BOYHOOD FOR GIRLS: AMERICAN TOMBOYS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF EROTICISM, 1900-1940

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This dissertation argues that tomboys are a crucial link in the relationship between heterosexuality and normative gender expression as they took shape between 1900 and 1940. Tomboys of the first decades of the twentieth century in the United States occupied the frontlines of major transformations in the histories of feminism, youth culture, sexuality, and the body. By 1920, New Women and political radicals had won significant opportunities for boyish girls to continue to be somewhat masculine into adulthood, such as through education, activism, athletics, and work. At the same time, an increasingly autonomous urban working-class youth culture demanded a measure of gender conformity for adolescent girls and boys who wished to be eligible for heterosexual activity. Although historians often view feminism and the growth of youth culture as liberatory, adolescent tomboys knew they were contradictory. Liberal adults, including many feminists, advised them to "be themselves," but tomboys' peers ostracized them from the world of dating and popularity when they remained boyish. For many pubescent

tomboys, changes in the body accompanied not only demands that they become feminine, but also a realignment of emotional life. Tomboys had to learn to see boys not as trusty comrades but as potential dates, and they had to look to girls, whom they had often scorned, for close friendships. In fact, as children many tomboys had believed that their similarity to boys extended right to their very bodies: they acknowledged that girl bodies and boy bodies were anatomically different, but they detected enough similarities that differences did not matter—a belief that this dissertation calls affinity. In fact, some tomboys only learned to see their bodies as female for the first time at menarche. The history of tomboyism thus coincides with the history of the body and sexuality. By 1940, women who had grown up as tomboys knew that the bargain for the female body's heterosexual normality depended on relinquishing the pleasures of tomboyism, including the sense that their bodies somehow resembled boys'. The historical tomboy body discloses affective contradictions between the freedoms promised by feminists and sexually adventurous youth alike.

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CONTENTS

Introduction

We think we know them when we see them. Scrapping and capering like boys, ripping ribbons from their hair or insisting on wearing pants, calling themselves by boys' names, sometimes imagining themselves as boys, tomboys are girls whose unique relationship to boyhood defines them as different. This, however, does not always result in family or community shunning. As far back as the mid-nineteenth century, boyish girls in the United States could find themselves celebrated, not despised, for their robust health and independent spirit, no matter how many pairs of stockings they ruined.[1]

Yet tomboyism supposedly was (and perhaps remains) but a stage of life. In 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville admired the young, unmarried women of the northeastern United States, whose feistiness mirrored the egalitarian, somewhat crude spirit of the new republic. Upon marriage, these daughters willingly left the households of indulgent fathers to become submissive wives. The first life-phase, Tocqueville thought, laid the groundwork for the second: "It can be said that it is from the enjoyment of her independence that she has drawn the courage to tolerate the sacrifice of it, without

[1] Michelle Ann Abate, Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), ix-x.

struggle or complaint, when the time comes for that to happen."[2] Although Tocqueville was not writing specifically about tomboys, his observation hints that boyhood for girls could be normative, even imperative. Only by drawing upon masculine virtues of willful action, pluck, and noble sacrifice could young women shoulder the inferior status enforced by marital convention. Though this change was sudden, girls handled it as only the confident Americans could.

Tocqueville correctly assessed the demanding nature of young women's coming of age, but he failed to note that not all of them bore this transformation lightly. Just a few years after his visit, eleven-year-old farmer's daughter Lucy Larcom (1824-1893) went to work in Massachusetts's Lowell Mills. Adhering to the strictures of femininity was a deep loss. "The transition from childhood to girlhood, when a girl had an almost unlimited freedom of out-of-door life, is practically the toning down of a mild sort of barbarism," she wrote in 1889. Ironically invoking the language of democratic rights denied to children and women, she explained, "I clung to the child's inalienable privilege of running half wild, and when I found that I was really growing up, I felt quite rebellious."[3] In the memoirs of white, middle-class women born in the nineteenth century, Anne Scott MacLeod has found that boyhood for girls came to an end, sometimes abruptly. "For some, the doors closed at thirteen[,]" she writes, "for others not until fifteen or even later, but close [they] inevitably did once the claims and constraints of nineteenth-century womanhood were laid upon the growing girl."[4]

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[2] Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans. Gerald E. Bevan (New York: Penguin, 2003), 687.
[3] Quoted in Anne Scott MacLeod, "American Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century: Caddie Woodlawn's Sisters," in American Childhood: Essays on Children's Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Athens, GA, and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), 12.
[4] Ibid.

