

Introduction

The idea of childhood presents a problem and a seduction. For the adults who have left it behind, childhood occupies –or is at least theorised as occupying—a conceptual space on which adults can project their most cherished hopes and dreams. It tends to function as a placeholder for the values as well as the cultural anxieties of any given context. As James Kincaid claims, the child “is the perceptual frame we have available to us to fit just about anything we choose—or nothing. What the child *is* matters far less than what we *think* it is.”¹

It is often assumed of childhood that its occupants lack the agency and the acquired terms necessary to conceptualise this space—they are incapable of providing self-representation. It then becomes the task of adults to invent and inform the terms of childhood. This is dangerous territory because, as much as childhood can be, and often is, imagined as a place of innocence, it is also malleable to the imposing and ever-shifting values of society. The projecting gaze of the adult may superimpose *any* value on the child. Childhood is therefore not a stable paradigm, and it is this unfixity and temporality that makes children such an alluring literary trope.

Henry James suggested as much when he presented his own literary child, Maisie, as unfixed and unknowable to adults. James proposed that we cannot assume to have knowledge of children, nor can we assign qualities on their behalf. We adults do not, after all, know as the child knows. If children are epistemologically impenetrable, as James suggests, then expectations of their

¹ James Kincaid., *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994) p.62.

innocence are little more than guesses, or hopeful assumptions of what the child *should* be. More to the point, this ostensible childhood innocence provides a naïve and simplistic view of children that does not account for their complexity:

architects of the child in culture have developed elaborate means of editing out or avoiding the kinds of sexuality children aren't supposed to have—all in an effort to simplify what is, in fact, not at all a simple story.²

If innocence is little more than a construct, it cannot hold as a 'true' representation of childhood. To reject this innocent model is a significant shift in the conceptualisation of the child. The unknowable child has the capacity to be more than innocent, and this presents an opportunity to reassess the terms of childhood. In this sense, Henry James provides a foundation upon which new models of childhood can be built, namely the sexualised child. If the child's fluidity often devolves through the hopeful or assumed innocence of childhood, it can equally produce a sexualised child by way of liberating childhood from that prescribed ideal, and reinscribing children with the potential to be sexual.

Through the work of three authors, this thesis tracks the development of childhood from representations of unknowing toward wildly sexualised children within the modernist epoch. Having written 'The Pupil' in 1891 and *What Maisie Knew* in 1897—too early to be considered as a modernist author—Henry James is included in this thesis as a proto-modernist figure for his treatment of childhood as unknowable, and his suggestion that children have potential as more than “symbols standing for innocence, emotion, and simplicity.”³ Following the lead of

² Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley., *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* (USA: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) p. 11.

³ Hugh Cunningham., *Studies In Modern History: Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500 (2nd Edition)* (New York: Routledge, 2014) p. 66.

Freudian psychoanalysis, Anais Nin then created perversely sexual children. Her short story anthology *Delta of Venus* was originally commissioned in the early 1940s⁴ by an unnamed book collector seeking erotic stories for his personal and anonymous use. Nin, however, used this as a forum to explore the psychoanalytic assumption of the sexual child to transgressive ends. Indeed, Nin's depiction correlates with the child presented by psychoanalysis that is "capable of every sexual activity."⁵ Nin's fictional children demonstrate her personal relationship to psychoanalysis and the direct influence it had over her writing and indeed her life. In 1934, Nin engaged with psychoanalyst Otto Rank in both a professional and a romantic capacity. In this sense, Freudian psychoanalysis is not an abstract theoretical framework, but a directly influential frame of reference through which Nin's children can be analysed. Drawing toward the end of the modernist movement, however, Vladimir Nabokov's 1959 text *Lolita* articulates not only the waning efficacy of Freudian theory, but the dangerous potential this shift has produced for the child and childhood sexuality to be obscured by adult desire. These three authors illustrate how modernism does not present one continuous picture of childhood sexuality, but experiments to various extents with the possibilities of this sexuality, and the shifting conceptual space childhood occupies.

This thesis takes an ambivalent stance on the representations of children presented by these authors. It celebrates the identification of children as more than simply vessels of innocence, but this recognition of the child as a complex figure

⁴ Although these stories were published posthumously in 1977.

⁵ Sigmund Freud, "Sexuality in the Aetiology of the Neurosis" in Freud—Complete Works, ed, Ivan Smith http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf [accessed 19 March 2016] p. 472.

comes to be distorted by its sexualisation. Its liberation from the prescribed ideal of innocence coincided with the child's reinvention as a sexual object. It is a problematic aspect of the modernist project that it treats children as conceptual spaces rather than legitimate subjects. While they have not lost their power to shock, these representations of childhood contribute to a trend that undervalues the child and re-embodies it as a sexual figure for the adult gaze. The possibility of the sexual child was then, as it is now, an alarming cultural force. While this thesis agrees that childhood should be approached with less naiveté than the assumption that all children are innocent, it also wants to acknowledge the potential danger of childhood as a limitless paradigm. Under such a rubric, adults maintain an unchecked prerogative to inform the terms of childhood and, as I come to discuss, this has many negative implications for the lived experience of childhood. Theoretical discussions of childhood, and in particular those presented under the banner of 'queer theory,' similarly explore this issue and much of this thesis draws on the ideas they present. As such, I discuss a range of theoretical texts that negotiate this same ambivalence, and have likewise documented the symbolic function of the child as a projection of adult desire.

The children presented within this thesis align with Freud's description of the sexualised child. The treatment of Freud throughout this thesis is as a historical intertext as his theories offer an immediate account of the conception of a sexualised child as it develops, and provides an inevitable frame of reference for childhood sexuality that my discussed authors are working within. Freud's active role in the disillusionment of childhood innocence provides a sense of the shifting views on childhood sexuality as they occur. He theorised that children "in earliest

childhood, have the experiences of sexual seduction.”⁶ Sexual desire, he argued, was inherently present in childhood, and this desire often took the form of a perverse sexuality, or the ‘polymorphous perverse.’ Freud argued that “an aptitude for perverse sexuality is innately present in their disposition” particularly because “shame, disgust, and morality have not yet been constructed at all or are only in the course of construction, according to the age of the child.”⁷ The child then not only had the capacity for sexual desire, but for this desire to be perverse and void of morality. By way of example, Freud establishes a relationship between the adult “gross, manifest pervert” and child sexuality: “when, therefore, anyone has become a gross and manifest pervert, it would be more correct to say that he remained one.”⁸ Freudian theory opposed the “progressive process of suppression”⁹ by bringing the sexualised child, and the concept of sexuality more generally, outside of familial circles and into general discourse. In establishing the child as a sexual entity, Freud “advocated a programmatic attack on repressive society for the sake of liberating sexuality.”¹⁰ This challenged the secrecy with which we treat children’s sexuality and did some substantial damage to the innocent child archetype:

Popular opinion has quite definite ideas about the nature and characteristics of this sexual instinct. It is generally considered to be

⁶ Freud, p. 398.

⁷ Freud, p. 1519.

⁸ Freud, p. 1387.

⁹ Freud, p. 1499.

¹⁰ John Brenkman, ‘Freud the Modernist’ in *The mind of Modern Medicine, Psychology, and the Cultural Arts in Europe and America 1880-1940*, ed, Mark S. Micale (California: Stanford University Press: 2004) p.172-197. P.179.

absent in childhood... We happen to believe, however, that these views give a very false picture of the true situation.¹¹

Freud is a dominant figure in the conception of childhood sexuality.¹² As such, his theories function throughout this thesis as foundations on which the children of Nin and Nabokov are built on. That is to say, Freudian conceptualisations of childhood influenced a departure from the innocent child archetype and proposed a model of childhood sexuality which the theorists and authors discussed throughout this project inevitably draw on.

Kathryn Bond-Stockton's *The Queer Child or Growing Sideways* looks retrospectively at the twentieth century to illustrate the ways child development is not a linear trajectory: children grow sideways, she suggests, rather than growing up. She revises the assumption of childhood as a linear and predictable experience, or that this should follow a predetermined trajectory. 'Up' implies a straightforward development whereas sideways-growth implies varying experiences and varying directions. This notion of linear growth suggests a knowable, planned journey to adulthood, however Bond-Stockton suggests a view that allows for the "elegant, unruly contours of growing that don't bespeak continuance."¹³ Stockton argues, as James does, that we cannot "know the contours of children"¹⁴ and as such, she proposes the use of a sideways-model to measure childhood: a model founded on the understanding of childhood as an unpredictable space:

We should start again, with the problem of the child as a general idea. The child is precisely who we are not and, in fact, never were. It is the act of

¹¹ Freud, p. 1464.

¹² Brenkman, p.179

¹³ Kathryn Bond-Stockton, *The Queer Child or Growing Up Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, (London: Duke University Press, 2009) p. 13.

¹⁴ Bond-Stockton, p.5

adults looking back. It is a ghostly, unreachable fancy, making us wonder: Given that we cannot know the contours of children, who they are to themselves, should we stop talking of children altogether? Should all talk of the child subside, beyond our critique of the bad effects of looking back nostalgically in fantasy?¹⁵

The work of this theorist assigns a complexity to the child that has otherwise been ignored. She refuses to contribute to the myth of childhood innocence by presenting stories of children who are sexual, violent, and queer. Stockton's 'queer child' is taken beyond sexuality alone to mean any child that deviates from the conventional innocent child. In this sense, Bond-Stockton provides a useful theoretical lens for negotiating childhood difference, which this thesis similarly adopts. The children discussed throughout this project are considered to occupy this same 'queered' space within which there is no set standard of normative childhood development. It is instead, according to Bond-Stockton, the very condition of childhood to deviate from this standard.

Jed Etsy's book *Unseasonable Youth* illustrates a similar rejection of linear development. He takes the traditional Bildungsroman narrative as a standard of linear development and discusses how this is reappropriated within modernist literature. Within the traditional coming-of-age narrative, the protagonist undergoes a journey to reach maturity within which he comes to accept the values of his given society and matures morally into adulthood. For the modernist writer, however, this development is forestalled and more often ends in resignation or death.¹⁶ Etsy's text is most useful as a point of connection between

¹⁵ Bond-Stockton, p.5.

¹⁶ 'Bildungsroman -- Britannica Online Encyclopedia'
 <<http://academic.eb.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/EBchecked/topic/65244/bildungsroman>> [accessed 17 February 2016]

linear development and heterosexuality, and—similarly to Bond-Stockton—he is influential to my discussions on the expected trajectory of childhood development and the implications this has for children who do not adhere to it. The traditional plot of the Bildungsroman generally leads to “libidinal closure” in the form of “heterosexual coupling and reproduction.”¹⁷ The modernist reappropriation, however, features instead “story lines driven by homoerotic investment, sexual indifference, homosexual panic, and same-sex desire.”¹⁸ The fact that the traditional Bildungsroman narrative insists on successful development as a fulfilment of heterosexual aspirations exemplifies the importance of a knowable, linear development of sexuality in childhood—in fact the development from child-to-adult and child-to-heterosexual are interchangeable terms within this structure: normative childhood is a necessary determinant of normative adulthood. This model illustrates a societal investment in heterosexuality as a measuring stick for morality, and associates the realisation of this heterosexuality with maturity. It perpetuates the notion that sexuality and immaturity, or sexuality and childhood, are exclusive paradigms—particularly so when this heterosexuality is to be fully realised in adulthood and no sooner. The modernist retelling of the Bildungsroman narrative described by Etsy affirms that sexuality *is* present in childhood, and rejects the implication that successful development is constituted by a fulfilment of a heterosexual ideal. Etsy’s notion of arrested development suggests that children *do* exist outside of this archetype, however there is an unforgiving standard of heteronormative development that displaces those who develop differently to this standard, i.e.—as Stockton similarly suggests—the

¹⁷ Jed Etsy, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 22.

¹⁸ Etsy, p. 22.

queer child. This is indeed true of each author presented in this thesis. The death of James' Morgan, Nin's school boy, and Nabokov's Lolita occur in the wake of an unconventional sexual experience. Estsy's take on arrested development in the modernist era explains why the death of children is such a prominent theme across my chosen authors. The dead child parodies an unforgiving structure of childhood development, and the displacement of children who do not adhere to it, as well as a long-standing investment in childhood as a straightforward trajectory.

In the text *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, contemporary queer theorist Lee Edelman discusses the child as a symbol of futurity and the negative implications this has for queer entities. Edelman's discussion is grounded in the use of the child within political campaigns as an emblem of the future: "we are no more able to conceive of a politics without a fantasy of the future than we are able to conceive of a future without the figure of the child."¹⁹

This emblematic child privileges a heterosexual standard as those who produce children (or have the capacity to do so, in any case) contribute to futurity.

However, this marginalizes homosexuals on the assumption they cannot reproduce, and therefore cannot contribute to the future: they are made other to, or exist outside of, the concept of futurity. As the corollary of this futurity, Edelman develops on Freud's concept of the Death Drive:²⁰ because these queer entities exist outside of the futurity represented by childhood by way of not being able to reproduce, they are stigmatised as futurity's inverse. As Edelman argues, "the

¹⁹ Lee Edelman, *The Future is Kid Stuff: Queer Theory, Disidentification, and the Death Drive* (Ohio University Press, 1998) p.21.

²⁰ Sigmund Freud., *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.: 1961)

death drive names what the queer, in the order of the social, is called forth to figure: the negativity opposed to every form of social viability.”²¹

Edelman’s text provides a useful platform for discussing the investment society has in a specific image of childhood, and how this constructed image is used to perpetuate certain ideals—in this case heterosexuality. The image of the child as we know it, argues Edelman, was

Historically constructed to serve as the figural repository for sentimentalized cultural identifications. The child has come to embody for us the telos of the social order and been enshrined as the figure for whom that order must be held in perpetual trust.²²

Our own society, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick claims, is “brutally homophobic”²³ and the child presents a means to institutionalize this homophobia in political discourse. Embracing the Death Drive, for Edelman, is an act of resistance that refuses to grant the child its symbolic value. He opts for resignation rather than participation in a symbolic order that displaces queer entities:

the efficacy of queerness, its real strategic value, lies in its resistance to a Symbolic reality that only ever invests us as subjects insofar as we invest ourselves in it.²⁴

It is precisely this refusal to comply with the symbolism invested in childhood that secures Edelman’s inclusion in this thesis. His willingness to disrupt the child’s sanctity reads as similarly antagonistic to my chosen literary texts, and

²¹ Lee Edelman., *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (London: Duke University Press, 2004) p. 9.

²² Edelman, p. 21.

²³ Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick, “How To bring Your Kids Up Gay: The War on Effeminate Boys,” in *Tendencies* p 154- 64 (Durham: Duke University Press: 1993) p. 3.

²⁴ Edelman, p. 18.

provides an insight into the child's symbolic function within the political sphere. Furthermore, Edelman extends my primarily fictional-focused discussion and situates it within a real-life political context. Developing on Freud's conceptual framework, Edelman similarly attacks the emblematic child figure and the dangerous implications this image has for queer individuals. Edelman's work serves to ground what is otherwise a heavily theoretical and literary discussion in actual political events, within which he takes this emblem of the child and uses it to valiantly "pierce the fantasy screen of futurity."²⁵

Edelman articulates a frustration that is common across this thesis: the *invention* and use of various models of childhood as best benefits adults. Whether this takes the form of an excessively moral child, an asexual child, or the-future-will-be-redeemed-by-the-next-generation-child, these archetypes have little regard for the *real* child behind the stereotype. As Henry James illustrated, we cannot know what, exactly, the child is, therefore we cannot assign qualities on their behalf. Why is it, then, that there is an ongoing compulsion to conceptualize childhood according to adult ideals? This is an argument James Kincaid takes up in *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting*. Kincaid puts particular emphasis on the construction of childhood innocence, arguing that this is a more insidious practice than it appears to be: the asexuality ascribed to children enables adults to insist on innocence while simultaneously eroticizing childhood. As this thesis similarly aspires to do, Kincaid rejects childhood innocence as a legitimate premise, and exposes it as a means to sexualize the child under the thin veil of protection. He asserts that the stories we tell against the sexualisation of children are the same stories that cement this practice in society. They allow us to covertly

²⁵ Edelman, p. 31.

explore the sexuality of children whilst overtly condemning it: they enable, and in fact ensure, an obsessional fixation on the eroticizing of children:

In the case of child molesting and its culturally approved narratives, we have stories that allow us a hard-core righteous prurience; it's a scapegoating exercise we have come to depend on.²⁶

Kincaid illustrates the way discourse regarding the child serves adults more than the children it professes to protect. Much like Nabokov's *Lolita*, the child is constructed as a projection of adult desire and—whether this is done under the banner of protection or not—this desire is fundamentally sexual. As Hanson Ellis claims, the child occupies an ambivalent and contradictory space:

The sexual child is a figure rich in paradox, at once familiar and strange, naïve and knowing, transparent and inscrutable, docile and dangerous, innocent and guilty. In Kincaid's analysis, it has acquired all the makings of a modern myth, and we find ourselves called upon to participate in the voyeuristic popular obsession with decrying an evil and enjoying it at the same time.²⁷

Kincaid's argument exposes the irony of society's investment in childhood as a place to regulate sexuality by way of early intervention. This very practice does not safeguard the child, but enables adults to fantasize the sexual exploits of childhood: "these stories are doing something for us: we wouldn't be telling this tale of exploitation of the child's body if we didn't wish to have it told."²⁸

Similarly, Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley's *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* suggests that "one can and should disapprove of the sexual abuse of

²⁶ Kincaid, p. 8.

²⁷ Hanson Ellis, 'Knowing Children: Desire and Interpretation in The Exorcist.' in *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* ed. Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley (USA: University of Minnesota Press: 2004) p. 135.

²⁸ James Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) p. 6.

children without denying that it raises some unsettling questions about its uncertain measure in our lives.”²⁹ These theorists shift the focus from innocence as a qualifier of childhood, to the reasons *why* we treat it so.

In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault similarly considers how childhood sexuality is so heavily regulated and why it is so. Children’s sexuality—as we have likely gathered by now—is a public issue. As suggested by Edelman, the child is political; Kincaid called it an obsession; and Bond-Stockton claims that “any and every child can be seen as queer.”³⁰ There is a fixation across the Western world with demarcating the barriers of childhood and, as Foucault claims, this is an inherited practice: “the sex of the schoolboy became in the course of the eighteenth century a public problem.”³¹ General consensus across these theoretical texts is that childhood has long been the responsibility of society, and they have attached to it a long standing legacy of innocence. We need only to consider the pure child presented by Locke or Rousseau,³² or the godly children presented in Wordsworth’s Romantic poetry to evidence this tradition.³³ Foucault does the important work of historicising childhood sexuality and presents a case that is of utmost relevance to this thesis: The innocence ascribed to children is not inherent, but invented, and it serves a purpose.

Childhood sexuality presented a threat to conventional (read: heterosexual) sexuality, as well as to the investment in sexuality’s reproductive value. For the

²⁹ Bruhm and Hurley, p. 23.

³⁰ Bond-Stockton, p. 7.

³¹ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality volume 1* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998) p. 28.

³² Cunningham, p. 38.

³³ ‘Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood by William Wordsworth : The Poetry Foundation’ <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174805>> [accessed 16 February 2016]

child, sex and its derivatives (sexual play, for one) was a means of pleasure rather than reproduction. This was concerning as it equated with a kind of perverse sexuality that prioritised individual pleasure above reproduction. As Foucault illustrates, this was a sexuality that could not be monitored or contained, it opposed a standard of institutionalised monogamous heterosexuality and as such it was “susceptible to a series of abnormalities; it is always in danger of deviating from the norm.”³⁴ Childhood sexuality, Foucault suggests, deviated too far from knowable, safe sexuality, and it was its closeness to, or potential for perversion that made it so threatening:

The liveliness and most dynamic aspect of the sexual instinct thus go far beyond pure and simple copulation: it begins before and goes beyond copulation. You can see why this instinct is naturally fragile: it is much too lively, precocious, and wide to be able really to lodge and take place solely in adult heterosexual copulation.³⁵

Childhood functioned as a space to inform normalised sexuality, and to instil, at an early age, the values of society. In order to ensure that childhood remain as such, its perverse sexuality needed to be characterised in accordance with these societal values, to be “entirely localized, sealed off, and locked up within auto-eroticism.”³⁶ To produce the desired adult figure, the child needed to be contained, and its sexuality controlled:

A value is attached to the child’s body, his life is given an economic and affective value, a fear is created around this body, and a fear is installed

³⁴ Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France 1974-1975*, trans. Graham Burchell. (UK: Verso, 2003) p. 279.

³⁵ Foucault, p. 279.

³⁶ Foucault, p. 266.

around sexuality as source of the dangers incurred by the child and his body.³⁷

Foucault deconstructs what is otherwise easy to generalise as an essential, uncompromising innocence attributed to children. As Foucault's analysis suggests, this is not a true representation, and rather the concept of innocence was manufactured in order to contain what is otherwise a dangerous challenge to normative and containable sexuality. In this sense, the child was commodified as a means to regulate sexuality. It is not my argument that the sexualised child finds its origins in modernism, but that in the modernist shift toward sexual liberation, they reject this legacy of ostensible childhood innocence and expose it for what it was: a tradition that characterized child sexuality so that it may perpetuate an adult ideal.

Through this development of the sexualised child within modernism, I establish causality between the liberation of the child from a series of fixed and measurable categories, and the way in which this inevitably lends itself to the production of various models of sexualised children. The child's lack of agency paired with the unfixed, unknowable quality of childhood enables, and in fact necessitates, the child's sexualisation. The modernist child disrupts the child's commodification as an embodiment of morality that was perpetuated within the eighteenth century. Beginning with Henry James as a precursory modernist, the symbolic child is stripped of its foundational qualifiers of innocence and simplicity, so that it becomes unknowable and unable to be defined by societal values. This disruption of the innocent archetype lends itself to renegotiation of the terms of childhood. Ultimately, the modernist child is freed from prescription:

³⁷ Foucault, p. 265.

they are no longer essentialized by morality or innocence. However, in abandoning the child's legacy of innocence, they become increasingly informed by sexuality: the child's unfixedness always lends itself to be informed from without.

Within this epoch there is no dominant model of childhood, and rather the various literary depictions provide insight into the shifting stages of the century. Writing in the 1940s, Anais Nin's children represent the dominance of Freudian theory by being perversely and outrageously sexual, whereas Nabokov's late-modernist text *Lolita* illustrates the anxieties about a childhood that has developed to be dangerously sexualised and re-informed as a fantasy for the adult gaze. The sexual child that is to occupy the modernist epoch signifies the rejection of hope, morality, and sanctity that was ascribed to it in the former century. This symbol is replaced with the image of a child whom—in liberating the child from this prescription of innocence—came to be under-valued and over-sexualised.

Chapter 1 - The Ambiguous Children of Henry James

Henry James' novel *What Maisie Knew* (1897), and short story 'The Pupil,' (1891) serve as transitional texts from the Victorian era into modernism in which ideals held by the former are unsettled and opened to renegotiation. This is particularly true of childhood sexuality and the departure from the innocent child archetype presented by James. He denotes a shift away from the characteristics of "singularity and simplicity that have long been hailed as special provinces of childhood."³⁸ And instead, children for James represented an unknowable paradigm, with a complex interiority and consciousness of their own: "James's work represents a shift in thinking about the unsocialized subject—from knowable agent to inaccessible outsider."³⁹ James reconceptualised childhood as an unknowable paradigm and it is this unknowability that prefaces, and in fact enables, the sexualised child that is to be discussed throughout this thesis.

In order to illustrate the unknowability of children, James' fictional children are presented through limited third-person narration in which both the narrator and readers of James' texts are kept outside of the child's perspective. The limited insight into his children's epistemology inverts the structure of childhood as a finite and knowable paradigm, and turns it into an enigma. The enigmatic child presented by James gestures toward the child's epistemology,

³⁸ Michelle Phillips, 'The "Partagé Child" and the Emergence of the Modernist Novel in *What Maisie Knew*', *The Henry James Review*, 31 (2010), 95–110
<<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/docview/347552872/abstract>> [accessed 7 December 2015] p. 96.

³⁹ Susan Honeyman, 'What Maisie Knew and the Impossible Representation of Childhood', *The Henry James Review*, 22 (2001), 67–80
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hjr.2001.0008>> p.79.

but—as illustrated in *Maisie*—James cannot account for a perspective that he cannot enter. James instead presents the potential for children to possess qualities outside of those previously prescribed to childhood. ‘The Pupil’s’ Morgan Moreen exemplifies this potential through his precocious intellect and homosexual relationship with his tutor, Pemberton. Through Morgan’s character, James disrupts the image of children as an empty vessel—unaware and innocent—by depicting a child who is not only knowledgeable beyond the adult figures of the text, but is also homosexual. The innocent archetype is displaced firstly by James’ ambiguous child, Maisie, and furthermore by his queer child, Morgan.

James illustrates how the precocious or sexual child poses a threat to the ostensible innocence that has long stood as characteristic of childhood. This threat is not as overt in *What Maisie Knew* simply because her character occupies an ambivalent space that has the potential to be knowing, but this potential is never confirmed or materialised: we are never given a conclusive indication of Maisie’s knowledge. In ‘The Pupil,’ however, Morgan Moreen is a notably precocious and sexual child. My discussion of ‘The Pupil’ then builds on that of Maisie. *What Maisie Knew* introduces the unknowable child while ‘The Pupil’ illustrates the implications for children who overtly deviate from the innocence expected of childhood. One notable difference between my treatment of these two texts is the inclusion of the Bildungsroman narrative in regards to ‘The Pupil.’ As I come to show, Morgan’s precocious intellect and suggested homosexuality positions him outside of normative childhood and he occupies this liminal space that is not quite comparable to childhood, but not yet adult. This displacement is represented by Morgan’s death at the close of the story, serving as a characteristically modernist

rejection of the Bildungsroman narrative and its investment in childhood development as a linear trajectory.

Throughout this project, Henry James is treated as a precursory modernist. I draw on the field of Jamesian scholarship in order to evidence his status as a proto-modernist as well as consider the ways in which this project develops on the existing Jamesian criticism. This is particularly true in regards to James' depiction of the child's epistemology. James' preoccupation with interiority and consciousness shifts the focus of literature from ostensible childhood archetypes toward unknown epistemologies. He asks of his characters what Brian McHale describes as "typically modernist questions":

What is there to be known?; Who knows it?; How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty?; How is knowledge transmitted from one knower to another, and with what degree of reliability?; How does the object of knowledge change as it passes from knower to knower?; What are the limits of the knowable? And so on.⁴⁰

In other words, by imagining childhood as a site of unknown interiority, James denotes a conceptual shift toward questions of knowingness in line with what McHale defines as characteristically modernist: "the dominant of modernist fiction is *epistemological*."⁴¹

Michelle Phillip's 'The "*Partagé* Child" and the Emergence of the Modernist Novel in *What Maisie Knew*' similarly characterizes James as a proto-modernist, within which she argues that the child figure of James' "emergently modernist novel,"⁴² represented a pointed opposition to Victorian ideals. The

⁴⁰ Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1987) p. 9.

⁴¹ McHale, p. 9.

⁴² Honeyman, p. 79.

innocent child, Phillips argues, was an embodiment of the Victorian values of morality and sentimentalism. The child was knowable, containable, and—most significantly—children symbolized a subject uncorrupted by social ills. To oppose this image was to oppose the nineteenth-century values which it stood for:

To confront the conventions of Victorian literature is to confront the conventions of childhood, so seeped is one in the other. Innocence, simplicity, transparency, sentimentality, morality—all are not only deeply seated in the concept of the child but also find renewed life in the idea of an infinitely preservable and porous childhood interior. The Victorian novel, for modernists, becomes synonymous with sentimental, revelatory, and (literal) voluminous excess. The modernist novel, by contrast, develops an early attachment to the inexplicable, the restrained, and the strictly and uniquely formed.⁴³

The fictional children of Henry James are synonymous with Phillip's description of the child found in modernist novels. His children do not adhere to an archetype of simplicity and morality, but replace this archetype with an image of childhood as complex and enigmatic, with an interiority unknowable to adults. If the Victorian child represents the ideals of the period in which it was constructed, then the modernist child similarly represents the modernist ambition to locate and re-value individual consciousness. As Phillips suggests,

Forged in the spirit of the new and enthusiastically wielding the tools of experimental method and form, modernism reacted violently against the conventions and ideals of the Victorian era. But given that so many of

⁴³ Phillips, p. 104.

these ideals were centered in the child, it is no wonder really that a new child and a new childhood interiority should emerge in the divided houses of James.⁴⁴

James recapitulates the elusive quality of childhood through his use of language, treating childhood and discourse as similarly abstract concepts in which meaning and representation become unfixed and open to reinterpretation. James' treatment of language is inextricably tied to his conceptualisation of the child and, as Susan Honeyman claims, it is the various language techniques used throughout James' work that draw attention to the constructedness of childhood:

In James, children are ever elusive, both representationally and narratively. His unique combination of externalized focalization, visual objectivity, and dramatic irony anticipates post-structuralist approaches to the social subject and draws attention to the one-sided and unchecked power of adults constructing children.⁴⁵

Developing on Honeyman, this project illustrates how the child occupies a space outside of discourse because they do not have the acquired terms necessary to speak for themselves. That is to say, discourse advantageously positions adults in their construction of children, while the pre-verbal figure of childhood is not equipped with the same means of self-representation. James took the child's limited access to language to represent a lack of acquired terms rather than a lack of cognition:

Small children have many more perceptions than they have terms to

⁴⁴ Phillips, p. 97.

⁴⁵ Honeyman, p.67.

translate them; their vision is at any moment much richer, their apprehension even constantly stronger, than their prompt, their at all producible vocabulary.⁴⁶

Children's inability to provide representation is problematic as it grants adults the prerogative to speak on their behalf. However, as the children of Henry James illustrate, adults work within a different frame of reference to the child and therefore cannot understand the child's perspective. Implicit in James' literary children is a skepticism towards adult figures who apply meaning and representation to an unknowable entity, as well as a critique of those who speak on behalf of, and assign qualities to, childhood. Linked to claims of James' status as a modernist writer is his disruption of childhood as a determinate paradigm and the discourse that informs it. As Muriel Shine suggests

Twentieth-century novelists owe a debt of gratitude to Henry James for his active role in the movement to sweep away outmoded convention and prejudice and to establish the child in literature as a worthy object of complete and honest investigation⁴⁷

The following passages similarly advocate these claims—noting the abstraction of childhood and its correlative effects on adult prerogative and discourse—however, this argument is extended by the inclusion of James' queer child, Morgan Moreen, through whom, I consider not only the child's elusive quality, but the possibilities for childhood that are granted by their liberation from the Victorian archetype. Central to my own discussion is how the enigmatic child becomes the queer child

⁴⁶ Henry James, *What Maisie Knew* (England: Penguin Classics; 2010) p. 294.

⁴⁷ Muriel G. Shine., *The Fictional Children of Henry James* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1969) p. 174.

in modernist literature: how removing the boundaries of a rigid archetype frees the child from its sanctified position, and enables its sexualisation. Whereas *What Maisie Knew* functions to establish the child as unknowable, ‘The Pupil’ illustrates the queering of childhood this shift inevitably produced.

What Maisie Knew

As the title suggests, the question of epistemology is a central concern for *What Maisie Knew*, within which, the child’s interiority remains curiously elusive.

James’ relationship to Maisie reads as fundamentally ambivalent: he advocates for her consciousness without ever granting us access, or without confirming the extent of Maisie’s comprehension. Instead, through the novel’s narration, we read Maisie from a distance that dilutes her perspective in order that it remain inaccessible. As Honeyman argues,

James does not presume to give a close representation of Maisie’s inexpressible thought. In fact, his frequent use of indirect discourse insures that the reader remains aware of Maisie’s inaccessibility.⁴⁸

Honeyman describes James’ efforts to realistically depict a character’s interiority as unknowable from an outside perspective, and the significance of the child in portraying this inaccessibility,

For Henry James, to whom authentic characterization was key, children posed a further challenge to realistic representation, as he was intent on avoiding trespasses into unknowable subjectivities. He would not presume

⁴⁸ Honeyman, p. 70

to represent a child through self-narration, a method toward which he was already disinclined—to take the child’s role would be unconvincing. He may have recognized a greater barrier between adult and child minds than that between adults.⁴⁹

What Maisie Knew exemplifies Honeyman’s claim as the child is at the center of the narrative, however her perspective is filtered through a third-person narrator and thus—in lieu of a direct account of events—we readers are offered a set of observations and recycled dialogue. An example can be made of Maisie’s encounter with death in the form of Clara Matilda:

So it was in that course of an extraordinarily short time she found herself as deeply absorbed in the image of the little dead Clara Matilda, who, on a crossing in the Harrow Road, had been knocked down and crushed by the cruelest of hansoms, than she had ever found her herself in the family group made vivid by one of seven. ‘She’s your dead little sister,’ Mrs. Wix ended by saying, and Maisie, all in a tremor of curiosity and compassion, addressed from that moment a particular piety to the small infectious sentiment. Somehow she wasn’t a real sister, but that only made her the more romantic. It contributed to this view of her that she was never to be spoken of in that character to anyone else—least of all to Mrs. Farange, who wouldn’t care for her nor recognize the relationship: it was to be just an unutterable and inexhaustible little secret with Mrs. Wix.⁵⁰

Maisie’s reaction as a “tremor of curiosity and compassion [...] a particular piety to the small infectious sentiment”⁵¹ gives little by way of Maisie’s personal affect,

⁴⁹ Honeyman, p. 70.

⁵⁰ James, p. 20.

⁵¹ James, p. 20.

her internal monologue, or her conceptualizing of death at the age of seven. It is difficult to judge by this limited summary whether Maisie's acceptance of death is a testament to her maturity and heightened understanding, or whether it reflects an inability to fully comprehend the severity of Mrs. Wix's dead daughter. Again, Maisie's secrecy about the matter suggests enough intellect to discern what is appropriate to say in front of her Mother, Mrs. Faranage, however her thought on the subject is brief and is a primary example of the fleeting attention span attributed to children. This ambiguity speaks to the success of James' efforts to maintain Maisie's elusiveness: we are offered just enough vicarious insight into her perspective to imply intellect and awareness, but not enough to denote the extent of thought Maisie gives this information.

In this passage, Maisie's response is ambiguous and open to interpretation. It is not made clear whether she understands the information presented to her or not. This testifies to our inability to know what the child knows and gestures toward Maisie's potential understanding of complex adult concepts such as death. As Phillips claims, "in the place of the familiar metaphors of childhood, James identifies a new child interiority that is mobile, multiple, restrained, and, perhaps most especially, authorial."⁵² The ending of *What Maisie Knew* does not satisfy the reader with an anticipated revelation of what, exactly, Maisie *does* know. Alternatively, it ends more or less where it began, maintaining the question of Maisie's epistemology into the very last line: "Mrs. Wix gave a sidelong look. She still had room to wonder at what Maisie knew."⁵³ This is to suggest the child's

⁵² Phillips, p. 103.

⁵³ James, p. 265.

impenetrable interiority, in which James (and his readers) can muse, and indeed come closer to understanding, but ultimately can not fully access.

Maisie's perspective is all the more limited by the fact that it is delivered through a vocabulary that does not belong to her. The dialogue attributed to Maisie is so outside of her own seven-year-old frame of reference that it provides a troubling doubleness. This doubleness leaves unaccounted for gaps between Maisie's consciousness and that which is ascribed to her by the narrator whom, based on the sophistication of the third person narration, is likely an adult figure. Not only do these gaps contribute to the ambiguity of Maisie's awareness, they also provide a commentary on the practice of adults speaking on behalf of children. As Honeyman asserts, "there is a language gap, an inherent inaccessibility, between the concept of a child and the adult mind that creates it."⁵⁴

The complexity of the dialogue asserts its own adulthood and implies a place of origin outside of the child. It is not a direct account of Maisie's thoughts, but an imposition of adult perspective onto her. The irony of this practice, and what the novel draws attention to, is that 'child' and 'adult' are two exclusive paradigms with respective experiences and frames of reference. It is then absurd to think one can speak on behalf of the other, and yet this is a widely accepted practice.

In the same way that we readers are unable to fully comprehend what Maisie does or does not know, the adult figures of the novel that profess to know what is best for her are just as removed from Maisie's inner-workings as we are. This lack of insight into their 'little charge' is advantageous for the adults to

⁵⁴ Honeyman, p. 68.

which “she was the little feathered shuttlecock that they fiercely kept flying between them.”⁵⁵ Rather than attempt to understand Maisie, both parents rationalize her as unaware and embrace “the theory of her stupidity”⁵⁶ in order to best serve their own purpose:

What was clear to any spectator was that the only link binding her to either parent was this lamentable fact of her being a ready vessel for bitterness, a deep little porcelain cup in which biting acids could be mixed. They [Maisie’s parents] had wanted her not for any good they could do her, but for the harm they could, with her unconscious aid, do each other.⁵⁷

James’ sympathy lies with Maisie as she is subject to arbitrary adult discourse and adult manipulation, and he criticizes the adults who involved Maisie in “games she wasn’t yet big enough to play.”⁵⁸ James exposes the dangers of an unchecked adult discourse by illustrating how it is used *against* the child, for adult gain, rather than to benefit Maisie:

And did your beastly Papa, my precious angel, send any message to your own loving mamma?” Then it was that she found the words spoken by her beastly Papa to be, after all, in her little bewildered ears, from which, at her mother’s appeal, they passed in her clear, shrill voice, straight to her little innocent lips. “He said I was to tell you, from him” she faithfully reported, “that you’re a nasty, horrid pig!

This passage illustrates how the parental figures within the novel exploit Maisie as a means to attack one another. James accounts for Maisie’s virtue by stating

⁵⁵ James, p. 13.

⁵⁶ James, p. 13.

⁵⁷ James, p. 5.

⁵⁸ James, p. 10.

“she was in short introduced to life with a liberality in which the selfishness of others found its account, and there was nothing to avert the sacrifice but the modesty of her youth.”⁵⁹ The parental figures of *What Maisie Knew* illustrate the advantageous position adults hold in relation to children and how this unchecked prerogative lends itself to the unfair treatment of children. This passage also reinforces Maisie’s ambiguous epistemology as we readers are not given any indication as to whether she understands the severity of what she is saying, or if she is naively mimicking adults.

Inextricably linked to the question of epistemology within *What Maisie Knew* is the question of sexuality. The adult relationships, affairs, and divorces are the driving force behind the narrative, and the measuring stick with which we gauge both Maisie’s knowingness and her innocence. Throughout the novel we equate the two as if, through her unknowingness, her innocence might be preserved. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes this same similarity between claims of ignorance and claims of innocence, arguing of ignorance that it is “dangerously close in structure to the more palpably sentimental privileging of ignorance as an ordinary, passive innocence.”⁶⁰ Given the interchangeable quality of these terms, if we can never be completely sure of the extent of Maisie’s knowledge, then her innocence can not be secured either. Sedgwick comes to describe the binary relationship between “knowledge/innocence”⁶¹ suggesting that the two exist in opposition. In destabilizing the epistemological certainty associated with children, James

⁵⁹ James, p. 8.

⁶⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Los Angeles, University of California Press: 1990) p. 7.

⁶¹ Sedgwick, p. 11.

inevitably implicates their innocence—as the binary structure of these two terms suggests that the knowing child and the innocent child cannot simultaneously exist. Similarly, Sedgwick positions “sincerity/sentimentally”⁶² in an equal structure, suggesting again the exclusivity of these terms. In order for James to realistically present the child—that is, with sincerity—he inevitably corrupts the sentimental image of the sanctified child.

What Maisie Knew similarly highlights the assumed exclusivity of childhood and adult concepts of sex. Take, for example, a conversation between Maisie, Mr. Beale, and Miss Overmore:

The scene depicts a carriage ride together where Maisie contemplates Mr. Beale’s affection for Miss. Overmore when she is absent: “Did Papa like you just as much when I was away?” To which Mr. Beale replies: “Why, you little Donkey, when you’re away what have I do to but just to love her?” Miss Overmore reacts to this retort with the statement: “I shall make him understand that if he ever says anything as horrid as that to you I shall carry you straight off and we’ll go and live somewhere together and be quiet little girls.”⁶³

What follows is Maisie’s inability to fathom Miss Overmore’s response as she can not recognize the innuendo of her father’s comment: “the child couldn’t quite make out why her father’s speech had been horrid since it only expressed that appreciation which their companion herself had of old described as immense.”⁶⁴

This accentuates, as Honeyman claims, “her exclusion from the complex cultural

⁶² Sedgwick, p. 11.

⁶³ James, p. 24.

⁶⁴ James, p. 25.

codes that not only revolve around sex, but exist through language.”⁶⁵ Instead, we see two distinctly different interpretations of the same conversation: that of Maisie’s literality, and that of her parent’s erotically charged subtext. Maisie’s lack of comprehension and inability to access the adult’s vocabulary illustrates the respective frames of reference used by adult and child to interpret language, but also excuses the liberality with which adults include Maisie in conversations rife with sexual subtext. Just as Beale speaks with the assumption Maisie will not understand, so do her other parental figures: “There have been things between us—sir Claude and me—which I needn’t go into, you little nuisance, because you wouldn’t understand them.”⁶⁶ The fact is, however, that we cannot ever know what Maisie will or will not understand, and the assumption made otherwise is a source of irony throughout this novel. It is made clear through Maisie’s centrality to the novel that children, despite adult illusions, are in fact not removed from notions of sexuality, and rather this refusal to safeguard Maisie from the adult relationships within the text is indicative of the fact that children do not exist outside of these concepts of sexuality, but are privy to, and products of, these exact conversations.

The sexuality in *What Maisie Knew* is evident not only in content, but style. James’ use of language is complex with its perpetual use of referential, vague and deferred language, which - without ever reaching a conclusive end - begins a chain that continuously collapses in on itself. This is illustrated in the way the sentences roll into one another, and without certainty or clarity, signal

⁶⁵ Honeyman, p. 75.