But what of modern tomboys, born between 1900 and 1920 or so, who came of age as self-assured New Women demanded access to political life, higher education, the professions, labor protections, athletics, even military service? Did feminist visions of gender equality affect their upbringing? What were the implications of being a boyish girl as masculine (or "mannish") women racked up unlikely accomplishments? How did tomboys think, feel, and dream at a time when relations between the sexes were in such flux that their eventual status as women could not be forecast? And, most importantly, did these circumstances have any impact on the pressure to become feminine as childhood faded—did they render Lucy Larcom's bereavement a thing of the past?

In a word, no. Rambling and rounding the bases as vigorously as ever, tomboys who grew up in the first decades of the twentieth century sometimes did sense new possibilities in the air, developing plausible ambitions for work, education, and recreation that would have been dubious a generation earlier. Yet tomboyism was still supposed to be a phase. Even by 1940, it seems, boyish girls had to alter their gender expression in order to become eligible for dating and eventually marriage. In its relative independence and open attitude toward sexuality, modern femininity was quite dissimilar from the restraint, domesticity, and moral authority that characterized Victorian virtue for middle-class women. But many tomboys continued to resist it—in some cases, precisely <u>because</u> of the ways it was different. The necessary transition to femininity around adolescence had changed significantly, insofar as behavioral adjustments were concerned. Playing sports was no longer unusual for young women; nor was socializing with boy peers or pursuing educational opportunities, even if this only meant completing a business course

in high school (as it did for most white working-class girls).[5] What adolescent tomboys had trouble with was how it all was supposed to feel. Becoming a normal girl meant changing one's behavior, but it also entailed shifting one's affective relationships with others. The transformation was both outward and inward.

"Boyhood for Girls" proposes that three historical forces shaped this social expectation anew: the presence of psychological theory in everyday life, the pleasures of youth culture, and the possibilities for gender expression forged by feminists. Gender and sexuality intertwined through all of these, with unmistakable consequences for tomboys, especially at adolescence. The next sections explicate these factors in greater detail. Their very nature demands less emphasis on what tomboys did in childhood (for example, how they played or dressed); this seems to have remained more or less static. Instead, this study explores their inner lives: how they felt about who they were, how they were supposed to change, and what they were supposed to do with the interpersonal relationships they had forged as children. Adolescent transformations became part of "tomboy lore": thinking by and about boyish girls that echoed, circulated, and metamorphosed through time in the form of literature, psychological studies, visual media, toys, and many other cultural productions, all of which tomboys had access to and all of which they helped shape. This study's focus on interactions between inner and outer lives, as well as gender and sexual expression, emerges from its sources: sexological interviews of women taken in the 1930s, social workers' notes on individual girls, diaries, and novels—documentation of intimacy, including frank talk about

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[5] Susan K. Cahn, Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 7-8; Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 57-59; Julia Kirk Blackwelder, Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995 (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 39-40.

sexuality, which some scholars continue to insist is difficult to find in archives. Ultimately, "Boyhood for Girls" requires historians who wish to comprehend American modernity in its fullest to consider its impact on gender and sexual expression through the affective lives of tomboys.