⁶⁶ James, p. 161.

more toward what is being left unsaid. In this respect, the text is what, according to *Innocence and Rapture* author Kevin Ohi, constitutes aestheticism:

As a stylistic term it refers to an elaborate, artificial, tortured, often self-reflexive or involuted style, which delights in paradox, in difficulty, in drawing attention to itself as a beautiful, gilded, and often impenetrable surface.⁶⁷

James establishes a relationship between the fluidity of language and the ambiguous quality of childhood: that is to say, the two are reframed as similarly abstract concepts in which their meaning and representation are similarly destabilized. In *The Art of Fiction*, James discusses how ‘good’ fiction is constituted by the freedom or lack of restraint it is granted:

The good health of an art which undertakes so immediately to reproduce life must demand that it be perfectly free. It lives upon exercise, and the very meaning of exercise is freedom. The only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting.⁶⁸

James confronts the rigid conceptualizing of literature in much the same way he does childhood—suggesting that the two should be similarly free from prescription. This freedom is encapsulated in James’ elaborate prose through which he illustrates the subjectivity of meaning and interpretation. See again the moment when Maisie’s literal interpretation is juxtaposed with Ms. Overmore and Mr. Beale’s innuendo. The text facilitates multiple, unfixed interpretations

⁶⁷ Kevin Ohi, *Innocence and Rapture: The Erotic Child in Pater, Wilde, James, and Nabokov* (USA, Palgrave Macmillan: 2005) p. 2.

⁶⁸ Henry James, James, Henry, ‘The Art of Fiction’, *Longman’s Magazine* (September 1884); *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American writers and English writers Vol. 1. (USA, Library of America, 1985)* p. 61.

through the language it uses which are then recapitulated in Maisie's ambiguity—which itself does not imply a fixed or stable representation. As Phillips asserts, Maisie embodies the “art of not thinking singly [...] James's form, the form of a “developing modernist fiction, arises out of the reconceptualization of hers.”⁶⁹ Childhood and literature are then simultaneously shifting paradigms in which their defining principles are challenged. The ambiguous image of childhood represented by James is repeated in the structure of language used to articulate this shift. Ohi elaborates on this earlier claim by establishing a relationship between the ‘beautiful, gilded’ language and the ‘sexual scandal’ it represents:

What is perhaps most interesting about aestheticism, however, is the difficulty of disentangling its sexual scandal from its scandalous formalism [...] It is precisely the difficulty of separating “theme” from “style” that, this book argues, has made aestheticism alluring for queer writers: to articulate decadent aesthetics has also been to explore, enable, celebrate and even constitute queer desire [...] The disruption of representability inherent in the aestheticist reversal of style and matter is queer. Thus, the recursive turn whereby style or manner becomes the “content” of the text is, for these writers, an experience of eroticism.”

Following Ohi's argument, James' elaborate and convoluted style reaffirms Maisie's centrality to sexual narratives. James' ‘queering’ of childhood is not intended to mean ‘queer’ in an overtly sexual sense (at least not as far as Maisie is concerned), but queer in the way that James' use of language disrupts representation as a straightforward and knowable practice—to disrupt, destabilize, and indeed

⁶⁹ Phillips, p. 107.

displace the child's representation invites the potential for a sexualized child to exist. As Ohi claims in reference to Henry James' work, "desire is intimately bound up with the conundrums of interpretation."⁷⁰

It is James' suggestion that sexuality and childhood are not separate paradigms that most constitutes his departure from the innocent archetype of childhood found within the Victorian Era. There is more to be said on this subject in the following section on 'The Pupil', however, for now it will suffice to say that, through Maisie, James has complicated the widely accepted belief of sexuality and children as exclusive paradigms in a way that is not to argue for Maisie herself as a sexual child, as her own engagement with sexuality is not touched on throughout the text, but rather to assert that through second-hand encounters with discussions of a sexual nature, she is not removed from the subject, nor does she exist outside of sexuality. Rather Maisie is central to, and constructed by, these very narratives.

'The Pupil'

The question of epistemology is not as central to 'The Pupil' as it is in *What Maisie Knew*. In *Maisie* there is a deliberate effort to make the child's knowledge as elusive as possible in order to problematize the willingness of adults to assume they have full access to, or knowledge of, the child's consciousness. This assumed knowledge is then used to inform the terms of childhood. In 'The Pupil' however, Morgan's intellect is not as indefinable as Maisie's; the concern is not how much

⁷⁰ Kevin Ohi, 'The Author of 'Beltraffio': The Exquisite Boy and Henry James's Equivocal Aestheticism', *ELH*, 72 (2005), 747-67
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/elh.2005.0029>>

or how little he knows, but rather how his heightened knowingness intersects with his queer sexuality, and how ultimately Morgan's failure to comply with the unknowing-child archetype results in his displacement and eventual death. This trajectory exposes the stereotype of childhood as an unforgiving one, which excludes those who are not complicit with its limitations. If *What Maisie Knew* exposes the practice of adults defining children, then 'The Pupil' illustrates the consequences of disrupting this definition.

James disguises Maisie's awareness, however, he makes no such attempts within 'The Pupil.' Contrastingly, Morgan's heightened intellect is asserted throughout the story with qualifiers such as "genius" and "supernaturally clever."⁷¹ It is through Morgan's "wisdom of the ages"⁷² that we understand him to be more aware than the typical child, and, in addition, his "weakness"⁷³ of health denies him entrance into the stereotype of boyhood: "Morgan was scrappy and surprising, deficient in many properties common to the *genus*, and abounding in others that were the portion of the supernaturally clever."⁷⁴ The assertion of Morgan's intellect paired with his weak heart serves to muddy the parameters of childhood by applying traits other than those typically associated with childhood. A weak heart implies fragility while his precocious intellect implies wisdom beyond his age. James applies qualities to Morgan which stretch so far beyond the boundaries of childhood that he can not fit within them, suggesting the limits of childhood need be extended to encapsulate Morgan Moreen. Given this inability to comply with the childhood archetype, Morgan makes claims as though an

⁷¹ Henry James, 'The Pupil' in *The Complete Tales of Henry James Volume 71888-1891* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis; 1963) p. 413.

⁷² James, p. 441.

⁷³ James, p. 410.

⁷⁴ James, p. 418.

adult: “I’ll take their affairs in hand; I’ll marry my sisters.”⁷⁵ Despite his best efforts, however, Morgan cannot fulfil the requirements of adulthood anymore than he can childhood. Thus there is no paradigm in which he fits –he is not only excluded from childhood, but displaced entirely.

This displacement is particularly evident through James’ use of childhood signifiers. These function throughout the text to test the terms ascribed to childhood, and challenge their efficacy as descriptors for Morgan. The use of these terms produces disjuncture between the language used to assert Morgan’s status as a child, and its insufficiency to fully encapsulate his precocious maturity:

“He was a pale, lean, acute, undeveloped little cosmopolite, who liked intellectual gymnastics and who also, as regards the behaviour of mankind, had noticed more things than you might suppose, but who nevertheless had his proper playroom of superstitions, where he smashed a dozen toys a day.”⁷⁶

Using the terms ‘playrooms’ and ‘toys’ James is drawing on common descriptors of childhood if only to broadcast their unsuitability, and to show the investment adults have in terms that bear little resemblance to the child they are applied to. This illustrates the irony of describing children according to adult-defined terms given the mutual incomprehensibility of these two paradigms. This is particularly evident in the juxtaposition between ‘playroom’ and ‘superstitions’: playroom implies youth, while characterising Morgan as superstitious implies his cynical observation of the world. He is not presented with a child-like optimism, but with a mature sense of scepticism. This passage provides a sense of doubleness

⁷⁵ James, p. 448.

⁷⁶ James, p. 419.

wherein claims of childhood are underscored by assertions of Morgan's capacity for 'intellectual gymnastics.' Ultimately, this technique exemplifies as problematic the unchecked prerogative adults have to define children—illustrating the terms they use as both arbitrary and ill-advised, yet—despite their insufficiency—they set the standard for childhood.

Erotic Innocence author James Kincaid supports this claim, asserting that, rather than legitimate accounts of childhood, the assigned qualities of ignorance and innocence are adult constructed narratives, perpetuated to confirm their belief that children *should* be innocent: i.e. adults rationalize childhood according to their own agenda with little regard for the truthfulness of these claims, nor their consequences for children such as Morgan who exist outside of this stereotype. As Kincaid claims,

Such disclaimers seem to me custodial, ways of cleaning up little messes here and there, scouring away anomalies in or threats to our belief system so that the main narrative can go on doing its work for us. Offering judicious qualifiers and calming assurances, I can lay claim to virtue and buy a ticket for my argument on the same old bandwagon.⁷⁷

Henry James and Kincaid alike then beg the question: what purpose does the conceptualization of children as both ignorant and innocent serve, or, rather, who does it serve? As Kincaid continues to say, innocence enables a kind of projection onto the child of all things *unadult*: “uncorrupted, unsophisticated, unenlightened,” so as to secure their own claim to these characteristics: “innocence makes you vulnerable, badly in need of protection, which is why

⁷⁷ Kincaid, p. 53.

adults like it in others.”⁷⁸ Rather than confront this illusion as James does, common practice is to perpetuate these narratives in order to maintain their legitimacy, and keep secure the knowledge of adults as protectors of innocence.

Through Morgan’s character, James critiques this rigid conceptualising of children, and –given the insufficiency of childhood signifiers to fully encapsulate Morgan’s precocious intellect – James illustrates the false treatment of childhood as a fixed category. Again, Morgan’s advanced comprehension provides an excellent case-in-point for James’ rejection of the unaware child, and similarly his rejection of knowledge as a characteristically adult trait. By applying the quality of supernatural intellect to Morgan, James inverts this structure: “The chance that his small scholar might prove cleverer than himself had quite figured, to his nervousness, among the dangers of an untried experiment.” The fact that Morgan does indeed prove cleverer than his tutor, Pemberton, outright discredits conceptualisations of the child as an empty vessel, and engenders readers to question the legitimacy of these claims. Pemberton summarizes James’ belief in the child as an unfixed and knowing entity:

When he [Pemberton] tried to figure to himself the morning twilight of childhood, so as to deal with it safely, he perceived that it was never fixed, never arrested, that ignorance, at the instant one touched it, was already flushing faintly into knowledge, that there was nothing that at a given moment you could say a clever child didn’t know. It seemed to him that he both knew too much to imagine Morgan’s simplicity and too little to disembroil his tangle.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Kincaid, p. 54.

⁷⁹ James, p. 437.

This passage illustrates the problematic space James' sexualised child occupies. James negates claims of singularity and simplicity, only to leave Morgan floating between an irrelevant archetype and the far-away premise of adulthood. The child is then as enigmatic as it is displaced. The passage ends with Pemberton's perplexing stance on how to negotiate the space Morgan now occupies. This moment foreshadows the liminal child that is to inhabit the modernist epoch: he does not fit within the simple archetype of childhood, but is not yet granted the agency to occupy adulthood. This ambivalence denotes the child's status as a liminal figure as well as the complex position held by adults for whom the old truths of childhood no longer hold true, but there is not yet a space formulated wherein the precocious child, the queer child, or the ambiguous child fits.

Furthering Morgan's displacement is the sexual subtext between himself and Pemberton. This further complicates the parameters of childhood, and contributes to a reading of Morgan as a liminal figure who exists outside of both childhood and adulthood. It is through sexually charged phrases and passages that James expels ideas of sexuality and childhood as mutually exclusive terms, and rather suggests the two to be intimately linked. Take, for example, the claim that Pemberton "used sometimes to wonder what people would think they were—fancy they were looked askance at, as if it might be a suspected case of kidnapping." With allusions to Pemberton's "intercourse with his little companion"⁸⁰ James facilitates an intentionally ambivalent homo-erotic relationship between Morgan and his tutor, Pemberton. Through this homoerotic subtext, James subverts conceptions of childhood innocence—particularly with

⁸⁰ James, p. 420.

claims that “the boy ejaculated, laughing,”⁸¹ and also presents the potential for the queer child.

Avoiding speaking on behalf of either Pemberton or Morgan, James does not directly inform a sexual relationship between the two. In lieu of such a claim, however, James utilizes the ambiguous quality of language to imply desire. That is to say, Morgan’s homo-erotic desire is found within the euphemistic potential of James’ narrative. As Roland Barthes suggests, “there is no distinction between the structure of ejaculation and that of language.”⁸² It is through this euphemistic subtext that Morgan represents James’ similar liberation of language and childhood from fixed meaning and representation. The two become mutually constituted and destabilised by desire wherein the language used to articulate this shift is just as elusive as the child it represents. James’ texts broach similar ground to what Joseph Allen Boone describes in *Libidinal Current* as texts that are

by virtue of the libidinal currents they are willing to explore, less interested in destabilization for the sake of liberation *from*, than in destabilization as a mode of liberation *into*—into realms of unknown, untapped desires that have no necessary end.”⁸³

That is to say, James enters into a chain of language that does not conclusively signify anything definitive, but rather frees language, and indeed childhood, and indeed sexuality, from fixed meaning—particularly as this sexuality is treated in such close proximity to childhood. James’ freeing of language from prescription

⁸¹ James, p. 429.

⁸² Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, trans. Richard Miller (Hill and Wang, 1976) p. 129.

⁸³ Joseph Allen Boone, “Modernity’s Fictions of Desire: Definitions / Parameters / Desires.” In *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) p. 7.

enables representation to be informed by and within the narrative, rather than imposed from without. As Boone goes on to say,

texts whose ostensibly realistic formats are nonetheless subtly, and profoundly, infused with the rhythms and reverberations that evoke the power of libidinal activity and unconscious desire to shape not only human subjectivity but external “reality.”⁸⁴

Thus, the ambiguous quality of language and childhood comparably lend themselves to subjective interpretation wherein ‘reality’ is constituted by individual desire. Sedgwick similarly speaks to the transformative power of ‘a language of sexuality’ and its influence over identity and language,

Western culture has placed what it calls sexuality in a more and more distinctly privileged relation to our most prized constructs of individual identity, truth, and knowledge, it becomes truer and truer that the language of sexuality not only intersects with but transforms the other languages and relations by which we know.⁸⁵

Through the narrative’s sexual subtext, the concepts of knowledge and sexuality intersect, and reassert claims made during my discussion on *What Maisie Knew* that intimately link conceptions of the child’s epistemology to conceptions of their innocence. Indeed, the innocent child is symbiotic with the unknowing child, and thus for the illusion of childhood to remain stable, the two terms can’t be disrupted. ‘The Pupil’ is complicit with this logic as the relationship between Pemberton and Morgan is predicated on Morgan’s heightened awareness, and it is his awareness that enables his sexuality to

⁸⁴ Boone, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Sedgwick, p. 3.

develop. This is true of Morgan's character as his intellect disrupts not only the unknowing child archetype, but the innocent-child by extension: the unaware child *is* the innocent child, as in order to stay safeguarded from sexuality, children must be oblivious to it.

This practice of subverting the archetypal childhood figure (via Morgan's heightened awareness, misplaced signifiers, and homoerotic subtext), is not exclusive to the child, and rather James manipulates and perverts the term adulthood in similar fashion:

“The Moreen's were adventurers not merely because they didn't pay their debts, because they lived on society, but because their whole view of life, dim and confused and instinctive, like that of clever colour-blind animals, was speculative and rapacious and mean. Oh! They were “respectable,” and that only made them more immondes. The young man's analysis of them put it at last very simply—they were adventurers because they were abject snobs. That was the completest account of them—it was the law of their being.”

The Moreen's are depicted in contrast to the responsible adult archetype, and instead live a fleeting, selfish existence without care for consequences. The fact it is the child who recognises the adult's shortcomings, illustrates perfectly the inversion of the terms ‘adulthood’ and ‘childhood’ throughout the story, as well as their correlative characteristics. As Phillips suggests,

At every turn, James imagines his character... as effortlessly performing an intense irony, of lighting upon society's (and the reader's) most trained

expectations and turning them, in the most offhand way, inside out.⁸⁶

In addition to exposing these paradigms as arbitrary, this provides a point of interest throughout the novel: that is the fact that to disrupt the archetype of childhood is to be rendered displaced, whereas to disrupt the qualifiers of adulthood enables the Moreens to hold their position—albeit not without judgement. Morgan’s parents openly absolve themselves of their duty to care for him, and Pemberton hesitates to take on the role of sole caregiver. It is Morgan, however, who enters into a liminal space between childhood and adulthood where his age insists on the former whilst his wisdom and queer desire engenders his exclusion from childhood. He is neither here nor there and this displacement is represented by his death at the close of the story:

You walked him too far, you hurried him too fast!” she [Mrs. Moreen} tossed over her shoulder at Pemberton. The boy made no protest, and the next instant his mother still holding him, sprang up with her face convulsed and with the terrified cry “help, help! He’s going, he’s gone.”⁸⁷

Taken in a metaphorical sense, the quote “you walked him too far, you hurried him too fast” by Mrs. Moreen refers to Morgan’s advancement beyond the stages of childhood. The fact this is signalled as the cause of his death reiterates the claim that foregoing the unknowing, innocent archetype produced Morgan’s exclusion from childhood which reached its zenith in this dramatic denouement. As Pemberton claims of Morgan, “you are too clever to live!”⁸⁸ It would seem, then, through Morgan’s death that despite the mutual failings of adult and child, it is the

⁸⁶ Phillips, p. 97.

⁸⁷ James, p. 460.

⁸⁸ James, p.440.

child that is most dramatically effected. This illustrates precisely how the adult/child binary unfairly privileges the former, and why adult defined discourse is so problematic: it is not the adult who suffers when these illusory paradigms inevitably collapse. Thus Morgan's exclusion is so severe that death becomes the only option: "he couldn't stand it, with his infirmity, said Pemberton – the shock, the whole scene, the violent emotion."⁸⁹ Albeit dramatic, this denouement presents an ultimatum: comply or die.

Typically, in nineteenth-century literature, in order to come of age, the protagonist would fulfil the requirements of the *Bildungsroman* narrative. That is, he would come to align himself with the values of his given society. Morgan's refusal to conform to societal norms, however (namely his homosexuality), permits him from crossing the threshold into adulthood. In refusing to comply with this particular narrative, James foreshadows a shift that is characteristically modernist – that is, the problematizing of growth as a linear and the rejection of a prescribed standard of development:

If the *Bildungsroman* emerges in a rapidly changing society in which youth for the first time becomes problematic, its renaissance is clearly linked to the present questioning of gender categories, with all the multiple ramifications this involves for the representation of personal and social relation.⁹⁰

Rita Felski's above definition from *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, speaks to modernity and what is constituted as success within this framework. The modernist text, however, reacts by way of displacing these grand narratives of

⁸⁹ James, p. 460.

⁹⁰ Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989) p. 138.

futurity and development, and replacing them with an account of development that is not linear or standardized, but subjective and unconventional.

The disruption of the *Bildungsroman* archetype is concerned with problematizing youth, and central to this concern are questions of gender, and the punitive consequences this has on those outside of a standardised norm. Morgan's untimely death denotes his failure to follow a linear development, and to align with societal values—values of heterosexuality, for example. As noted in Jed Etsy's *Unseasonable Youth*,

whether they end with a frozen corpse or a frozen youth (or both) at their centre, these novels conspicuously evade the closural plot of adulthood and the harmonic social integration it implies.⁹¹

Etsy situates this theory of arrested development within the modernist movement, arguing that the denial of the *Bildungsroman* is characteristically modernist in its perversion of a standard of development which fails to account for the instability of the twentieth-century:

where the classical novel of education was shaped by the eschatology of nineteenth-century industrialization and nation-building, the modernist version assimilates the temporality of an imperial era when the accelerating yet uneven pace of development seemed to have unsettled all narratives of progress, on the ground and in the mind.⁹²

In its denial of a straightforward trajectory, or a fixed process of development, Morgan's death recapitulates the instability of the modernist child, and his correlative displacement in a world that seeks to define the child as well as the

⁹¹ Jed Etsy, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 29.

⁹² Etsy, p. 38.

child's development as linear and measurable. Furthermore, inextricably linked to Morgan's inability to cross the threshold into adulthood is his identity as a queer child, and the lack of an alternative narrative to cater for this.

It is true of 'The Pupil' that it more willingly explores what *Maisie* only gestures toward, and the effects of this are evidenced by Morgan's ultimate displacement. Firstly, in contrast to *What Maisie Knew*, 'The Pupil' more readily qualifies Morgan as a queer child, and is a considerably more overt confrontation to the nineteenth-century archetype of childhood. Maisie indeed poses a challenge to this archetype by calling into question the stability of childhood discourse, however Maisie herself accepts the notion that she is to feign her own ignorance. Likewise, her interaction with sexuality is always second-hand as opposed to Morgan's homosexual relationship to Pemberton. In this regard, Maisie is complicit with societal values, whereas Morgan threatens the legitimacy of these values with both his precocious comprehension and queer sexuality.

Morgan's death denotes the lack of an alternative narrative to account for the model of childhood posited by James. The fact that this lack necessitates Morgan's death is an argument *No Future* author Lee Edelman makes in response to a (politically perpetuated) heterosexual ideal. He claims that homosexuals challenge the concept of futurity by their inability to produce children and, because children represent the future, this correlates with an inability to contribute to futurity. Queer entities are then positioned as outside of the concept of the future, and thus they are forced to embrace the death drive. Thus, the refusal to comply with a constructed norm (child as future) means queer entities are excluded entirely, and relegated to death:

Reproductive futurism: terms that impose an ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of a queer resistance...Queerness names the side of those not “fighting for the children,” the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism... Rather than rejecting, with liberal discourse, this ascription of negativity to the queer, we might, as I argue, do better to consider accepting and even embracing it.⁹³

The same principle as the Bildungsroman applies here. Because of Morgan’s status as a queer child who does not comply with the values of society, it is impossible to envisage a future for him. Yet again this illustrates the punitive and unforgiving nature of accepted social practices, particularly as they negatively position those who do not fit within them.