The Inward Turn

Modern tomboys experienced pressure to change their gender expression around puberty, just as their nineteenth-century counterparts did. But the bridge from tomboyism to femininity became an inner transformation: not a rupture in behavior as much as an exercise in self-examination and emotional realignment, a change in who a girl was rather than what she did. The appearance of psychoanalysis in American popular and academic culture by the 1920s is rightly termed an explosion, but a great deal of scientific thought laid the groundwork.[6] Even before the turn of the century, American psychologists paid attention to connections between mental life and gender expression. These theories had a significant impact not only on the ways tomboys thought of themselves, but also on adults' expectations of proper child development.

Psychology

By 1900, many middle-class girls defied expectations that they would submit to and internalize the moral discipline imposed by their family, particularly their mothers.[7] In the mid- to late nineteenth century, the urban middle classes linked acceptably feminine

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[6] See Nathan Hale, Freud and the Americans: The Beginnings of Psychoanalysis in the United States, 1876-1917 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).
[7] Jane H. Hunter, How Young Ladies Became Girls: The Victorian Origins of American Girlhood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), ch. 10.

gender expression to an explicitly Christian moral regime, which held that an adolescent girl must realize self-discipline and godly concern for others by consciously shaping her behavior. Daily prayer was not the least of it. She must complete domestic chores, for example, because her family (especially her mother) needed her to think of others before herself. She completed diary entries to demonstrate to her parents, who inspected her journals, that she accepted the diurnal discipline of moral accounting.[8] Middle-class girls' gendered consciousness grew from the inculcation of behavioral regimes like these. Hardy tomboys faced demands that they change their behavior at adolescence, for adults reasoned that femininity could spring from the repetition of womanly tasks.[9] Thus, gender-appropriate behavior preceded normative gender consciousness and its outward expression. Within this affective framework, middle-class tomboys who did not especially want to grow up to be bourgeois ladies might resist by refusing to do needlework, for example. But in most cases they did want to grow up to be something.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, many middle-class women began presenting alternatives to domesticity, in the professions, education, the arts, politics, athletics, union leadership, and more. By 1900, then, tomboys could aspire to the accomplishments of somewhat older women, whose masculine aspirations demonstrated the spirit of the exceptional—the rare female example of expertise in the arts of men (or

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[8] Jane H. Hunter, "Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late-Victorian America," in Miriam Forman-Brunell and Leslie Paris, eds., The Girls' History and Culture Reader: The Nineteenth Century (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 242-269. For similarities in England, see also Sharon Marcus, Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 34-36.

[9] MacLeod, "American Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century," 14. The relationship of gendered behavior to gendered consciousness demands examination from historians of twentieth-century behavioral psychology. Unfortunately, such questions are beyond the scope of the present study.

boys).[10] The period 1880-1900 was a transitional era: repetition of suitably feminine behavior might make one a lady, but it could also be that who a young woman believed she was determined the direction in which she steered her life. The revolution in behavior proposed by New Women involved consciousness and often a great deal of introspection, usually played in multiple, contrapuntal tones. Subjectivity interpenetrated social life in new ways as more women realized that higher education, sports, demanding equal pay for equal work, and claiming the right to influence public life had an impact on who they were. Moreover, they sometimes considered their accomplishments expressions of innermost desires. When Jane Addams wrote "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements" in 1893, she made the case that educated women needed to discover personal, religious, and emotional ("subjective") outlets through democratic uplift among the urban poor.[11] It stood to reason that gender was an expression of the soul.

The first scientific studies of sexuality also proposed that inner life was gendered. The true sex of the soul preoccupied Richard von Krafft-Ebing, the most influential sexologist of the late nineteenth century. His Psychopathia Sexualis went through a dozen editions between 1886 and 1925. This encyclopedic work included case histories of people born as women and men who believed the soul of the "opposite" sex inhabited their bodies. Women with men's souls behaved as ordinary men did, in dress, comportment, sexual license, leisure pursuits, even marriage to women. Some were active in the pursuit of political equality; others preferred to blend in with men entirely.

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[10] General interpretations of women's new presence include Sara M. Evans, Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America (New York: Free Press, 1997), ch. 7; Jean V. Matthews, The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875-1930 (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003), ch. 1.