The Jamesian children Maisie and Morgan dispel the notion of children as unaware and removed from sexuality, and, in both cases, the unaware child archetype is disrupted: by uncertainty in the case of Maisie, and outright denial as seen in the heightened intellect of Morgan. The limited insight we have into Maisie’s consciousness via the externalised focalisation of her point of view, and adult narration, illustrates that adults cannot access the child’s mind, nor can we make any certain claims regarding her epistemology. The same can be said for our misguided assumptions regarding children’s sexuality. As evidenced by Maisie’s centrality to a novel about adult sexual relationships, the child is not removed

⁹³ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, (London, Duke University Press: 2004) p.1-3.

from concepts of sex, but rather is constantly privy to sexual narratives. It is then false to claim the child's exclusion from these narratives, or advocate their innocence, when they are fundamentally central to these very conversations. 'The Pupil' develops on Maisie by way of confirming these claims, and outright asserting what Maisie only gestured toward. That is the idea that children are more aware than they are given credit for, as well as more sexual. The ambiguity fostered in Maisie presents a less confronting challenge to adult conceptualising of childhood, whereas 'The Pupil's' overtly intelligent and queer youth blatantly denies the innocent child archetype. Morgan's refusal, or rather his inability, to comply with the ignorance and innocence expected of childhood poses more of a threat than Maisie, and thus he has to die at the close of the text. Ultimately, both texts demonstrate how the rigid conceptualising of childhood is not a legitimate representation, and –particularly in the case of Morgan—this has punitive effects on children who do not fit the mould. The terms used to define children are then arbitrary, ill-advised, and ultimately unproductive.

This chapter functions as a transition into the modernist epoch wherein the child is reimagined as an unmeasurable and enigmatic entity. Like the language that articulates this shift, Morgan Moreen and Maisie Farange deny the assertion of childhood as a stable and representable paradigm, and alternatively, these children embody the uncertainty and subjective epistemological insight with which the twentieth-century holds as its dominant preoccupation. Henry James reimagines childhood as an ambiguous paradigm wherein the model of innocence is displaced enabling the sexualised child to take its place. James' enigmatic child becomes a blank slate, opened to the various interpretations and new forms childhood takes within the following chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 2 - The Perverse Children of Anais Nin

Anais Nin takes a more complex, and indeed more disturbing stance on the topic of childhood sexuality. The previous chapter gestured toward children's potential to be sexual, whereas Nin's erotic stories present children that are unquestionably sexual, and perversely so. With reference to the short stories 'The Boarding School', 'Pierre', and 'The Hungarian Adventurer' taken from Nin's erotic short story collection *Delta of Venus*, this chapter is interested in Nin's writing as transgressive literature: that is literature which extends beyond boundaries of law and ethics into the questionable realm of child eroticism. Childhood provides a platform for Nin to liberate sexuality from its prescribed limitations, and to demonstrate in the most extreme sense, her disregard for censorship. In this sense, Nin's literary children are a projection of her feminist ideology and her belief that, in order to occupy a new space wherein she is free to write without restriction and to explore sexuality, she must transgress established limits. Although this chapter reads with an understanding of Nin's conviction and finds interest in her use of the child as a projection of her feminist ideology, it is not without a great deal of discomfort that I negotiate between her ambition to generate new knowledge and her abuse of the child to do so.

As a woman writer in the twentieth century, Nin felt restricted by her gender. She felt she could not write with the liberty granted to men, nor was she writing in a period that valued the female perspective. Her child eroticism illustrates her frustration toward the censorship of women—particularly regarding sexual content. In eroticism, and in the child, Nin found a means to assert her own prerogative to disregard censorship, and to affirm a distinctly female voice

without restriction. Her violation of childhood innocence was a pointed statement against censorship, and a means to transgress, in the most extreme way, a paradigm that had established firm limits around sexuality. Freudian psychoanalysis provided a framework that Nin could work within that validated her view of children as sexual and, as Otto Rank's branch of psychoanalysis did, legitimised the female perspective. Nin considered the artist as a figure that was above ethics, and she adopted the method of transgressive literature that viewed the violation of these ethics as a means to surpass established boundaries in order that she might occupy a new space.

This chapter firstly draws on a field of criticism within which writers such as Lynette Felber, Smaro Kamboureli, and Harriet Zinnes (et al) describe Nin's status as a canonical twentieth-century feminist writer. In her writing, Nin's "womb writing"⁹⁴ as Chris Michael's calls it, asserted a distinctly female voice and advocated for the prerogative to write whatever content she pleased—pornography included. Like the body of Nin criticism, and indeed using this as a foundation, this chapter too recognises her progressive insights into sexuality, and her conviction toward a distinctly female voice. My focus, however, deviates from this body of scholarship by acknowledging Nin's paedophilic stories. This is otherwise uncharted territory in Nin scholarship as eroticising children somewhat complicates claims of progressive sexuality. This chapter negotiates this fine line between female prerogative to write without restriction, whilst still considering the ethics surrounding paedophilia. This chapter provides insight into

⁹⁴ Michael, Chris, PhD Thesis, *Embodied Borders: Auto/Erotica in the writing of Anais Nin* (Cardiff University, 2006)
<https://orca.cf.ac.uk/54308/1/U584122.pdf> p. 2.

Nin's feminist ideology, and the influence this had over her paedophilic writing, and her willingness to explore sexuality in its most forbidden sense.

A defining feature of Anais Nin's work is her self-conscious experimentation with a feminine language: she emphasised her gender in a way that treated it not as a subculture in reference to man, but celebrated womanhood in its own right, and the unique perspective it provided. As Nin claims, she was intuitively using a woman's language, seeing sexual experience from a woman's point of view: "woman's sensuality, so different from man's and for which man's language was inadequate. The language of sex had yet to be invented."⁹⁵ The short stories discussed throughout this chapter were commissioned by an anonymous collector, "an elderly man, very rich, who had no sensual life of his own."⁹⁶ This collector instructed Nin to produce explicit sexual content which she used as a forum to explore sexuality in its most forbidden sense. Writing with "a voyeur at the keyhole,"⁹⁷ Nin challenged a standard that censored women and excluded them from the prerogative to freely write sexual content. It is the inversion of this structure that characterises Nin's unrestricted entry into the erotic, as she rebels against the censorship enforced upon her gender, and pushes its boundaries in the most extreme sense.

The existing scholarship on Anais Nin reads with a resounding emphasis on this conviction to assert an uncensored female voice. Without exception, this scholarship is a vindication of this voice, heralding Nin as a prominent figure in

⁹⁵ Anais Nin, *Delta of Venus* (Victoria, Penguin Books Australia Ltd: 2008) p. x.

⁹⁶ Anais Nin, *Mirages : The Unexpurgated Diary of Anais Nin, 1939–1947* (Athens, OH, USA: Swallow Press, 2013) <<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10793886>> [accessed 12 October 2015]p.42.

⁹⁷ Nin, Preface to *Delta of Venus*, p.vii

the development of a consciously feminine literature. As Shari Benstock has argued, “Nin’s writing in the 1930s examined a specifically female-centred universe, its experimental literary forms tracing the psychological contours of woman’s imagination.”⁹⁸ Benstock includes Nin in a group of women she termed the Women of the Left Bank –a cohort of twentieth century Parisian female writers who sought to assert their gender, and to embrace its distinct difference from their male counterparts. The defining principle of this group is the notion that difference is not deficit, and the female perspective was one to be valued for its unique insights into the female psyche:

These women discovered themselves *as women* and *as writers* in Paris, charting experiences that were significantly different from those of their husbands, brothers, and male Modernist colleagues.⁹⁹

Benstock’s *Women of the Left Bank* situates Nin within a historical and literary movement which “privileged the white, male heterosexual,”¹⁰⁰ producing a standard which consistently devalued Nin and her contemporary female writers. It is this standard which Nin rebelled against, adopting the genre of erotic writing that enabled her to write sexuality from the perspective of a woman, with the same prerogative granted to her male counterparts. In his foundational text on erotic literature *Death and Sensuality*, Bataille claims that eroticism was as a serious literary project for male writers:

⁹⁸ Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank : Paris, 1900-1940* (Austin, TX, USA: University of Texas Press, 1986)
<<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10439453>>
[accessed 17 October 2015].p. 430.

⁹⁹ Benstock, p. ix.

¹⁰⁰ Benstock, p. x

Eroticism had become a subject that a serious man could study without forfeiting his good name. For many years, men have been discussing eroticism fearlessly and at length.¹⁰¹

Nin adopted this style of writing that was—as a serious literary project—only available to men, to consciously produce erotic literature that had a distinctly female voice. As Lynette Felber asserts: “Nin moved through and beyond ecriture feminine to produce a double discourse...Nin revealed the daughter’s competence in two languages, the masculine and the feminine.”¹⁰²

Critics are forthright with their praise of Nin’s progressive sexuality in its myriad forms, arguing, as Harriet Zinnes has, that

She [Nin] is hindered neither by a sense of shame nor by pretension nor by a desire to shock...It is that she writes with an understanding not of mere sex, but of the total motivation behind the encounter of man and woman, of man and man, of woman and woman.¹⁰³

These critics have made the connection between Nin’s feminist views and her erotic writing, but have not yet made that between her feminist ideology and her paedophilic writing. As Chris Michael’s asserts:

¹⁰¹ Georges Bataille, *Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo* (New York; Walker and Company: 1962) p. 7.

¹⁰² Lynette Felber, ‘The Three Faces of June: Anaïs Nin’s Appropriation of Feminine Writing’, *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 14.2 (1995), 309–24 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/463902>>. p. 310.

¹⁰³ Harriet Zinnes, ‘The Fiction of Anaïs Nin’, *A Casebook on Anaïs Nin*, ed. Robert Zaller (N.Y. : New American Library, 1974). p. 40.

There has been no full-length studies of Delta of Venus and Little Birds in relation to Nin's strategy of 'womb writing' as most writers have read her autobiographical and fictional work separately from her erotica.¹⁰⁴

One of Nin's critics, Smaro Kamboureli has come closest to making this connection. She discusses Nin's reappropriation of the pornography genre to include a female perspective and to produce erotic writing that did not neglect emotion for a purely physical description of sex: "Nin's treatment of pornography results in a sexuality that is considerably different, both in intent and content, from the sexuality described in traditional pornography."¹⁰⁵ Nin consciously muddies the lines between erotica and pornography according to her belief that sex and emotion, or sex and poetics can't be kept separate:

[Nin] has deliberately chosen to call her pornographic stories erotic, for... she is innovative within the genre of pornography. She creates a context where, even though the focus is exclusively on the sexual life, sexuality is far from being "not natural."¹⁰⁶

It is this practice of taking something familiar and inverting its characteristics that describes both Nin's feminism and her erotic writing. In the same way that Nin reimagines pornography to include poetics and emotion rather than reduce sex to mere mechanics, she reimagines the female writer to be uncensored: Nin works within a specific frame of reference if only to deny its familiarity and to disrupt its archetype. As Bataille suggests, "eroticism always entails a breaking down of

¹⁰⁴ Chris Michael P.hD Thesis, *Embodied Borders: Auto/erotica in the writing of Anaïs Nin* (Cardiff University, 2006)
<https://orca.cf.ac.uk/54308/1/U584122.pdf> p. 10.

¹⁰⁵ Smaro Kamboureli, 'Discourse and Intercourse, Design and Desire in the Erotica of Anaïs Nin', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 11.1 (1984), 143–58. P. 155.

¹⁰⁶ Kamboureli, P.144.

established patterns, the patterns, I repeat, of the regulated social order.”¹⁰⁷

Lynette Felber affirms this claim in regards to Nin’s diary keeping by arguing that she takes something characteristically feminine and manipulates it in accordance with her own feminist views: “Nin’s struggle to retain the diary, a subgenre often considered feminine and stigmatized accordingly, is a rebellious act of feminine identity.”¹⁰⁸

What the collective Nin scholarship discussed above fails to identify, however, is a relationship between Nin’s distinct views regarding gender and sexuality, and her inclusion of children in erotic stories. Building on this body of scholarship, this chapter aims to provide this missing link, and discuss that which the existing criticism pays little attention to: the inclusion of children in perverse pornographic content. My contribution to the Anais Nin scholarship is the suggestion that Nin’s literary children are a projection of her feminist ideologies. Nin’s treatment of children as perversely sexual, for example, is an extreme statement against censorship, and a pointed objection to established models of prescribed sexuality.

Transgression within Anais Nin

Unlike Henry James, Anais Nin *does* provide an insight into the psychology of her child characters—documenting their epistemological response to sexual acts as well as their physical one. Whereas James professed to be unable to access the child’s psyche, Nin’s investment is in the exact opposite: she consciously portrays

¹⁰⁷ Bataille, p. 10.

¹⁰⁸ Felber, p. 314.

sex from the child's perspective. This emphasis on psychology in Nin's writing illustrates the point raised by Smaro Kamboureli that Nin's sexual content cannot be separated from emotion and the pairing of sex and psyche depicted in Nin's stories is what situates her writing under the rubric of erotic literature as opposed to pornography.

Taking Bataille's description of eroticism within *Death and Sensuality*, erotic literature is interested in the psychology of sex as much as the physical act, and often the intrigue is the disjuncture between the two. As Bataille claims, the "realm of calm, rational behaviour" is as much a part of eroticism as "the violence of the sexual impulse" – "it is always a matter of two incompatibilities."¹⁰⁹ What distinguishes eroticism from pornography then, is the conscious act of violating that which is sacred or taboo. The appeal of eroticism is that ambivalent moment where the mind recognises the taboo while the body gives in to its temptation. It is the crossing of the threshold that the taboo demarcates:

the anguish we feel when we are violating the taboo, especially at that moment when our feelings hang in the balance, when the taboo still holds good and yet we are yielding to the impulsion it forbids.¹¹⁰

More than mere physicality, eroticism is in large part a process of transgressing limits of consciousness through transgressive sexual acts. It is only by crossing established boundaries that the mind can conceive of a new space. For example, Anais Nin challenges the impossibility of deviant children, or uncensored female writers, by pushing beyond the limits that have been prescribed to them. Referring

¹⁰⁹ Bataille, p. 53.

¹¹⁰ Bataille, p. 39.

again to Bataille, erotic literature is concerned with transgression as a means of change:

Man achieves his inner experience at the instant when bursting out of the chrysalis he feels that he is tearing himself, not tearing something outside that resists him. He goes beyond the objective awareness bounded by the walls of the chrysalis and this process, too, is linked with the turning topsy-turvy of his original mode of being.¹¹¹

It is unsurprising, then, that throughout Nin's erotic short stories runs two dissonant currents: the psychological and the physical. Alongside physical descriptions of intimacy, there is a narrative of internal thought—more often than not recalling feelings of shame that are overridden by the compulsion to attain pleasure. For example, this passage in 'Pierre' offers a description of sex that is interested in psychology as much as physicality:

He moved desperately, to rid himself of his torment, to inject his warm liquid into her cold body. Oh, how he wanted to come at this moment, while kissing her breasts, and he frantically urged his sex within her, but he still could not come. He would be found there by the man and the police, lying over the body of the dead woman."¹¹²

The coupling of sex and psyche within erotic literature is recapitulated throughout Nin's short stories. Nin treats physical and psychological experience in tandem, describing with equal effort the visceral experience of sex, and the conscious thought behind it. The symbiotic relationship between the psychic self and the physical self is an important aspect of Nin's work. When the physical self

¹¹¹ Bataille, p. 39.

¹¹² Nin, 'Pierre,' p. 171.

transgresses boundaries (through deviant sexual acts), the mind reaches new levels of consciousness. Nin appears to be arguing, as Michael Silverblatt does, that “knowledge is found at the limits of experience.”¹¹³

This reading is true of ‘Pierre’ as his various sexual transgressions motivate his development from boyhood to adulthood. The acts of necrophilia, voyeurism, statutory rape, and incest are treated as milestones, and the measuring sticks we use to gauge Pierre’s development. The story begins “when he was a youth,”¹¹⁴ and ends with a love affair between Pierre and his adopted daughter, Martha, while the in-between is a series of erotic encounters denoting his transition through stages of development. Each sexual transgression Pierre has serves to propel him forward—his transgressions are tied to both his epistemological and ontological development: “beyond the objective awareness bounded by the walls of the chrysalis...the turning topsy-turvy of his original mode of being.”¹¹⁵ The physical, legal, and social boundaries Pierre breaks through signal his growth—his age is not measured in numbers, but by the various sexual encounters he has. This story illustrates the interconnectedness of sex and psychology that Nin is interested in. She shows that physical transgressions are a means of growth: by breaking restrictive boundaries, the transgressor creates new limits or—as in ‘Pierre’—he grows and develops as a result of these transgressions.

There is a moment in the story where it returns to Pierre’s youth, recognisable by his “timid” response to the older woman for whom he first

¹¹³ Michael Silverblatt, ‘SHOCK APPEAL / Who Are These Writers, and Why Do They Want to Hurt Us? : *The New Fiction of Transgression*’, *Los Angeles Times*, 1 August 1993 <http://articles.latimes.com/1993-08-01/books/bk-21466_1_young-writers> [accessed 12 March 2016] p. 1.

¹¹⁴ ‘Pierre,’ p. 170.

¹¹⁵ Bataille, p. 39.

experiences an uncontrollable desire. It is not a given age that signifies Pierre's youthfulness, but his sexual inexperience:

He wondered what her legs looked like, her feet. He could contain himself no longer and gave the screen a pull... He approached, staring at her—the first naked woman he had ever seen... Pierre was completely unnerved. His body was burning, yet he did not know what to do about it.¹¹⁶

The synonymous treatment of sexual experience and maturity (or sexual *inexperience* and *immaturity*) in 'Pierre' illustrates the way erotic literature connects the two, suggesting that, through sexual transgressions, the transgressor is exceeding established boundaries and is therefore moving forward: his growth is achieved through these very sexual experiences. Given that we readers are informed of Pierre's exact age only once throughout the story (to denote a return back to adulthood), his development is not concerned with age as the measure of maturity, and rather with each sexual experience there is an implicit 'growing up' which takes place—a transition from unknowing to knowing, or from immaturity to maturity.

A similar progression takes place within 'The Hungarian Adventurer', a short story documenting the sexual experiences of The Baron, which again recounts a life journey comprised of various sexual transgressions, worsening in sinfulness as the story reaches its end. Whereas in 'Pierre' the child is presented as undeniably sexual, and victim to sexual urges, 'The Hungarian Adventurer' offers a contradictory insight into child sexuality, where the child figures are innocent, and it is adults who corrupt this innocence. For example, the Baron encounters two young girls with whom he plays games. To these young girls, the

¹¹⁶ 'Pierre,' p. 175.

games are void of any sexual desire, however, to the Baron, they are entirely motivated by sex:

One of the girls was lying on her stomach, and all he had to do was to move a little against her to reach his pleasure. So he did this, playfully, as if he meant to finally push her off the bed. He said, “I am sure you will fall off if I push this way.” ... “Laughing, he pushed her body up, but she lay close to him, her little legs, her little panties, everything, rubbing against him in her effort not to slide off, and he continued his antics while they laughed. Then the second girl, wishing to even the strength of the game, sat astride him in front of the other one, and now he could move even more wildly with the weight of both on him. His penis, hidden in the thick quilt, rose over and over again between the little legs, and it was like this that he came, with a strength he had rarely known, surrendering the battle, which the girls had won in a manner they never suspected.¹¹⁷

Through these little girls, Nin provides an image of child innocence only to later corrupt it—she violates a quality that is long established as taboo: the innocence of the child. Unlike ‘Pierre’, this depiction denies the idea that sexuality is inherent in children, and rather positions these “little girls” as victims of an imposed, adult sexuality.¹¹⁸ In doing so, Nin alludes to a sacred taboo only to shatter and to violate it, and to intensify the transgressions of her Hungarian Adventurer. The contrasting image of the innocent young girls and the corrupt Baron is a shocking one, highlighting the vulnerability of the child, and their helplessness against an imposed, adult sexuality. Contributing to this juxtaposition

¹¹⁷“The Hungarian Adventurer,’ p. 4.

¹¹⁸ ‘The Hungarian Adventurer,’ p. 3.

between adult and child is the epistemological gap between the two. In the case of the Baron, we are offered an insight into his conscious, deliberate efforts to violate these children, and to manipulate their innocence:

Another time when they had come to play with him he put his hands under the quilt. Then he raised the quilt with his forefinger and dared them to catch it. So with great eagerness, they began to chase the finger, which disappeared and reappeared in different parts of the bed, catching it firmly in their hands. After a moment it was not the finger but the penis they caught over and over again, seeking to extricate it, he made them grasp it more strongly than ever. He would disappear under the covers completely, and taking his penis in his hand suddenly thrust it upward for them to catch... So heated were the games, so great were the confusion of the battle and the abandon of the little girls at play, that very often his hand went everywhere he wanted it to go.¹¹⁹

Simultaneously, we are presented with an insight into the consciousness of the children, who consider the games only in terms of their playfulness:

The little girls did not mind how their skirts flew upward and their slender dancers' legs got tangled and fell over his penis lying straight in the quilt. Laughing, they turned over him, sat on him, treated him like a horse, sat astride him and pushed down on him, urging him to swing the bed by the motion of his body. With all this, they would kiss him, pull at his hair, and have childish conversations. The Baron's delight in being so treated would grow into excruciating suspense.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ 'The Hungarian Adventurer,' 4-5.

¹²⁰ 'The Hungarian Adventurer,' p. 4.

The young girls' complete lack of insight into the sexual element of the games further confirms their innocence, and intensifies the transgressive sexual acts committed by the Baron. In this story, as in all of her child-centered erotica, Nin is making specific reference to widely held discourse that positions the child as innocent, unaware, and removed from sexuality. It is by firstly recognizing this taboo and the sanctity of it, that the transgressions committed against it become so severe. As Bataille argues, "The forbidden action takes on a significance it lacks before fear widens the gap between us and it and invests it with an aura of excitement."¹²¹

Following the molestation of the two little girls, the Baron goes on to rape his two teenage daughters, aged fifteen and sixteen. The daughters are essentially older, more aware versions of the two young girls, particularly in the way that they "reminded him of his games with the two little girls in Rome, only his daughters were a little older, and it added a great attraction to the situation."¹²² Being the matured equivalents to the two young girls, these daughters suffer a similar fate:

Their young bodies, with their small breasts barely formed, affected him so that he did not sleep. He fondled one and then the other, with catlike movements, so as not to disturb them, but after a moment his desire was so violent that he awakened one and began to force himself on her. The other did not escape either. They resisted and wept a little, but they had seen so much of this during their life with their mother that they did not rebel.¹²³

¹²¹ Bataille, p. 39.

¹²² 'The Hungarian Adventurer,' p. 5.

¹²³ 'The Hungarian Adventurer,' p. 6.

Despite the analogy to the young girls from Rome, there is not the same residual sense of innocence, as it has already been corrupted—these two daughters “had seen so much of this during their life.”¹²⁴ Having already corrupted the child’s innocence, the story then necessitates a new transgression, and ventures further into the forbidden with the introduction of incest. Incest, Bataille argues, holds a status as one of the most extreme taboos. He asks,

is there anything more firmly rooted within us than the horror of incest?

We look on physical union with the mother or father or with a brother or sister as inhuman.¹²⁵

The transgressions committed by the Baron escalate in severity as the story progresses, ending with the incestuous rape of not only his young daughters, but also his son:

One night when he had taken leave of his daughters, he wandered through the apartment, still prey to desire, to erotic fevers and fantasies. He had exhausted the girls. They had fallen asleep. And now his desire was tormenting him again. He was blinded by it. He opened the door to his son’s room. His son was calmly sleeping, lying on his back, with his mouth slightly open. The Baron watched him, fascinated. His hard penis continued to torment him. He fetched a stool and placed it near the bed. He kneeled on it and he put his penis to his son’s mouth. The son awakened choking and struck at him.¹²⁶

The trajectory of the ‘Hungarian Adventurer’ firmly follows the logic of eroticism, as the breaking of existing boundaries necessitates new limits to be

¹²⁴ ‘The Hungarian Adventurer,’ p. 6.

¹²⁵ Bataille, p. 22.

¹²⁶ ‘The Hungarian Adventurer,’ 6-7.

broken, and more extreme acts to do so. Each new transgression produces new restrictions to be surpassed, and new space to violate. In doing so, this short story transgresses every facet of child sexuality—leaving no aspect of it untainted; Nin constructs childhood innocence only to shatter it, and to deny any knowledge of the child as an untainted, sacred entity. Nin’s treatment of the child suggests an inability for innocence to go untainted, and a lack of faith in the child as a site for purity. This is not the fault of the child, however, but it is an adult sexuality that they have imposed on them, that they must adhere to against their will.

The short story, ‘The Boarding School’ affirms claims made by Bataille and Foucault that knowledge and the generation of consciousness is situated within acts of eroticism or transgression. The two are inextricably linked as the taboo defines a limit where understanding stops: it provides a barrier that, when broken, opens the transgressor to new possibilities and a higher level of consciousness. As Foucault argues “we have not in the least liberated sexuality, though, to be exact, we have carried it to its limit: the limit of consciousness.”¹²⁷ The underlying premise of eroticism is that committing sins produces new levels of consciousness, and enables the transgressor to occupy new space, having moved beyond old limits. This is perhaps why, in the case of ‘The Boarding School,’ it is the priest who consistently transgresses ethics of religion by committing acts of paedophilia, that is in a position of power. Contrastingly, the young boy who is unwilling to explore sexual taboos is portrayed as the victim. His innocence makes him vulnerable in comparison to his peers—particularly when the “experienced” others violently rape him to “satisfy their desire” while he “screamed and kicked and wept, but they all

¹²⁷Foucault, Michel, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. And translated Donald F. Bouchard (USA: Cornell University Press, 1977) p. 30.

held him and used him until they were satiated.”¹²⁸ Those willing to commit acts of erotic transgression are depicted in ‘The Boarding School’ as more developed in both status and knowledge: their heinous acts appeared to advantageously position them in contrast to “one boy in particular, the only fair-haired one in all the school, with the eyes and skin of a girl.”¹²⁹ This little blond boy, the image of innocence, who “did not know anything”¹³⁰ was repeatedly the victim of others transgressions as they advanced and developed and he did not.

The suggestion being made, then, is that growth and power are products of transgressions, whilst the innocent are victims. Granted this is a bleak outlook, but it testifies to Nin’s own belief that her innocence stifled her, leaving her stagnant and unable to move forward. As a woman, Nin felt that she was constantly taken advantage of—she was never the transgressor and always the transgressed: “The woman grows older, tired, exhausted, and finally emptied and weak. If she weakens and needs protection she finds herself alone, even abandoned.”¹³¹ Committing transgressions is the difference between the “nine boys” of ‘The Boarding School’ who “satisfy their desire” and the blond boy who “screamed and kicked and wept, but they all held him and used him until they were satiated.”¹³²

The fact that ‘The Boarding School’ is set in a religious boarding school where “the customs of strict Catholicism still prevailed”¹³³ illustrates two key aspects of Nin’s erotic writing: her willingness to violate things which are most sacred: the church and the child, and her denouncing of religion. To set the church as a site of

¹²⁸ ‘The Boarding School,’ p. 21.

¹²⁹ ‘The Boarding School,’ p. 19.

¹³⁰ ‘The Boarding School.’ P. 19.

¹³¹ ‘*Mirages*,’ p.119.

¹³² ‘The Boarding School,’ p. 21.

¹³³ ‘The Boarding School.’ P. 19.

child rape, and to portray a priest who “in great secrecy at night, ordered a boy to go into the Chapel with him when no one was around and dip his penis in holy water,”¹³⁴ is a particularly pointed transgression which denies the sanctity of religion, and makes it responsible for the corruption of young children.

This line of thought follows an argument presented in Foucault’s *Preface to Transgression*. He argues that transgression illustrates a world that no longer recognises any positive meaning in the sacred.¹³⁵ God exists only in negation. That is to say, “God is dead.”¹³⁶:

Eroticism can say what what mysticism never could: God is nothing if not the surpassing of God in every sense of vulgar being, in that of horror or impurity: and ultimately in the sense of nothing.¹³⁷

‘The Boarding School’ is firmly situated within this argument, where the profane has replaced the sanctity of religion and, even within the churches, God cannot be found. This is particularly true of “the old Jesuit”¹³⁸ character, Father Dobo, who denies his archetype as a holy man, and would instead use confession to perversely question the young boys, and when checking the boys at night, “would slowly and cautiously lift the cover and look at his naked body.” In her reimagining of religious spaces, Nin denies the knowledge of religion as a last beacon of salvation and, in crossing this particular taboo, commits her own transgression against the church, ridding it of its significance and debasing it so far that it no longer holds its taboo.

¹³⁴ ‘The Boarding School.’ P. 20.

¹³⁵ Michael Mahon, *Foucault’s Nietzschean Genealogy: Truth, Power, and the Subject* (SUNY Press, 1992) p.64.

¹³⁶ Foucault, p.31.

¹³⁷ Foucault, p.33.

¹³⁸ ‘The Boarding School’ p. 20.

‘The Boarding School’ then is her own surpassing of God in every sense of vulgar being.

The church and the child occupy similarly sacred spaces. There is a reverence associated with the two, and a sanctity that implies immunity from corruption: both are associated with purity or innocence. Nin’s transgressive stories are then all the more shocking on account of her willingness to violate the sanctified position they both hold. Rather than a place of salvation, the church and the child are presented as equally corrupted. This is a pointed statement against the efficacy of innocence in “the dark world which no child was ever prepared to receive.”¹³⁹ As well as an indication of the extent of Nin’s transgressive writing. Her attack on the church and child alike are a self-aware act of crossing the boundaries that limit sexuality. It is the recognition of the church and child as sanctified spaces that constitute the severity of her transgressions against them. Nin creates a world in which there is no aspect that sexuality and corruption do not infiltrate:

After a while the blond boy was thrown on the grass, undressed, turned on his stomach, and all the other nine boys passed over him, taking him as they would a prostitute, brutally. The experienced boys penetrated his anus to satisfy their desire, while the less experienced used friction between the legs of the boy, whose skin was as tender as a woman’s. They spat on their hands and rubbed saliva over their penises. The blond boy screamed and kicked and wept, but they all held him and used him until they were satiated.¹⁴⁰

No story more firmly illustrates Nin’s intention to transgress the boundaries of religion, and an institution that is noticeably male and privileged. Through ‘The

¹³⁹ ‘Mirages,’ p. 140.

¹⁴⁰ ‘The Boarding School,’ p. 21.

Boarding School's' sordid characters, Nin has desecrated that which is most sacred, the church and the child. It is this "quality of transgression, or in other words, the sinfulness"¹⁴¹ that best illustrates her desire to generate a new mode of thinking, and establish new limits by making the old limits irrelevant: they no longer represent a stopping point, but rather open up a space for new discovery, and new boundaries to be broken.

Admittedly, these stories are horrific and pose many ethical problems, but Nin is working within a frame of reference—eroticism and transgressive literature—that characterises these abhorrent stories of child abuse, incest, and corrupt priests as a necessary evil. In surpassing the limitations these taboos assign, Nin is trying to conceptualise a space beyond them. She destabilises our notions of sexuality in the hope that sexuality as a paradigm might be reconceptualised and its demarcations redefined. This is her ambition: to move beyond boundaries—particularly those imposed on her gender and sexuality—so that she cannot be restricted by them any longer. Transgressions are an act of moving beyond physical and epistemological limits to make space for new modes of thinking and ways of being. It is this principle which takes Nin so far into the forbidden: only by moving beyond prescribed limits—of gender or of censorship, for example—can she reach a new space where these no longer exist.

When you consider that Anais Nin felt limited by her gender and the censorship expected of women, you come to a better understanding of why she felt it so necessary to supersede these boundaries by applying the logic of eroticism that locates new knowledge, and new ways of being within transgressive sexual experience. This genre recognises limitations only to move

¹⁴¹ Bataille, p. 109.

beyond them. Just as Pierre's transgressions enable his forward movement, these stories serve as Nin's own transgression beyond an old, unforgiving order. In December, 1943, Nin wrote:

I no longer want to be the victim of the criminals. I want to be the criminal, and this has come simultaneously with the birth of the artist. I want to be the artist now. I have begun to create. I am sad, humanly sad. The saint in me was killed by excess. I had to know hatred.¹⁴²

In order for Nin to reimagine a new space for female writers to occupy she needed to move beyond her current limits into new territory. Her child-erotica is then an attempt to violate the sacred and taboo in order to move past it, to "enter openly the into the secret world of sex, rebelling at the bondage of sex."¹⁴³ She is writing within a genre that asks, as Foucault suggests, its readers to detach this writing

from its questionable association to ethics if we want to understand it and begin thinking from it and the space it denotes; it must be liberated from the scandalous or subversive, that is, from anything aroused by negative association.¹⁴⁴

Despite Foucault's assertion to disregard ethics, it is impossible to read Nin without serious moral and ethical objections. This chapter does not propose that we do so, but rather tries to account for why these short stories transgress so far into controversial content.

¹⁴² 'Mirages,' p. 47.

¹⁴³ 'Mirages,' P. 89.

¹⁴⁴ Foucault, p. 30.

Nin and Psychoanalysis

Anais Nin's depiction of 'Pierre' and the children within 'The Boarding school' as inherently sexual aligns with the views of psychoanalytic theory. Nin and Freud alike advocate for childhood as a site of sexual discovery, and for child development to be motivated by sexual desire. 'Pierre' and 'The Boarding School' both present children that commit sexual acts which are prompted by their own desire—rather than adult's imposing themselves on children. These stories align with Freudian psychoanalysis, and Nin's depiction of children is one that ultimately sides with Freud's conceptualisation of childhood sexuality. These literary children adhere to what Freud terms the "polymorphous perverse" in the way that their sexual attraction is not limited to socially accepted or normalised practices, but deviates in various and perverse ways.

Freud suggests that childhood is not void of sexual urges, but contrastingly is characterised by these exact urges: as recapitulated in 'Pierre' and 'The Boarding School', the discovery of sex is the driving force behind the child's every action. Freud and Nin alike entertain the notion of children as perverse by reasoning that they are not motivated by the reproductive function, and instead their sexual practices are motivated only by the desire to attain pleasure. As Freud comments,

If a child has a sexual life it is bound to be of a perverse kind; for, except for a few obscure hints, children are without what makes sexuality into the reproductive function.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Sigmund Freud. "The Sexual Life of Human Beings." In *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, edited by James Strachey and Angela Richards,

This is particularly evident in the case of Nin's stories 'The Boarding School' where the sexuality presented is homosexual, and thus void of any reproductive value. Freud explains that the child's sexuality is then characteristically perverse; it precedes the desire to reproduce, and is invested purely in the attainment of a self-gratifying pleasure:

To suppose that children have no sexual life—sexual excitations and needs and a kind of satisfaction—but suddenly acquire it between the ages twelve to fourteen would (quite apart from any observations) be as improbable, and indeed senseless, biologically to suppose that they brought no genitals with them into the world and only grew them at the time of puberty. What *does* awaken in them at this time is the reproductive function, which makes use for its purposes of physical and mental material already present.¹⁴⁶

This premise denies the archetype of the innocent child, and rather creates an alternative narrative for childhood which Anais Nin is undoubtedly engaging with. This is unsurprising given that the two (Nin and Freud) were actively engaging in the disillusionment of childhood innocence, and the liberation of sexuality within the twentieth century. Nin is writing at a point when Freud's ideas of childhood sexuality were being considered as legitimate theories. In similar ways, Freud transgressed boundaries of childhood innocence in order to conceive of the sexual child. Freudian theory is then not some removed theoretical framework but a movement which Nin is actively engaging with, and drawing on in her own conceptualisation of the child as a sexual entity.

translated by James Strachey. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974) p. 67

¹⁴⁶ Freud, p. 65.

It is Nin's relationship to the psycho-analyst Otto Rank that confirms a connection between Nin's writing and psychoanalytic theory. In 1934, Nin was a patient of Rank's, and they subsequently had an affair. Rank was a student (and patient) of Freud from 1906-1924, and largely advocated the theories of Freud regarding the sexual impulses of children. The two diverged in their belief that the child's fear of castration, or the 'Oedipal complex,' was the origin for all neurosis, and that the role of the mother was secondary to that of the father as suggested by Freudian theory. Rank proposed that birth was the primary trauma, and all proceeding anxiety was prompted by a desire to return to the womb: "the child's every anxiety consists of the anxiety at birth (and the child's every pleasure aims at the re-establishing of the intrauterine primal pleasure)"¹⁴⁷ As Rosemary Balsam argues in *Freud, Females, Childbirth, and Dissidence* Rank positioned his birth trauma anxiety as the definitive unconscious experience. It was basic in everything from the child's fear of the dark to the blinding of Oedipus in the play, as a return to the darkness of the womb, to phobias about animals, ultimately sublimated into art, religion, and theatre. Importantly, Rank questioned the centrality of Oedipus. He put the mother at the center of every neurosis.¹⁴⁸

By minimizing the role of the father in the development of neurosis and pleasure, Rank's thesis challenged the legitimacy of both the Oedipal complex and the fear of castration which were fundamental to Freudian psychoanalysis:

¹⁴⁷ Otto Rank, *The trauma of birth, 1920*. (Mineola, N.Y. : Dover, 1993.) P.20.

¹⁴⁸ Rosemary Balsam, "Freud, Females, Childbirth, and Dissidence: Margarete Hilferding, Karen Horney, and Otto Rank." *Psychoanalytic review* 100.5 (2013): 695-716. *ProQuest*. Web. 17 Sep. 2015 p. 710.

The general validity of the experience that the child's every anxiety consists of the anxiety at birth (and the child's every pleasure aims at the re-establishing of the intrauterine primal pleasure) could be called in question in view of the so-called *castration anxiety*, which has recently been so strongly emphasized....It is conceivable, indeed obvious, that precisely the female genitals, being the place of the birth trauma, should soon again become the chief object of the anxiety-affect originally arising there. Thus the importance of the castration fear is based, as Starcke thinks, on the primal castration at birth, that is, on the separation of the child from the mother.¹⁴⁹

It is these differences between Rank and Freud that lead Nin to engage more closely with Otto Rank, as his emphasis on the mother aligned with Nin's own belief in the significance of women, and positioned female figures at the center rather than on the periphery. Rank's theory placed a value on women which Freud's theory lacked, and emphasized the role of the mother over the father—he repositioned the mother according to his belief that misogyny is a “primal repression which tries to degrade and to deny woman both socially and intellectually on account of her original connection with the birth trauma”¹⁵⁰ Rank re-conceptualized children's sexuality to “re-instate the high estimation of woman which was repressed simultaneously with the birth trauma, and we can do this by freeing her from the weight of the curse on her genitals”¹⁵¹

The female figure is similarly central in Nin's work. Not in the form of female characters—in fact the majority of her characters are male—but rather in

¹⁴⁹ Rank ,p. 19.

¹⁵⁰ Rank, p. 37.

¹⁵¹ Rank, p. 36.

the fact that she positions the female centrally by writing consciously as a woman—using a female perspective and emotive/intuitive language to explore sexuality from an otherwise ignored perspective. Rank and Nin are comparable in their depictions of children as inherently sexual, and women as central figures.

Otto Rank's theories are then just as pertinent to the discussion of Nin's child characters as Freud's are, particularly given her personal relationship with Rank. According to Nin's diary entry from 1966, Otto Rank influenced Nin's writing by helping her to express her written voice:

As he talked, I thought of my difficulties with writing, my struggles to articulate feelings not easily expressed. Of my struggles to find a language for intuition, feeling, instincts which are, in themselves, elusive, subtle, and wordless¹⁵²

Additionally, Rank's view of childhood and infantile sexuality is similarly perverse, and couples deviant sexual expression and child sexuality with a similar lack of restraint shown by Nin; he even goes so far as to liken Jack the Ripper to infantile sexuality:

murderer of woman who wallows in blood and in bowels, seems completely to play the part of infantile curiosity, and seeks to discover the nature of the inside of the body.¹⁵³

Like Nin, Rank does not attribute child sexuality to some arbitrary point in development, but rather argues children are born negotiating the terms of sex – it is central to their character, their world view, and their development.

¹⁵² Anais Nin, *The Diary of Anais Nin Volume 1 1931-1934* ed by Gunther Stuhlmann (New York, The Swallow Press: 1966) p. 276.

¹⁵³ Rank, p. 3.

Both the theories of Freud and Otto Rank are then equally viable frames of reference for understanding Nin's sordid depictions of children. Rank and Freud locate sexual urges in childhood which exist outside of normalized sexuality, and propose a theory of children as fundamentally sexual. As her contemporaries, Freud and Rank are challenging the same assumed innocence of childhood as Nin, and contest the same established archetype of childhood as sacred and innocent. Freud recognizes this construct, and the repercussions for those who treat children as anything but innocent:

almost all infantile sexualities were forbidden to children and frowned upon; an ideal was set up of making the life of children asexual and of course over time things came to the point at which people really believed they were asexual and thereafter science pronounced this as its doctrine. To avoid contradicting their belief and their intentions, people since then overlook the sexual activities of children (no mean achievement) or are content in science to take a different view of them. Children are pure and innocent, and anyone who describes them otherwise can be charged with being an infamous blasphemer against the tender and sacred feelings of mankind.¹⁵⁴

Freud and Rank respectively enable a conversation beyond this childhood innocence that Nin certainly draws on, and ultimately contributes to. This is particularly true of the short stories 'Pierre' and 'The Hungarian Adventurer,' both of which make reference to childhood innocence only to later violate this innocence, or expose it as illusory. The children of these stories are encased in an ambivalence that recognizes these two dissonant narratives: that of the child's

¹⁵⁴ Freud, P.65.

purported innocence, and psychoanalytic assumption of the always-already sexual child. In the case of ‘Pierre,’ the adopted siblings Martha and John are plagued by their sexual attraction to one another, but attempt to resist this attraction by reverting to a former childhood innocence:

I will come to you every night and stay with you and we will sleep like children, together, and I will prove to you how chaste I can be, how free of desire.

This gesture is undermined by the sexual torment they both experience when laying next to each other, and in fact the reimagining of themselves as children intensifies their attraction:

she did not betray the heat she felt between her legs as he lay near her. He remained awake sometimes, with the haunting sexual images of her naked body.

Nin alludes to childhood and its ostensible innocence only to deny that is void of sexual urges.