[11] Jane Addams, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements," in Jean Bethke Elshtain, ed., The Jane Addams Reader (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 14-28.

And many of them had been tomboys. Krafft-Ebing did not propose that tomboyism caused this gender "inversion" in women, but he did note the correlation.[12] Not all female homosexuals were inverts and not all female inverts were homosexuals—a "passive," feminine woman might very well prefer a female sexual partner. Rather, sexual inversion—such as a masculine woman's inclination to seduce feminine women—was the expression of a soul whose gender did not accord with its body's physical sex. Just as New Women did, early sexologists established a relay between inner life and social life: gendered and sexual behavior were symptomatic of the soul's true sex. Tomboy activity, therefore, might also be such a manifestation.

Early twentieth-century psychology did not demand self-reflection for its own sake or to achieve religious virtue; its purpose was to accomplish a personal transformation, sometimes as an inward-looking strategy to improve society. The popularization of Freudian psychoanalysis in the 1920s matched an intense focus on inner life with a great deal of talk about sexuality. But as early as the 1890s, American psychologists had begun discussing interior states in addition to the role of external stimuli in the development of the psyche.[13] Scientific observations of inner life would prove important to theories of child development and the final assumption of adult gender expression.

The path from academic empiricism to a broader cultural conversation about gendered subjectivity twisted through trails that were only sometimes well marked. The

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[12] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Forensic Study, twelfth ed., trans. F. J. Rebman (New York: Physicians and Surgeons Book Co., 1925), 397-399; case histories in 416-424.

[13] Nathan Hale, Freud and the Americans, ch. 4; John Demos, "Oedipus and America: Historical Perspectives on the Reception of Psychoanalysis in the United States," in Joel Pfister and Nancy Schnog, eds., Inventing the Psychological: Toward a Cultural History of Emotional Life in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 65.

Harvard psychologist William James's two-volume Principles of Psychology (1890) synthesized contemporary thought on brain activity, ranging from the causes and effects of sensory experiences to the neural location of consciousness. Although James was trained in physiology and much of his treatise dealt with physical manifestations of thought, he also offered a brief for self-examination. "Introspective Observation is what we have to rely on first and foremost and always," he wrote emphatically. "… All people unhesitatingly believe that they feel themselves thinking, and that they distinguish the mental state as an inward activity or passion, from all the objects with which it may cognitively deal. I regard this belief as the most fundamental of all the postulates of Psychology, and shall discard all curious inquiries about its certainty as too metaphysical[.]"[14]

Honing his focus on inner life in The Varieties of Religious Experience (1902), James protested the ascription of otherworldly states to organic causes, which allowed scientists to write off religious "genius" as an exceptional form of disturbance. As James argued, the inner lives of deeply spiritual people were "special cases of kinds of human experience of much wider scope." Religious melancholy, for example, was real; it was impossible to dismiss it by discovering its "origin" or grouping it with other pathologies. Studying the inner lives of saints and prodigies would lend insight into the nature of the human condition.[15] The point was not to lay the deathblow to secular Positivism—the belief that human (not celestial) power, knowledge, and inventiveness would eventually result in a perfect world. Rather, James claimed a place for the inexplicable, inaccessible

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[14] William James, The Principles of Psychology (New York: Dover Publications, 1950), 1:185. Emphases in original.
[15] William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature (New York: Touchstone, 2004), 19.

points of human existence. The ultimate mysteries of consciousness were to be respected, ultimately, as mysteries.