Likewise, in the ‘Hungarian Adventurer,’ Nin depicts two young girls as oblivious to the sexual advances of their adult playmate: “the little girls did not mind how their skirts flew upward and their slender dancers’ legs got tangled and flew over his penis lying straight under the quilt.”¹⁵⁵ On the one hand they are innocent in the sense that they are not consciously motivated by desire or pleasure, however, the ease and delight with which these girls engage in games with the Baron can also be read in Freudian terms where children “assert their animal rights with naiveté and give constant evidence that they still have to travel

¹⁵⁵‘The Hungarian Adventurer,’ p. 4.

the road to purity.”¹⁵⁶ Read through this lens, the natural, unrestricted play of the little girls suggests a sexuality that is not yet censored by guilt or shame. Furthermore, this depiction of innocence is fleeting when the story introduces the two slightly older girls—the Baron’s daughters—who are so privy to sexual experience that their own innocence has long been corrupted: “they...had seen so much of this in their life that they did not rebel.”¹⁵⁷ The story suggests that innocence, if real to begin with, is not a fixed state, nor is it applicable to all children. It instead is a paradigm that claims its own existence at the very moment that it is being corrupted. These short stories illustrate their own self-awareness as commentaries on childhood sexuality. They make allusions to innocence to then negate its efficacy as a characteristic of childhood, and provide an alternative narrative in accordance with Freud and Rank. Nin is demonstrably engaging with two competing understandings of childhood sexuality, and ultimately siding with that which positions the child as inherently sexual, and perversely so.

Freudian theory also provides a theoretical frame of reference for Nin’s coupling of sex and psyche. As discussed earlier in regards to ‘Pierre,’ Nin ambivalently negotiates two contrasting narratives: the impulsive urge for pleasure, and the moral reasoning, or fear of being caught. Freud theorises that the psyche is comprised of three parts: the Id, the Ego, and the Superego. The conscious, socialised self attempts to maintain control over the subconscious, instinctive self, and mediate between a heightened sense of morality and animalistic urges. Freud argues that the three exist in competition:

¹⁵⁶ Freud, P. 65.

¹⁵⁷ ‘The Hungarian Adventurer’, p. 6.

We see this same ego as a poor creature owing service to three masters and consequently menaced by three dangers: from the external world, from the libido of the id, and from the severity of the super-ego... As a frontier creature, the ego tries to mediate between the world and the id, to make the id pliable to the world and, by means of its muscular activity, to make the world fall in with the wishes of the id.¹⁵⁸

This structure is most evident in ‘Pierre,’ where as a young boy, Pierre has sex with the body of a dead woman he found washed ashore. His conscious self is aware of the potential consequences, and “was afraid the police would arrive.”¹⁵⁹ However, he could not stop himself from acting on his sexual instincts: “he tried to hurry to satisfy himself...to rid himself of his torment.”¹⁶⁰ The competition between Pierre’s subconscious and conscious mirrors Freud’s structure of the psyche, and also equates children’s sexuality with an uncontrollable sexuality that has not yet succumb to, or been inhibited by the superego. The same can be said for the young girls in ‘The Hungarian Adventurer’: their innocence denotes a developmental stage where sexual play is not impeded by morality.

It seems that Nin is again drawing on Freudian theory to construct her own image of the child as complex, multi-faceted and conflicted. This approach abandons the idea that children are less complex than adults, or that they do not suffer the same torments (be it sexual or otherwise), and in doing so presents an

¹⁵⁸ Sigmund Freud, 2010 ‘The Ego and the Id: The Two Classes of Instincts,’ In Freud—Complete Works, ed. By Ivan Smith. Original work published 1923 <http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf> [accessed 18 March 2016] p. 3990.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Pierre,’ p. 171.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Pierre,’ p. 171.

image of the child that unsettles assumptions of childhood innocence by showing childhood sexuality in its fullest, uninhibited form.

Anais Nin and the Artist

Anais Nin's personal feelings toward children mirror much of the same disregard for children as sanctified subjects as her short stories do. Documented in her various diary entries between 1939-1947 –at the time she was writing *Delta of Venus* is, at times, a love of children and their freedom from restraint, but more often these entries illustrate her resentment toward children for the same reason. When discussing 'children' in her diaries, Nin is often referring to the cohort of struggling artists and writers whom, with their carefree attitude, depended on her as a parental figure to provide them with food, money, and a home. This dependency on Nin inevitably took its toll and, in this case, she describes children in terms of their exploitation and carelessness. Speaking of her own experience, Nin claims that

She no longer wants to be the mother of children, which demands immolation and abdication. She is the sublimated mother of the child-man, the artist, the poet, the primitive. Today the primitive, the poet, and the child are the weakest in the new world realism, and woman chose to protect him, recognizing his needs, protecting creation again, and thus giving birth again to the artist.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ 'Mirages,' P. 119.

For Nin, the child is analogous to the artist: “the worlds of the child and artist are, for me, the same world.”¹⁶² Nin’s attraction to the young, arises from the similarity between the creative and the adolescent personality:

both live in a world of their own making ... Both the artist and the child create an inner world ruled by their fantasies or dreams. They do not understand the world of money, or the pursuit of power. They create without commercial intent. They rebel against existing conditions. They cannot be deceived. The realistic world for them is ruled by conscious compromises, self-betrayals, selling out.¹⁶³

Innocence, for Nin, correlates with authenticity for the artist and child alike, but as with her fictional child characters, this authenticity, Nin asserts, cannot last—the world is too cruel a place for innocence to exist:

It is the dark face of the world which no child was ever prepared to receive. Childhood is not prepared for strife. It enters with an expectation of paradise and play, and to force the tragedy of hatred and destruction upon a child is to force too great a burden onto its innocence.¹⁶⁴

Nin’s fictional treatment of children reaffirms her own experiences of childhood, where child sexuality is not an abstract concept, but a lived experience. Nin personally accounts for her own sexual discovery in childhood:

My first erotic feeling I experienced at the age of eight. I was playing with four or five children of my own age. We had exhausted all the games we knew and it was getting to the end of the afternoon. I remember the

¹⁶² ‘Mirages,’ p. 299.

¹⁶³ Anais Nin *The Diary of Anais Nin Volume 4 1944-1947: Vol. 4 (1944-1947)* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1972) p.99.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Mirages,’ p. 119.

growing darkness, and how we passed from the room where we were playing into a glass hothouse... We all got dressed quickly. We were nearly caught by the parents.¹⁶⁵

She also witnesses the affection of Haitian children toward one another: “My nature finds its climate among them because they touch each other so warmly, they kiss frequently, caress each other. There is warmth of life and sensuality.”¹⁶⁶

It is then unsurprising that she advocates that sexual desire is present in childhood, as her own childhood testifies to this claim. As an adult, Nin also refers to herself as a child, and does so in condemning terms. When it comes to her own experience, innocence is not a measure of childhood, but rather it denotes a lack of agency: “We are two children, ashamed, rejected and deserted, he by his other and me by my father.”¹⁶⁷

Simultaneously, these diary entries illustrate Nin’s desire for the child ideal: the young, and the artists, who can live without inhibition. However, this ideal is overridden by her skepticism toward childhood as a site of salvation, and alternatively childhood for Nin becomes a limit to corrupt, deny, and ultimately transgress. Nin’s personal experience as a child, and her relationship to her artist friends, who she describes as children, offer some insight into the contradictory views of children depicted in her short stories, as she experiences first hand the desire to assume the child’s innocence, but also the shattering of this view as naive. She bitterly writes, “The artist/child never becomes a man, never ceases to

¹⁶⁵ ‘Mirages,’ p. 89.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Mirages,’ p. 203.

¹⁶⁷ ‘Mirages,’ p. 363.

live off her strength, and the woman grows older, tired, exhausted and finally emptied and weak.”¹⁶⁸

Nin was acting against a gendered standard that positioned her as the “sublimated mother of the man, the artist, the poet, the primitive.”¹⁶⁹ In her role as a mother figure for her artist friends, Nin felt used by those that depended on her: her male counterparts took from her as they pleased and “in the end destroyed her.”¹⁷⁰ Nin’s personal exploitation by men is analogous to her treatment of male characters within her erotic short stories. With the exception of two sexual encounters within ‘Pierre,’ Nin’s depictions of rape are committed by men against women and children. There is a similar sense of exploitation by men within Nin’s diaries and her short stories that illustrates their dominance and their willingness to take as they please.

Much in the same way that Nin’s experience with children and men sheds light on her fictional treatment of them, her attitude towards the artist provides some understanding as to why her writing is uninhibited by ethics or morality. The artist, for Nin, held a sanctified position and was not accountable to the same standards as non-artists. As Sharon Spencer muses, “for Nin, as for all of us who no longer believe in the power of churches to bestow illumination and salvation, the artist becomes a voyant, as Rimbaud said, or a wizard.”¹⁷¹ It was the role of the artist to create without restriction. Nin’s heightened sense of self was shared by Otto Rank who also firmly believed in the artist as the height of humanity. He

¹⁶⁸ ‘Mirages,’ p. 119.

¹⁶⁹ ‘Mirages,’ p. 119.

¹⁷⁰ ‘Mirages,’ p. 119.

¹⁷¹ Sharon Spencer, “Introduction” in *Cities of the Interior Volume 1* by Anais Nin (London, Quartet Books Limited: 1979) p. xi.

exulted artists, and considered them above those who were not inclined to create, and to cross boundaries in order to do so:

Artists, as Rank understood them, are self-appointed, self-aware, and intentional in their response to reality's demands. Of necessity they step outside convention. They recognize themselves as others and outsiders and are reconciled to their difference. Artists are resourceful; they are successful at adapting to reality, but prefer to shape it for themselves, and share it as new creation.¹⁷²

Because Rank saw birth as the paradigmatic trauma—he writes, “As a general biological factor, the trauma of birth, and especially all attempts to overcome it, prove to be the deepest foundation for an essential part of our whole cultural development.”¹⁷³—the symbolic act of creating life through art was an almost sacrificial one. Artists, according to Rank, reproduced (figuratively) the act of giving birth: of re-experiencing trauma in order to create new life. To create art, asserts Rank, is to “rage against the dying of the light, a rebuke to mortality itself.”¹⁷⁴ The reproduction of art was then as sacred to him as the reproduction of children. This treatment of the artist aligns with Nin's own heightened view of herself, and plays an important role in the production of her erotic stories, and her depiction of children. Because Rank and Nin alike viewed the artist, and the

¹⁷² Will Wadlington, "The Art of Living in Otto Rank's Will Therapy." *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 72.4 (2012): 382-96. *ProQuest*. Web. 19 Sep. 2015. p. 384.

¹⁷³ Otto Rank and Robert Kramer, *A Psychology of Difference: The American Lectures* (Princeton University Press, 1996) p. 82.

¹⁷⁴ Ellen Handler Spitz, 'Conflict and Creativity: Reflections on Otto Rank's Psychology of Art', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 23 (1989), 97–109 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3332767>>

practice of creating art, as saintly, and because they positioned the artist above general society, they became exempt from the same restrictions: the artist is free to transgress boundaries that will hinder her production of art. Thus Nin claims that “writing Erotica became a road to sainthood rather than to debauchery.”¹⁷⁵ It is this belief which characterizes Nin’s unrestricted entry into such unsettling subjects. As an artist, she is not hindered by pedophilia’s status as taboo, nor by ethics, and rather the genre of eroticism provides Nin with a forum to “destroy the relationship of ethics to sexuality.”¹⁷⁶ The artist, for Nin holds a sanctified position, and her transgressions are a necessary means to “transgress the sexual limits prescribed by our culture.”¹⁷⁷

Anais Nin’s literary children are ultimately an embodiment of her feminist ideology. They represent her belief in an uncensored female voice and her prerogative to write sexually explicit content: her violent and perverse children are a pointed rejection toward the censorship expected of her gender. Nin resented that women could not write sexuality freely as a man could, particularly because, for Nin, women provided a unique and valuable perspective on sexuality that men could not access. Similarly, Nin’s diaries illustrate her resentment toward the autonomy and prerogative assigned to her male peers as well as their exploitation of Nin as a mother figure. It is this same exploitative quality that characterises the male characters within Nin’s erotic short stories, and denotes their dominance over the children and women throughout the text.

¹⁷⁵ *Delta of Venus*, p. xii.

¹⁷⁶ Kamboureli, p. 153.

¹⁷⁷ Kamboureli, p.155.

The transgressions committed by her literary children are an attempt to transgress this censorship of sexuality. In order to break through the boundaries that limited Nin, she committed extreme acts against the sanctity represented by childhood. Nin is working within a theoretical framework that views the disruption of this sanctity as an act of breaking past the limitations ascribed to sexuality. In doing so, Nin negotiates new boundaries for sexuality that extended into the most forbidden corners of society: the child and, in 'The Boarding School,' the Church. She is transgressing the taboo of sexuality in order that it no longer holds its severity—by moving beyond it, Nin, in theory, occupies a new space that necessitates new boundaries.

Despite Nin's obvious choice to dismiss ethics, her short stories complicate the reader's ability to do the same. Although this chapter attempts to recognise Nin's train of thought and the framework she was working within, her literary child abuse inevitably calls into question the omission of morality within her work. It is Nin's self-awareness as an artist that she claims positions her outside of these very ethics, and her reasoning that the ends indeed justify the means. As an artist, Nin was not hindered by the sanctified space children occupy. Instead she draws on this very knowledge of children as sacred in order to worsen her transgressions against them. That is why in Nin's erotic short stories there is no facet of childhood sexuality she does not explore, that is to say, she does not violate.

Chapter 3 - The Hyper-sexualised Child within Nabokov's *Lolita*

This chapter develops on the fictional children presented by Henry James and Anais Nin, documenting the ways in which Nabokov's late modernist text *Lolita* is both a product of, and a diversion from, its literary predecessors. *Lolita* presents an image of the child so severely steeped in adult desire that the 'actual' Lolita is not recognisable. Instead, readers are presented with a fantasized Lolita without agency, a voice, or a consciousness of her own. The text's limited epistemological insight into Lolita exemplifies the ambiguous quality of childhood, and its exclusivity from the realm of adulthood, while the novel's narrator, Humbert Humbert, illustrates the advantageous position held by adults resulting from the child's unknowability. It enables, as I come to argue, the child to be dismissed as a legitimate entity, and re-embodied as a fantasy for the adult gaze. *Lolita* then liberates childhood from the innocent archetype only to later pervert it in line with adult desire. The novel's preoccupation with singular, subjective realities—often taken to be a paradigmatically modernist concern—emphasizes Humbert's inability to access Lolita's consciousness, and this permits him free reign to construct her according to his own desire: *Lolita* recounts for childhood as an inaccessible paradigm, and how this lends itself to the imposition of adult desire.

Lolita is primarily concerned with style, and the abuse of Lolita is justified—in Humbert's mind—with claims of aesthetic bliss. Nabokov's aesthetic style and quest for artistic representation facilitate Humbert's treatment of Lolita by situating it outside of the realm of 'reality' and within the realm of art. As I later come to discuss, *Lolita* critiques the sanctity of art as a means to explore any content regardless of its transgressive nature. This discussion of

Lolita illustrates anxieties peculiar to the twentieth century, within which Freudian theory conceptualized the child as a perverse sexual entity, and provided endless (and terrifying) possibilities for child sexuality. Ultimately, this chapter reveals the dangers of childhood as a liminal, unaccounted for space open to interpretation from without.

The Unknowable child: *Lolita*'s Epistemology

Lolita is the intersection of James' unknowable, sexualised child and Nin's hypersexualised children. Like Henry James' Maisie, *Lolita* is epistemologically impenetrable and it is her unknowability that enables her to be imagined as a sexual figure as Nabokov self-consciously draws on this ambiguous quality of childhood to construct *Lolita* according to Humbert's desire. The child's unknowability functions as a blank slate on which Humbert can impose his own desire. Whereas James presented the unknowable child, Nabokov shows us what to do with it. In his unwillingness to recognise a *Lolita* outside of his own imagined version, Humbert consciously and explicitly constructs a fictitious *Lolita*, stating that

What I had madly possessed was not she, but my own creation, another, fanciful *Lolita*—perhaps, more real than *Lolita*; overlapping, encasing her, floating between me and her, and having no will, no consciousness—indeed, no life of her own.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Vladimir Nabokov, *The Annotated Lolita* (USA: Random House Publishing; 1991) p. 62.

The unknowability of the ‘real’ Dolores Haze is advantageous in the creation of an idealised Lolita; she does indeed become a blank slate which we readers have no prior knowledge of, and cannot access, except through Humbert’s perspective. As Timothy McCracken asks, “how are we to know what Lolita knows? Her silences are deafening and her words, few and far between, are filtered through Humbert.”¹⁷⁹ Childhood as a voiceless, ambiguous paradigm presents no challenge to the imposition of adult desire. Children, as Kevin Ohi explains, do not have the agency to provide self-representation “because subjects have origins outside of themselves, they cannot represent themselves in any simple sense.”¹⁸⁰ It is this aspect of childhood that enables Humbert to construct Lolita without regard for the real girl behind the imagined version.

Similar to James’ children, Nabokov’s Lolita does not have her own narrative voice or agency within the text. For James, the inability to access the child’s consciousness equated with an inability to speak on their behalf because we can not enter into their perspective. However, Nabokov inverts this logic and contrastingly in *Lolita*, the child’s voicelessness enables Humbert’s unrestricted dominance over both his own perspective and hers. Humbert exploits Lolita’s inability to provide self-representation by constructing his own Lolita that does not account for her perspective. As the novel’s focal point, Humbert can only present us with a Lolita that is filtered through his own subjective reality, however, this provides him with the unchecked prerogative to impose his desire onto Lolita, and construct her character “based ultimately on subjective

¹⁷⁹ Timothy McCracken, *Lolita Talks Back: Giving Voice to the Object in He Said, She Says: An RSVP to the Male Text* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001) pp.128-142 p.135.

¹⁸⁰ Kevin Ohi, *Innocence and Rapture: The Erotic Child in Pater, Wilde, James, and Nabokov*. (USA; Palgrave Macmillan: 2005) p. 8.

impressions.”¹⁸¹ As Linda Kauffman argues, the novel “elides the female by framing the narrative through Humbert’s angle of vision.”¹⁸² The unknowable child for Nabokov serves as a projection for his ideal child—filling in the blanks of her consciousness with his own desire. As Simone de Beauvoir asserts, “Lolita’s are not born—as Humbert would have it—but fabricated by male desires...To become this blank slate, the girl’s own reality must be denied.”¹⁸³

Humbert’s mythologisation of Lolita is central to her characterisation as a projection of his desire. He constructs “the nymphet,” in order to frame Lolita as a seductress, “the body of some immortal daemon disguised as a female child”.¹⁸⁴

It will be marked that I substitute time terms for special ones. In fact, I would have the reader see “nine” and “fourteen” as the boundaries—the mirrory beaches and rosy rocks—of an enchanted island haunted by those nymphets of mine and surrounded by a vast, misty sea. Between those age limits are all girl-children nymphets? Of course not. Otherwise, we who are in the know, we lone voyagers, we nympholepts, would have long gone insane.¹⁸⁵

Through this lens, Lolita is not a twelve-year-old girl, but a mythological figure. The reference made to an “enchanted island” invokes images of Homer’s Calypso, Circe, or the Sirens to whom male voyagers lost their lives. Categorizing Lolita as a nymphet situates her within this legacy of the mythological seductress.

¹⁸¹ Page Stegner, *Escape into Aesthetics: The Art of Vladimir Nabokov* (New York, Dial Press, 1966) p. 50.

¹⁸² Kauffman, Linda. “Framing Lolita: Is There a Woman in the Text?” in *Lolita*. Ed. Harold Bloom. (New York: Chelsea House, 1993.) pp. 149-68. P.157

¹⁸³ Simone De Beauvoir, *Bridgette Bardot and the Lolita syndrome* (New York, Arno Press: 1972) p.12.

¹⁸⁴ Nabokov, p. 139.

¹⁸⁵ Nabokov, p. 16-17.

This implies, deceptively, Lolita's agency in her relationship with Humbert, and in this light, it becomes *her* who seduced *him*. That is to say, by conceptualising Lolita as a seductress, Humbert inverts the structure of their relationship, framing himself as the victim: "I was weak, I was not wise, my schoolgirl nymphet had me in thrall."¹⁸⁶ Additionally, in this passage, Humbert juxtaposes nymphets with ordinary children, claiming "are all girl children nymphets? Of course not."¹⁸⁷ This denotes Lolita's position outside of the typical child, and Humbert's crimes are then not towards an ordinary child, but something other-worldly. In the essay "The Art of Persuasion in Nabokov's *Lolita*", Nomi Tamir-Ghez describes Humbert's use of the term nymphet as

yet another strategy Humbert uses for exonerating himself is claiming that Lolita is a 'nymphet.' Being a nymphet, she is not, according to his learned theories, a normal child anyway, but a demon disguised as a child.¹⁸⁸

Characterising Lolita as "a maiden who, to certain bewitched travelers, twice or many times older than they, reveal their true nature which is not human, but nymphic (that is demonic)" reframes the narrative away from Humbert as the pedophilic monster, and positions Lolita as the predatory one. Thus, Humbert shifts the blame from himself onto Lolita, enabling the claim "it was she who seduced me."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Nabokov, p. 183.

¹⁸⁷ Nabokov, p. 16.

¹⁸⁸ Nomi Tamir-Ghez, 'The Art of Persuasion in Nabokov's *Lolita*', *Poetics Today*, 1 (1979), 65–83 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1772041>> p. 77.

¹⁸⁹ Nabokov, p. 132.

Aesthetics within *Lolita*

Lolita's aestheticism and Humbert's manipulation of the reader engenders our willingness to buy into his claims of *Lolita* as a seductress is made possible by his "polyphonic prose."¹⁹⁰ That is the lyrical style Humbert uses to narrate the story, situating it more within a canon of poetic love stories. Humbert frames his tale as though he is the poet and *Lolita* his muse, rather than his victim. Julian Connolly attributes Humbert's charm to the "brilliance and energy of his style."¹⁹¹ He argues,

the very style of Humbert's narrative—its dazzling use of language, with striking sound play, word play, and original imagery—exerts a palpable appeal to many readers... As a result of all this, susceptible readers may find themselves laughing with Humbert, agreeing with his judgements, and ultimately, going along with his perspective on events, including his relationship with Dolly.¹⁹²

In other words, Humbert's ability to manipulate language makes readers more susceptible to his tale. This is evidenced by the way Humbert aligns his own narrative within a tradition of romantic poetry by making allusions to and explicitly referencing both art and literature to situate his own story within a canon of great love tributes including the works of Dante's *Inferno*, Botticelli's *Venus*,¹⁹³ and—most overtly—Edgar Allen Poe's poem to his young love, *Annabel Lee*. Take, for example, Humbert's retelling of his first love, Annabel

¹⁹⁰ McCracken, p. 131.

¹⁹¹ Julian Connolly, *Studies in Slavic and Russian Literatures, Cultures and History : Reader's Guide to Nabokov's "Lolita"*. Boston, MA, USA: Academic Studies Press, 2009. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 24 November 2015. P. 41.

¹⁹² Connolly, p. 41.

¹⁹³ Nabokov, p. 270.

Leigh: “There might have been no Lolita at all had I not loved, one summer a certain initial girl child. In a pryncedom by the sea.”¹⁹⁴

And the way that this is overtly comparable to Poe’s poem, *Annabel Lee*:

It was many and many year ago/In a Kingdom by the sea/That a maiden
there lived whom you may know/by the name of Annabel Lee.¹⁹⁵

By likening his own story to Poe’s love poem, as well as the other mentioned literary references, Humbert subverts the story of Lolita’s kidnapping, and instead reframes *Lolita* as a romantic love story in which she becomes a muse like many before her, as opposed to an unwilling victim. The literary references Humbert makes to both Edgar Allen Poe and Dante are also about love for young girls. However, Nabokov strategically omits the fact that these writers were themselves children in these poems. This is also true of Humbert’s encounter with Annabel Leigh, but Humbert’s innocence as a child does not extend to his relationship with Lolita. For the close reader of *Lolita*, this reference serves as one of many allusions within the text which accounts more for Humbert’s ability to deceive his audience than to his credibility as a tortured poet. Humbert’s allusions are then undermined by the scepticism they arouse in the reader, and the knowledge of his unreliability as a narrator. This rhetorical technique produces a kind of complex ambivalence from its reader: we are positioned to be at once sympathetic to Humbert’s self-professed claims of the poor, lovesick poet, and unsettled by the holes in his narrative and the things that go unsaid. It is this ability to elide the undesirable with eloquent prose that constitutes the text’s aestheticism.

¹⁹⁴ Nabokov, p. 9.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Notes’ in *The Annotated Lolita* p. 329.

Aestheticism refers to the dominance of beauty or artistry over themes of social instruction or morality within the text. Nabokov himself insisted that “he is neither a reader nor writer of didactic fiction... a work of fiction only exists insofar as it affords me what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss”¹⁹⁶ *Lolita* revels in this bliss with euphemisms, word play, obscure references, and eloquent speech. The artistry of Nabokov’s language subverts *Lolita*’s controversial content—he appeals to the reader as a poet not a paedophile, and Lolita is not his victim, but his “warm-coloured prey.”¹⁹⁷ Nabokov’s stylistic preoccupation aligns with Kevin Ohi’s definition of aestheticism:

As a stylistic term, it [aestheticism] refers to an elaborate, artificial, tortured, often self-reflexive or involuted style, which delights in paradox, in difficulty, in drawing attention to itself as a beautiful, gilded, and often impenetrable surface.¹⁹⁸

Humbert’s indifference to the ‘real’ Lolita is a primary example of Nabokov’s aesthetic values, demonstrated by his willingness to omit her suffering, and in its place formulate a narrative in which she is, at the very least, a willing participant. More important to the text than the reality of the predatory relationship between Humbert and Lolita is Humbert’s ability to turn this into an aesthetic experience: to transform, via language, the most abhorrent of tales into a piece of art. Kevin Ohi goes on to suggest that the dominance of style over content within *Lolita* is characteristically aesthetic by way of its ability to make the text fold in on itself. The narrative style envelopes the content to the point where the two are inseparable:

¹⁹⁶ ‘On a Book Entitled *Lolita*’ in *The Annotated Lolita*, p. 314.

¹⁹⁷ Nabokov, p. 49.

¹⁹⁸ Ohi, p. 2.

its defining inversion—namely, the privileging of style over matter, form over content... demarcates a field where desire, and particularly non-normative desire, encounters stylistic and formal innovations that transform it and become intertwined with it.¹⁹⁹

It then becomes difficult to differentiate between Humbert's crimes and his "aesthetic bliss."²⁰⁰ The implication is that the dominance of beauty overrides the harsh reality of the novel: *Lolita* illustrates the transforming potential of art. As Ohi claims in regards to *Lolita*, "where contemporary culture sees occasion for panic, aestheticism discovers manifold possibilities for pleasure."²⁰¹

Humbert's first-person narration is the primary vehicle for this aestheticism in the way that Humbert's dominance over the narrative facilitates his power to obscure the reader's view of objective truths, and substitute these truths for subjective realities and individual experience. Similarly, Julian Connolly argues that Humbert's narration allows him to

transform the experience into an *aesthetic* moment, to move it, as it were, out of the realm of quotidian reality and into the realm of art. What is more, he would like his readers to adopt his perspective too and view what occurs as a theatrical performance with no consequences in "real" life.

Lolita's narratological, epistemological, and aestheticist concerns function as a nexus and these thematic and stylistic devices continuously collapse in on themselves. Humbert's narration then *is* the text's aesthetic. Take *Lolita's* preoccupation with subjective realities, for example. Humbert's first-person narration denies the logic of a collective truth, and in lieu of such a truth is

¹⁹⁹ Ohi, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ 'On a Book Entitled *Lolita*' p.314.

²⁰¹ Ohi, p. 6.

Humbert's individual experience. His control over the narrative then gives him full prerogative to construct, deceive, and embellish the narrative in a way that fails to acknowledge the severity of his crimes.

Humbert's historicisation of pedophilia for example, enables him to locate himself within epochs that do not hold the same opposition to paedophilia as his current environment does:

Of course, in my old-fashioned, old-world way, I, Jean-Jaques Humbert, had taken for granted, when I first met her, that she was as unravished as the stereotypical notion of "normal child" had been since the lamented end of the Ancient World B.C. and its fascinating practices. We are not surrounded in our enlightened era by little slave flowers that can be casually plucked between business and bath as they used to be in the days of the Romans; and we do not, as dignified Orientals did in still more luxurious times, use tiny entertainers fore and aft between the mutton and the rose sherbet. The whole point is that the old link between the adult world and the child world has been completely severed nowadays by new customs and new laws.²⁰²

This reference implies that Humbert's current existence is only one in a timeline of many others. It puts into perspective our aversion to pedophilia as a modern construct, while his allusion to the "old world" calls into question the temporality and fluidity of the laws that restrict and condemn him. That is not to say that Humbert's crimes against Lolita are made acceptable through these allusions, but rather that he provides an alternative perspective which complicates our ability to condemn him as a monster. In locating both himself and Lolita in various

²⁰² Nabokov, p. 124.

historical timeframes or within a canon of mythological references, Humbert complicates our ability to view this relationship with any kind of certainty, as our laws and logic become just one world-view in a timeline of many other, more accepting views. Indeed, this technique is a testament to Nabokov's ability to engage with subjective realities in which there is no dominant way of being and to decenter contemporary ideology as the singular perspective on pedophilia. Within which he destabilizes our aversion to pedophilia by introducing perspectives which challenge our own.

Within this passage there is also the suggestion that innocence is equally as constructed as pedophilia. It is only since the "end of the Ancient World" that the norm of childhood was to be 'unravished,' and the relationship between adults and children was severed into mutually incomprehensible paradigms. Filtered through charming prose, this passage suggests that both pedophilia and innocence are constructed. This presents a challenge to the way readers treat childhood innocence as an objective truth, as well as enable Humbert to frame pedophilia as a modern construction. In documenting their simultaneous construction, this passage positions childhood innocence as the correlative to adult perversion. Suggesting again that innocence is not a virtue intrinsic to every child, but manufactured by "new customs and new laws."

In the claim "I had taken for granted, when I first met her, that she was as unravished as the stereotypical notion of "normal child"²⁰³ is the suggestion that Lolita is not innocent—according to Humbert, in any case. She was indeed unravished at one point, but before Humbert could succeed in seducing Lolita himself, her "purity had been slightly damaged through some juvenile erotic

²⁰³ Nabokov, p. 124.

experience, no doubt homosexual, at that accursed camp of hers.”²⁰⁴ Humbert’s claim that Lolita’s innocence had already been tainted is yet another form of manipulation that serves to abdicate himself as the one responsible for shattering her innocence. This claim also reinforces what is implied by the term “nymphet,” Lolita is not an ordinary child, but one with a precocious sexuality. Neither of these claims, however, qualify Lolita for the following years of sexual abuse. By imagining Lolita as sexually active and as a mythological creature, Humbert attempts to lessen the severity of his crimes against her, and to situate her outside of the realm of the “normal child.” Doing so implies that Lolita operates under a different set of rules in the hope that we readers are less inclined to apply the same ethics that we would had Lolita been an ordinary child.

It has been the frustration of many scholars that the novel denies us a Lolita outside of Humbert’s fantasized version: that it does not fully account for the young girl burdened by Humbert’s possessive desire. This is indeed true of *Lolita*, however, it is also a necessary function of Humbert’s first-person narration to show us the Lolita he sees – albeit a naïve and fantasized interpretation. Humbert’s failure to account for a Lolita outside of his own experience is a product of his inability to step outside of himself and enter into another’s perspective. The novel, and indeed Humbert, is not interested in a ‘real’ Lolita—in the undesirable image of a motherless, disenfranchised young girl, weeping and in physical pain—because this image undermines what has come to constitute Humbert’s artistic representation.

This is not to suggest that a ‘real’ Lolita does not exist, but simply that we cannot know her. This is a feature of the text that Nabokov exaggerates to its full

²⁰⁴ Nabokov, p. 124.

potential, demonstrating not only Lolita's elusiveness, but Humbert's self-aware construction of her character. Although the dominant façade of *Lolita* is its subject's willingness, Humbert underscores this motif with a complex double-speak that at once professes happiness, but shows the opposite. The dissolute relationship between what is *presented* by Humbert's commentary and what is *shown* by Lolita's actions within the novel signify an important feature of the text: that is, the dissolute relationship between reality and illusion—what is presented by Humbert's commentary and what is shown by Lolita's actions. Take, for example, the moment in the text when Humbert reaches climax by rubbing himself against Lolita's body:

I crushed out against her left buttock the last throb of the longest ecstasy man or monster had ever known.²⁰⁵

Following this moment, Humbert is quick to inform his readers that “blessed be the Lord, she had noticed nothing!”²⁰⁶ However, when describing Lolita's reaction, Humbert concedes that

She cried with a sudden shrill note in her voice, and she wiggled, and squirmed, and threw her head back, and her teeth rested on her glistening under lip as she half turned away... Immediately afterward (as if we had been struggling and now my grip had eased) she rolled off the sofa and jumped to her feet... There she stood and blinked, cheeks aflame, hair awry.²⁰⁷

This passage illustrates Lolita's obvious discomfort, but is negated by the claim that she is unaware of the abuse that just took place. Her embarrassment is

²⁰⁵ Nabokov, p. 61.

²⁰⁶ Nabokov, p. 61.

²⁰⁷ Nabokov, p. 61.

made evident by her flushed cheeks, while her squirms and cries present her distress. These are notably ambivalent signs that are open to an interpretation that is different from Humbert's—one that recognizes Lolita's plight—but ultimately it is Humbert's version of events that we have to go by. Humbert's contradictory imagery facilitates reasonable doubt and draws attention to the constructedness of his claims. That is to say that he articulates his narrative power to create a façade, but also concedes, subtly, that behind this is a contradictory narrative. The following quote illustrates perfectly this function of Humbert's narration throughout the novel where he pits reality against the illusion he is trying to construct:

Every now and then I would take a bed-and-cot or twin-bed cabin, a prison cell of paradise, with yellow window shades pulled down to create a morning illusion of Venice and sunshine when actually it was Pennsylvania and rain.²⁰⁸

This passage demonstrates the way Humbert presents information via this kind of double-speak comprised of two contradictory images. Take 'a prison-cell of paradise', for example. He at once presents the reality of Lolita's imprisonment, but this is manipulated by Humbert's subjective experience: Lolita's entrapment is negated by Humbert's claims of paradise. This technique illustrates the text's aestheticism in which the 'reality' of events is skewed by artistic representation. By extension, it exemplifies Humbert's unreliability, as well as his willingness to evade completely Lolita's point of view. Humbert gestures toward the undesirable truth of the situation if only to superimpose his own views on top of this.

²⁰⁸ Nabokov, p. 145.

This passage illustrates the dominance of artistic representation within *Lolita*, as well as Humbert's self-aware construction of a romanticized version of events. As Anika Susan Quayle suggests, "the novel encourages the reader to discover the 'truth' about Lolita and the events concerning her by reading through the gaps in Humbert's narrative."²⁰⁹ Similarly, Alfred Appel argues that "the verbal *figurae* in *Lolita* limn the novel's involuted design and establish the basis of its artifice."²¹⁰ Indeed, this double-speak lends itself to suspicion by way of alluding toward an alternative narrative only to subvert this with Humbert's claims of paradise. That is to say, the text as a whole then presents the "illusion of Venice and sunshine when actually it was Pennsylvania and rain."²¹¹

Lolita emphasizes—and in fact takes advantage of—the ambiguous quality of childhood, and utilizes this quality to enable Humbert's control over the narrative. The child denotes an entity incapable of self-representation and agency, and thus they are conceptualized by adults: the qualities of childhood are then not direct representations of children, but rather are designed and assigned by adults. James Kincaid similarly argues that the innocence ascribed to children is nothing more than an ideal constructed and perpetuated by adults to contain the child in terms of their own desire. It is not, contrary to popular belief, a given that the child will be innocent, but rather a conceptualisation of the child that ultimately serves the adult:

²⁰⁹ Susan Anika Quayle, *Lolita is Dolores Haze: The 'Real' Child and the 'Real' Body within Lolita* in *Nabokov Online Journal*, Vol. III/2009 http://www.nabokovonline.com/uploads/2/3/7/7/23779748/v3_07_quayle.pdf [accessed March 10, 2016] p.5.

²¹⁰ Alfred Appel Jr., "The Artifice of *Lolita*" in *The Annotated Lolita*, *The Annotated Lolita* (USA: Random House Publishing; 1991) p. xix–xx.

²¹¹ Nabokov, p. 145.

Innocence makes you vulnerable, badly in need of protection, which is one reason adults like it to be in others. It is also very close to natural immodesty, which is another... It may also be, however, that the sexual revolution has made us cling even more desperately to the old glowing myths surrounding innocence and to attach that idea of innocence all the more hysterically to our children.²¹²

Kincaid explains the practice of conceptualising the child according to adult desire that I am arguing exists in *Lolita*. In *Lolita*, however, since Humbert makes no claims for the child's innocence, this practice is the inversion of what Kincaid asserts as common practice amongst adults: to imagine the child as innocent. Alternatively, Humbert conceptualizes Lolita as precociously sexual in a way that is similarly beneficial to him. However, the same principle applies that the "real" child—whether sexual or not—is made irrelevant, and instead they serve not as authentic individuals, but as projections of adult desire. *Lolita* illustrates the absurdity of this practice, while Kincaid illustrates its normalcy.

Here I return to the claim that the dominance of artistic representation over lived experience within *Lolita* recapitulates the aestheticist project that prioritizes style over matter. The subversion of a 'real' Lolita is a necessary function of the novel's aestheticism as the inclusion of Lolita's perspective would disrupt Humbert's artistic representation. As Ohi suggests,

It [aestheticism] is queer because it articulates desire while refusing to recognize the desire's representation as necessary for that articulation. Put

²¹² James Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (Durham, Duke University Press: 1998) p. 54.

another way, the disruption of representability inherent in the aestheticist reversal of style and matter is queer.²¹³

Ohi's account of aestheticism suggests that the treatment of Lolita as a legitimate entity is not necessary for Humbert to articulate his desire, and in fact, to treat Lolita as a subject (with agency and consciousness) as opposed to an object of Humbert's desire would shatter the illusion Humbert is so invested in. The novel's aesthetic preoccupation dictates Dolores Hazes' substitution with Lolita simply because that Lolita enables that which aestheticism stands for: individual experience, and the dominance of artistic representation over a kind of collective reality. To depict a 'real' Lolita would then be to acknowledge a perspective outside of Humbert's and to obscure this aesthetic bliss.

Dolly Schiller's death exemplifies the impossibility of a Lolita existing outside of Humbert's fantasized version. When she finally escapes him and resists his pleas to "come to live with me, and die with me, and everything with me,"²¹⁴ Humbert no longer has dominance over her—artistic or otherwise—and her death represents the mutual inability for a 'real' Lolita and Humbert's singular reality to exist. A Lolita with agency and a voice disrupts the novel's 'aesthetic bliss' because this Lolita—the older, autonomous Lolita—is not complicit with Humbert's artistic representation. This is why childhood is such an alluring literary trope: Humbert could project his desire onto the young Lolita as she did not have the agency to represent herself otherwise. It is particularly interesting that Lolita's death occurs on the cusp of adulthood (she is seventeen, and

²¹³ Ohi, p. 4.

²¹⁴ Nabokov, p. 278.

pregnant) as this illustrates the mutual exclusivity of adulthood and Humbert's ability to conceptualize Lolita according to his own desire.

Timothy McCracken emphasizes the importance of a fantasized Lolita to the novel's aestheticism. He suggests that to locate a 'real' Lolita within the text would expose Humbert's façade and draw the novel out of the realm of artistic endeavor into the harsh reality of its content:

when the focus shifts from Humbert to Lolita, she is transformed from passive and "safely solopized" object into a subject with a voice. This speaking girl subject, thus, resists the privileged status of the male's "aesthetic bliss"; her transformation from "nymphet" or "daemon" into subject awakens readers to her identity as a young girl in peril.²¹⁵

It is then a necessary function of *Lolita's* aestheticism to evade the child's epistemology in favour of Humbert's artistic representation. To deny the child of a legitimate existence enables her to be shaped by, and turned into, a manifestation of Humbert's desire. It is in Lolita's character that the limitations of subjective insight intersect with Humbert's dominance over the narrative: he is unable to access a 'real' Lolita, in which case she becomes a blank slate to be re-embodied as a projection of Humbert's desire.

The role of the artist within Lolita

In a similar way to Anais Nin's work, *Lolita* treats the artist as an exulted figure. This is tied to *Lolita's* aesthetic project, within which artistic endeavor is treated

²¹⁵ McCracken, p. 128.

as justification for Humbert's abuse of Lolita. The novel frames Humbert as a tortured poet, and thus the severity of the crimes he commits is negated by claims of artistic endeavor. In doing so, *Lolita* situates its narrative within the realm of art in which figures are not seen as legitimate entities, but become objects to be transformed by artistic representation. The crimes he commits are then not against 'real' people, but people reimagined—in fact re-embodied—as pieces of art. Humbert's conceptualization of himself as “an artist and a madman, a creature of infinite melancholy” then shifts his narrative out of the realm of reality into the realm of art which proffers a less severe form of judgment. Humbert is then not a criminal, but an artist—however self-professed. Maria Baruxis explains how, within Nabokov's fiction, the artist is an elevated, omnipotent figure:

Through art, the artist can tap into that state of existence where omnipotence is the prospective standard; creating whole worlds that bend to the artist's good authority, again assuming the role of master of men, animals, and spirits. In so doing, the artist engenders a space within which he no longer need acknowledge certain realities (individual smallness relative to the cosmos, the inevitability of death); for the artist, there exists only ubiquity, eternity, freedom from death.²¹⁶

As well as a means of justification, Humbert's knowledge of himself as this kind of artist figure described by Baruxis, allows his complete dominance over the text. It enables him to create a world comprised of artistic representation that is free from the confines of reality (laws, namely) and situate himself as an authoritative, god-like figure. In this world of Humbert's creating, he is not an abstract monster,

²¹⁶ Maria Baruxis, *Nabokov and his Lolita: A Chronophobiac's Struggle to Retain Artistic Omnipotence* (Santa Barbara; University of California) p. 19.

but an artist afflicted by a love he otherwise cannot legally obtain. Also, in creating this world, Humbert illustrates his artistic power to inform the reader—and indeed make them a part of—his individual experience and aesthetic bliss.