Most turn-of-the-century psychologists did not join James's abstention from the actuarial project of explaining everything, yet they did pursue work on internal states and their relation to physiology and environment. At Clark University, G. Stanley Hall linked puberty to a period of "storm and stress" among young people. Often credited with "inventing adolescence," Hall argued that changes in the body accompanied changes in consciousness. Although most of his influential magnum opus, Adolescence (1904), dealt with boys, he included discussions of women's education and puberty in girls. Gendered transformations in consciousness accompanied menarche especially: regular menses allowed girls to think of others before themselves, becoming proper ladies as their bodies fell in step with monthly rhythms. Hall built on nineteenth-century theories of hysteria, which often connected menstrual disruption or cessation with higher education—excessive brain activity drew vital energy away from the sex organs. Feminism, Hall believed, advocated dangerous corporal rigor of adolescent girls. It required that they ignore physical health in order to pursue masculine desires, especially advanced schooling. In other words, Hall linked the rhythms of the female body to gendered consciousness and its outward expression.[16]

As president of Clark, Hall welcomed Sigmund Freud to the United States in 1909. Although the Viennese sage had yet to become a household name, at the time he,

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[16] G. Stanley Hall, Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1904). For Hall's views on interiority and "periodicity" (the monthly rhythm established by menses), see vol. 1, 493; on adolescent girls' education, see vol. 2, ch. 17. Hall's views on girls are analyzed in Christa DeLuzio, Female Adolescence in American Scientific Thought, 1830-1930 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), ch. 3; and Carol Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), ch. 4.

too, was advancing theories that contributed to popular thinking about childhood, gender, and affective experience. Transitional stages were as important in psychoanalysis as in other branches of psychology. Freud proposed links between deep inner states (the unconscious) and early childhood, sexuality, and gender expression. Exploring a young woman's hysterical symptoms, his now renowned case study Dora (1905) analyzed a patient's conscious memories and the reverberations of her dreams, telling the story of a hoyden's hysterical resistance to adolescent transformation.[17]

Dora's tomboyism does not figure in much recent commentary,[18] but Freud noted her "masculine" academic ambition, athleticism, and rivalry with her brother. He also argued that her hysterical cough, developed in adolescence, was an imitation of her father's catarrh and a way to rebel against her parents and the restrictions of bourgeois womanhood.[19] In Dora, the quest to account for physical symptoms incorporated childhood, gender, and unspeakable sexual experiences. Freud's early reasoning about femininity was entirely in line with attempts in other branches of psychology and sexology to discover a unified theory of body, soul, mind, and gender. In Dora, Freud discerned the importance of an ambivalent state between girlhood and womanhood, and much of his subsequent thinking (including the Three Essays, first published in 1909, as well as 1931's "On Female Sexuality") touched on problems in the developmental transitions of gender and sexual expression, not simply the existence of discrete states of

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[17] Sigmund Freud, Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria (New York: Touchstone, 1997).
[18] For an exception, see Hannah S. Decker, Freud, Dora, and Vienna 1900 (New York: Free Press, 1991), 106.
[19] Freud, Dora, 73n20, 74.

being.[20] Psychoanalysis both worked through and passed along to succeeding generations unresolved intellectual issues regarding gendered metamorphoses.

As much as Freud's influence resounded in American psychology, particularly after World War I, it is just as easy to make a case for the importance of his lesser-known acolyte and apostate Alfred Adler. Originally from a respectable Viennese neighborhood of assimilated Jews, Adler was deeply concerned with social justice (including feminism) in his early career, and his work eventually fused psychology with social conditions as well as gender.[21] His theories caused Freud to cast him from the ranks of orthodox analysts in 1911, but his stature only grew, especially in the Anglo-American world.[22] Contributing most to his reputation in the United States were his writings on social adjustment, the inferiority complex, and the masculine protest. In Adler's school of Individual Psychology, "adjustment" was not conformism, though this misinterpretation continues to thrive—who today does not envy or ridicule the "well adjusted"?[23] Rather, it was a process by which people and their environment came to equilibrium. It did not demand robotic acquiescence to all social dictates; Adler recognized that inequality and

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[20] Sigmund Freud, Three Essays on Sexual Theory and "On Female Sexuality," both trans. Shaun Whiteside, in Sigmund Freud, The Psychology of Love, ed. Jeri Johnson (New York: Penguin, 2007), 111-220 and 307-327.