The role of the artist as Humbert presents it implies an affliction which normal individuals do not suffer. He seeks to engender sympathy as the struggling poet whose heightened sense of the world enables him to claim to be a misunderstood artist. Humbert's perversion and his artistry are treated as almost interchangeable qualities throughout *Lolita*, suggesting that the artist and the criminal are similarly outcasts in the world of reality. After all, "you can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style."²¹⁷ Nabokov's treatment of the artist is interestingly parallel to Anais Nin's in the way both authors link the artist to transgression and share the sense that these transgressions are justified when committed under the banner of art. The two present a question of art versus ethics which, more to the point, presents the two as mutually exclusive. Julian Connolly explains how Nabokov was drawing on an understanding amongst twentieth century writers that artistic endeavor would often suffice as justification for literary crimes:

Nabokov was mindful of the way that certain turn-of-the-century artists and writers tended to blur the distinction between art and life or argued that an aesthetic vision served as ample justification for whatever endeavour they may have chosen to pursue under that banner.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Nabokov, p. 9.

²¹⁸ Julian Connolly, *Studies in Slavic and Russian Literatures, Cultures and History: Reader's Guide to Nabokov's "Lolita"*. (Boston, Academic Studies Press, 2009) P. 33.

This justification is recapitulated by statements wherein Humbert exonerates himself, and indeed other afflicted nympholepts, re-imagining them not as criminals, or killers, or pedophiles, but as poets:

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the majority of sex offenders that hanker for some throbbing, sweet-moaning, physical but not necessarily coital, relation with a girl-child, are innocuous, inadequate, passive, timid strangers who merely ask the community to allow them to pursue their practically harmless, so-called abhorrent behaviour , their little hot wet private acts of sexual deviation without the police and society cracking down upon them. We are not sex fiends! We do not rape as good soldiers do. We are unhappy, mild, dog-eyed gentleman, sufficiently well integrated to control our urge in the presence of adults, but ready to give years and years of life for one chance to touch a nymphet. Emphatically, no killers are we. *Poets never kill.*²¹⁹

This treatment of the artist functions within *Lolita* as another exemplifying quality which reaffirms the notion that Humbert's stylistic efforts are of more significance than the harm done to Lolita. In professing himself as a poet, a madman, and an artist—and, indeed, supporting these claims with eloquent prose—Humbert seeks to dislocate himself (and his narrative) from reality and pass into the sanctified realm of artistic endeavor. *Lolita* draws on the assumption that art and ethics occupy different spheres and—despite the connections between the artist and the criminal—the amorality of the artist is supposedly justifiable by its dislocation from 'real' life.

²¹⁹ Nabokov, p. 88.

Humbert exploits the privileged position art holds, within which he cannot be judged with the same harshness had his actions been framed as ‘real’ events, inflicted on ‘real’ people. Of course, Lolita is a real person, however, in framing himself as a god-like figure within *Lolita*, Humbert is able to imagine her otherwise: as a nymphet, a seductress, and—most importantly—as an artistic representation of his subjective reality. The artist figure not only has the liberty to construct those around him, but to re-imagine himself as a tortured poet. He can then invert his relationship with Lolita so that he is the victim: that is, the outcaste acting from a frame of reference which the non-artist cannot understand.

Freudian Psychoanalysis

What was seen in Anais Nin’s work as a subscription to the developmental stages of childhood assigned by Freud, is presented in Nabokov’s work as a revulsion toward this theory of development. *Lolita* articulates the dangerous potential Freudian theory holds for child sexuality, and the terrifying potential for this sexuality to be informed by adult desire. Within *Lolita*, the child as a sexual entity is presented as advantageous to Humbert, and this aspect of the novel articulates Nabokov’s concern with how we utilize knowledge of childhood sexuality. Nabokov is overtly suspicious of Freudian theory and its tendency to pathologize sexuality:

Everybody should know that I detest symbols and allegories which is due partly to my old feud with Freudian voodooism and partly to

my loathing of generalizations devised by literary mythists and sociologists.²²⁰

Nabokov includes Freudian logic within *Lolita* only to expose it as an insufficient, and indeed dangerous, means of conceptualizing the child, and a theory that has opened up childhood sexuality to a concerning extent. Nabokov's inclusion of Freud within *Lolita* then serves as a scathing critique of the way in which the child's identity as a sexual figure is exploited, yet the man responsible is vindicated by claims of his own childhood trauma.

Despite Nabokov's disdain for "the Viennese quack,"²²¹ however, Freud's theories are pointedly present throughout *Lolita*. These theories provide justification for Humbert's perversion, as is the case with Humbert's claim that his disrupted sexual experience with Annabel Lee—and her subsequent death—is responsible for Humbert's desire for children:

I think I can distinguish in her the initial fateful elf in my life. We loved each other with a premature love, marked by a fierceness that so often destroys adult lives. I was a strong lad and survived; but the poison was in the wound, and the wound remained ever open, and soon I found myself maturing amid a civilization which allows a man of twenty-five to court a girl of sixteen but not a girl of twelve.²²²

This allusion to Humbert's quasi-Freudian primal scene serves to justify his subsequent perversion. It functions as a means to shift the blame from Humbert and place it on his childhood trauma. As Maria Baruxis suggests, the

²²⁰ 'On a Book Entitled *Lolita*' in *The Annotated Lolita*, p. 314.

²²¹ Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York: Vintage International, 1973) p.47.

²²² Nabokov, p. 18.

reason for including this traumatic scene can be taken as a highly sophisticated tactic with which conniving Humbert means to diminish the wrongs he commits against Lolita by shifting a portion of his responsibility onto that chance unfortunate event. In so doing, he sets up a causal relationship; the supposedly traumatic experience of his childhood directly results in the pedophilic sickness of his adulthood.²²³

The use of Freudian rhetoric to both rationalize and excuse Humbert's crimes suggests a critique of psychoanalysis wherein the crime is attributed to a traumatic event instead of to the criminal. Freud's theories are not present within *Lolita* because of Nabokov's belief in their efficacy, but as justification for Humbert's actions. As Alfred Appel claims, "Nabokov's attacks on Freud are consistent"²²⁴ throughout the novel within which he frequently critiques and mocks the psychoanalytic tradition:

I discovered there was an endless source of robust enjoyment in trifling with psychiatrists: cunningly leading them on; never letting them see that you know all the tricks of the trade; inventing for them elaborate dreams, pure classics in style (which make *them*, the dream-extortionists dream and wake up shrieking) ; teasing them with fake "primal scenes" ; and never allowing them the slightest glimpse of one's real sexual predicament."²²⁵

The description of how Humbert manipulates psychoanalysts –hiding his "real sexual predicament" whilst creating imagined dreams to spur them on—testifies

²²³ Maria Baruxis, *Nabokov and his Lolita: A Chronophobiac's Struggle to Retain Artistic Omnipotence* (Santa Barbara; University of California) p. 25.

²²⁴ 'Notes' in *The Annotated Lolita*, p. 355.

²²⁵ Nabokov, p. 34.

to the little regard Nabokov has for Freudian theory, presenting it within *Lolita* as unintelligent psychiatrists readily duped by, and no match for, Humbert's imagination.

Lolita illustrates how the unknowability of childhood presents society with the potential to over-sexualize and under-value the child. As the novel illustrates, children do not have the agency to provide self representation and this gives adults the unchecked prerogative to conceptualize childhood according to their own desire. *Lolita's* Humbert illustrates how problematic this prerogative is, and the potential it provides for adults to re-embody the child as a sexual figure. *Lolita* presents a critique of childhood as a space informed by adults, but also the various banners used to rationalize this treatment of children. Humbert's artistic endeavor within the novel seeks to justify his crimes against Lolita by locating them within the realm of art, while Freud serves as a means to attribute Humbert's crimes to childhood trauma. Both banners—be it art or psychoanalysis—seek to exculpate Humbert and engender the reader's sympathy.

The modernist departure from childhood innocence reaches its zenith within *Lolita* as the seductress presented by Humbert is the antithesis to the innocent model. *Lolita* articulates how this modernist tendency toward the sexualized child has presented the dangerous potential for this sexuality to be obscured by adult desire. In this sense, *Lolita* serves as a cautionary tale that illustrates the concerning possibilities for childhood as a construction of adult desire.

Conclusion

The chapters in this thesis document the development of childhood sexuality from a proto-modernist, modernist, and late-to-postmodernist perspective. These few texts can not, of course, account for the epoch as a whole; they do however, provide an insight into the conceptual shifts regarding children's sexuality that occurred within the modernist movement. In Henry James' *What Maisie Knew*, the primary concern is epistemological: how much insight do we have into the child's consciousness? The Jamesian children, Maisie Farange and Morgan Moreen, illustrate, through the limited focalisation of adult figures, the unknowability of the child and the impenetrability of their specific frames of reference. Through the elusiveness of these children, James debunks notions of children as knowable and fixed entities. This departure from the ostensibly innocent child of the Victorian Era foreshadows the modernist reimagining of childhood sexuality. James' children denote a conceptual shift away from the child, or childhood, as a stable and knowable paradigm toward childhood as an enigmatic conceptual space. He presented the possibility for children to exist outside of the innocent archetype and it is this shift toward the unknowable child that lends itself to the production of the sexualised child.

What Maisie Knew is interested in childhood as an unknowable paradigm. Henry James does not present information from Maisie's perspective in order to illustrate the notion that adults do not have access to the child's consciousness. Her perspective is then filtered through a limited omniscient narrator. This narrator is noticeably adult by the sophisticated language he uses to inform

Maisie's perspective. Through this unnamed narrator, James negotiates the precarious imposition of the adult perspective onto the child, while illustrating the obvious disjuncture between seven-year-old Maisie and the adult voice that informs her perspective. The unknowable Maisie Farange presents a view of childhood that challenges the assumed ignorance and innocence that is generally ascribed to children, and reimagines them as complex and unknowable subjects.

Within 'The Pupil', Morgan's unknowability is identifiable by his lack of narrative voice and the limited insight we readers are given into his consciousness. Similar to the second-hand narration within *What Maisie Knew*, we readers are given insights into Morgan's character via dialogue that is recycled through Pemberton's focalisation. We are excluded from Morgan's interiority, however, we are made privy to the fact that he has a precocious intellect and a budding homosexual relationship with his tutor, Pemberton. This relationship is never confirmed, but gestured toward in the euphemistic subtext between the two with claims such as "the boy ejaculated, laughing,"²²⁶ Henry James then suggests at the potential for Morgan to be a queer child and for childhood to deviate from the innocence (and eventual heteronormativity) typically assigned to it.

Through his literary children, Henry James decentres ignorance and innocence as the markers of childhood. This departure from the innocent archetype enables the child to be reconceptualised: it makes room for a childhood that is not linear or predetermined, and destabilises the adult figure as the primary authority on childhood and its occupants.

James is included in this project as a precursory modernist because he signalled a shift away from the ostensible innocence of childhood toward children

²²⁶ James, p. 429.

as knowing subjects. It is this shift that foreshadows the modernist child presented by Anais Nin and Vladimir Nabokov as their fictional children occupy this same space that is outside of childhood innocence. Henry James conceptualised childhood as an unknowable sphere and it is the child's potential to deviate from innocence that signalled the modernist shift toward the sexualised child.

In her short story anthology, *Delta of Venus*, Anais Nin presents children that are not only sexual, but perversely so. Whereas James gestured toward the possibility for children to exist outside of the innocence generally ascribed to them, Anais Nin takes this idea to its full potential, illustrated in passages involving incest, necrophilia, and rape committed by children. The children presented by Nin are not only shockingly sexual, but transgress so far beyond the innocent model of childhood that they are, in equal parts, disturbingly violent and hyper-sexualised. They are indeed the antithesis to the innocent child.

What is interesting about Nin's children, however, is the way they encapsulate her feminist ideology. They are a projection of Nin's personal desire to transgress the limits of censorship and sexuality, and their perverse nature similarly affirm Nin's personal relationship to, and belief in, Freudian psychoanalysis and its conception of the sexual child. This project contributes to the Nin scholarship in a way that no other critic has by acknowledging her perverse children and how these children are a product of her feminism. Nin exploits the unknowability of childhood to impose her own beliefs onto children. That is to say, she fills in the blank slate childhood presents with her own desire. Through the short stories of Anais Nin, I illustrate the development of children from the unknowable to the sexualised subject and, more to the point, how James' conceptualization of childhood as an unaccounted for space enables it to be

reimagined in line with adult desire. The unknowability of childhood presented by James comes to be interpreted by Nin as an empty conceptual space to be filled in by adult desire: childhood had come to denote a conceptual space rather than a lived experience. This dangerously lends itself to a consideration of childhood as an empty space on which adults can project their beliefs onto, and utilise for their own means.

This is true of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. Nabokov's late modernist novel articulates the dangers of childhood as a conceptual space. The narrator, Humbert Humbert, exploits Lolita's position outside of discourse and uses this as a means to speak on her behalf—knowing full well that she does not have the agency to represent herself otherwise. I illustrate, through *Lolita*, the dangers of the unchecked prerogative adults have to inform the terms of childhood.

In its departure from innocence, the modernist child finds itself re-embodied as a sexual fantasy for the adult gaze. *Lolita* shows us how the child's liberation from the innocent archetype has led to the hyper-sexualised child. The adult is able to project onto childhood their personal fantasies without regard for the child's lived experience. Nabokov illustrates the way these modernist texts portray the dominance of the adult perspective and the irrelevance of the child's. It is within *Lolita* that the modernist child reaches its end, an end that has produced a view of childhood that over-sexualises and under-values children.

Bibliography

- Appel, Alfred Jr., 'The Artifice of Lolita' in *The Annotated Lolita* (USA: Random House Publishing; 1991)
- Balsam, Rosemary. "Freud, Females, Childbirth, and Dissidence: Margarete Hilferding, Karen Horney, and Otto Rank", *Psychoanalytic review* 100.5 (2013):pp. 695-716.
- Bataille, Georges, *Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo* (New York; Walker and Company: 1962)
- Barthes, Roland, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, trans. Richard Miller (Hill and Wang, 1976)
- Baruxis, Maria, *Nabokov and his Lolita: A Chronophobiac's Struggle to Retain Artistic Omnipotence* (Santa Barbara; University of California)
- Benstock, Shari, *Women of the Left Bank : Paris, 1900-1940* (Austin, TX, USA: University of Texas Press, 1986) <<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10439453>> [accessed 17 October 2015]
- 'Bildungsroman -- Britannica Online Encyclopedia'
<<http://academic.eb.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/EBchecked/topic/65244/bildungsroman>> [accessed 17 February 2016]
- Bond-Stockton, Kathryn, *The Queer Child or Growing Up Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, (London: Duke University Press: 2009)
- Boone, Joseph Allen, "Modernity's Fictions of Desire: Definitions / Parameters / Desires." In *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)

- Brenkman, John, 'Freud the Modernist', *The mind of Modern Medicine, Psychology, and the Cultural Arts in Europe and America 1880-1940*, ed, Mark S. Micale (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004)
- Bruhm, Steven and Hurley, N., *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* (USA: University of Minnesota Press: 2004)
- Connolly, Julian, *Studies in Slavic and Russian Literatures, Cultures and History: Reader's Guide to Nabokov's "Lolita"* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009)
- Cunningham, Hugh, *Studies In Modern History : Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500 (2nd Edition)* (New York: Routledge, 2014)
- De Beauvoir, Simone, *Bridgette Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome* (New York: Arno Press, 1972)
- Edelman, Lee *The Future is Kid Stuff: Queer Theory, Disidentification, and the Death Drive* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1998)
- No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, (London: Duke University Press, 2004)
- Etsy, Jed, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)
- Febler, Lynette, 'The Three Faces of June: Anaïs Nin's Appropriation of Feminine Writing', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 14.2 (1995), 309–24 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/463902>>

Felski, Rita, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989) Foucault, Michel, *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France 1974-1975*, trans. Graham Burchell (UK, Verso: 2003)

Foucault, Michel, *History of Sexuality Volume 1* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998)

—*Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. and translated Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977)

Freud, Sigmund, ‘The Ego and the Id: The Two Classes of Instincts,’ In *Freud—Complete Works*, ed. By Ivan Smith (2010), original work published 1923 <http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf> [accessed 18 March 2016]

—‘The Sexual Life of Human Beings’ In *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, edited by James Strachey and Angela Richards, translated by James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974)

— “Sexuality in the Aetiology of the Neurosis” in *Freud—Complete Works*, ed, Ivan Smith <http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf> [accessed 19 March 2016]

Hanson, Ellis, ‘Knowing Children: Desire and Interpretation in The Exorcist.’ in *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* ed. Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004)

- Honeyman, Susan, 'What Maisie Knew and the Impossible Representation of Childhood', in *The Henry James Review*, 22 (2001), 67–80
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hjr.2001.0008>>
- James, Henry, 'The Art of Fiction', Longman's Magazine (September 1884);
Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American writers and English writers Vol. 1. (New York: Library of America, 1985)
- 'The Pupil' in *The Complete Tales of Henry James Volume 7*, 1888–1891
(London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963)
- *What Maisie Knew* (England: Penguin Classics; 2010) Kamboureli, Smaro,
'Discourse and Intercourse, Design and Desire in the Erotica of Anaïs Nin', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 11.1 (1984), 143–58
- Kauffman, Linda. "Framing Lolita: Is There a Woman in the Text?" in *Lolita* Ed.
Harold Bloom. (New York: Chelsea House, 1993)
- Kincaid, James, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (London:
Routledge: 1994)
- *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (Durham: Duke University
Press, 1998)
- Kosofsky Sedgwick, Eve, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Los Angeles: University of
California Press, 1990)
- "How to bring Your Kids Up Gay: The War on Effeminate Boys," in
Tendencies p 154- 64 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993)
- Mahon, Michael, *Foucault's Nietzschean Genealogy: Truth, Power, and the
Subject* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992)

McCracken, Timothy, 'Lolita Talks Back: Giving Voice to the Object' in *He Said, She Says: An RSVP to the Male Text* (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001)

McHale, Brian, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1987)

Michael, Chris, *PhD Thesis, Embodied Borders: Auto/Erotica in the writing of Anais Nin* (Cardiff: Cardiff University, 2006)
<https://orca.cf.ac.uk/54308/1/U584122.pdf>

Nabokov, Vladimir, 'On a Book Entitled Lolita' from *The Annotated Lolita* ed. by Alfred Appel Jr (New York: Random House Publishing, 1991)

—*Strong Opinions* (New York: Vintage International, 1973)

Nin, Anais, *Delta of Venus* (Docklands, Victoria: Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 2008)

—*The Diary of Anais Nin Volume 1 1931-1934*, ed. by Gunther Stuhlmann (New York: The Swallow Press, 1966)

—*The Diary of Anais Nin Volume 4 1944-1947: Vol. 4 (1944-1947)* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1972)

—*Mirages : The Unexpurgated Diary of Anaïs Nin, 1939–1947* (Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 2013) <<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10793886>> [accessed 12 October 2015]

'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood by William Wordsworth : The Poetry Foundation'
 <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174805>> [accessed 16 February 2016]

Ohi, Kevin, 'The Author of 'Beltraffio'' in *The Exquisite Boy and Henry James's Equivocal Aestheticism*, *ELH*, 72 (2005), 747–67 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/elh.2005.0029>>

—*Innocence and Rapture: The Erotic Child in Pater, Wilde, James, and Nabokov*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

Phillips, Michelle H., 'The "Partagé Child" and the 'Emergence of the Modernist Novel in What Maisie Knew'', *The Henry James Review*, 31 (2010), 95–110 <<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/docview/347552872/abstract>> [accessed 7 December 2015]

Quayle, Susan Anika, *Lolita is Dolores Haze: The 'Real' Child and the 'Real' Body within Lolita*, in *Nabokov Online Journal*, Vol. III/2009 <http://www.nabokovonline.com/uploads/2/3/7/7/23779748/v3_07_quayle.pdf> [accessed March 10, 2016]

Rank, Otto, *The Trauma of Birth, 1920*. (Mineola, N.Y: Dover, 1993.)

Rank, Otto, and Robert Kramer, *A Psychology of Difference: The American Lectures* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996)

Shine, Muriel G., *The Fictional Children of Henry James* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1969)

Silverblatt, Michael, 'SHOCK APPEAL / Who Are These Writers, and Why Do They Want to Hurt Us?' in *The New Fiction of Transgression*, *Los Angeles Times*, 1 August 1993 <http://articles.latimes.com/1993-08-01/books/bk-21466_1_young-writers> [accessed 12 March 2016]

Spencer, Sharon, "Introduction", in *Cities of the Interior Volume 1* by Anais Nin
(London: Quartet Books Limited, 1979)

Spitz, Ellen Handler, 'Conflict and Creativity: Reflections on Otto Rank's
Psychology of Art', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 23 (1989), 97–109
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3332767>>

Stegner, Page, *Escape into Aesthetics: The Art of Vladimir Nabokov* (New York:
Dial Press, 1966)

Tamir-Ghez, Nomi, 'The Art of Persuasion in Nabokov's *Lolita*', *Poetics Today*,
1 (1979), 65–83 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1772041>>

Wadlington, Will. 'The Art of Living in Otto Rank's Will Therapy' *American
Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 72.4 (2012), 382-96

Zinnes, Harriet, 'The Fiction of Anaïs Nin', *A Casebook on Anaïs Nin*, ed. Robert
Zaller (New York: New American Library, 1974)