[21] For Adler's thinking on gender equality, see Alfred Adler, Co-operation between the Sexes: Writings on Women and Men, Love and Marriage, and Sexuality, ed. Heinz L. Ansbacher and Rowena R. Ansbacher (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982). For information on Adler's politics, see Edward Hoffman, The Drive for Self: Alfred Adler and the Founding of Individual Psychology (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994), 8-11, 49-50; Paul E. Stepansky, In Freud's Shadow: Adler in Context (Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1983), 11-14.

[22] For Adler's impact in Britain, see Mathew Thomson, Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture, and Health in Twentieth-Century Britain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 22, 47, 85-87.

[23] On American psychologists' embrace of adjustment as a brief for conformism, see Donald S. Napoli, Architects of Adjustment: The History of the Psychological Profession in the United States (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1981), esp. ch. 2.

prejudice contributed to neurosis.[24] At the same time, adjustment did encourage individual reflection on rebelliousness and dissatisfaction in order to evaluate the possibility of fitting into community standards.[25] Inner life and social life were inseparable. Both could be insalubrious, but both might be improved. Curing all neurosis would have a positive impact on human existence, and eradicating injustice would help ease neurotic feelings of personal inferiority.

Adler's idea of the inferiority complex continues to crop up today, too. He believed that all children, small and dependent as they are, grow frustrated at their lack of power and their simple inability to do the same things as grownups. As they learn to exercise more control over their environment and their bodies, they gain confidence in themselves. But sometimes frustration coalesces into neurosis, particularly when adults stymie self-development through behavioral prohibitions. This is especially pertinent to gender. Children attentively observe the inequalities between women and men and come to associate femininity with a lack of power. All types of inferiority thereby become feminized. Neurotic girls and boys, therefore, become overly masculine (aggressive, sadistic, and so on) in order to compensate for feelings of inferiority. Adler termed this strategy the masculine protest and related it to gender inequality. He hoped the advancement of women would contribute both to a decline of neurosis in individuals and to smoother roads to adjustment. Although he was put off by mannish women—he

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[24] See, for example, Alfred Adler, The General System of Individual Psychology, 65-66, in Alfred Adler, The Collected Clinical Works of Alfred Adler vol. 12, "Overview and Summary of Classical Adlerian Theory and Current Practice," ed. Henry T. Stein (Bellingham, WA: The Classical Adlerian Translation Project, 2006).

[25] Andrew R. Heinze suggests that Adler's secular Jewish upbringing influenced his ideas about the individual's integration into the community and the community's willingness to assimilate newcomers. Adjustment embraced toleration. Andrew R. Heinze, "Jews and American Popular Psychology: Reconsidering the Protestant Paradigm of Popular Thought," Journal of American History 88, no. 3 (December 2001), 969.

thought their gender expression betokened too much hostility toward men and therefore indexed the masculine protest—he also deplored militarism and aggrandizing expressions of nationalism, which were also compensations for inferiority. Thus, adjustment and the inferiority complex combined psychology with social analysis.[26]

Adler hinted that tomboyism might be a form of the masculine protest, but it was so widespread it could not be considered automatically pathological. In an unequal society, a girl's observations of female inferiority could naturally lead to boyish behavior; on the other hand, being a mentally healthy woman involved renunciation of the masculine protest. This brought up a significant question: where was the line between run-of-the-mill tomboyism and neurosis? The answer lay in current social conditions, especially women's inequality:

> I may say that I should never forbid a girl to play with trains, to climb trees, or to play any boys' games, but I am fully convinced that much trouble would be saved in the later life of children if they were brought up from the first in knowledge and preparation for their right sexual rôle. This is impossible, of course, if the atmosphere is charged with suggestions of feminine disability and of masculine privilege, as so often is the case.[27]

As with Freudian psychoanalysis, gendered transitions were sticky. Both Adler and Freud spent much of their professional lives making brilliant deductions about proper

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[26] For a more extensive summary of Adler's views on inferiority, see Hoffman, The Drive for Self, 68-71. Adler's most important writings on inferiority and the masculine protest include "Individual-Psychology, Its Assumptions and Its Results," "Psychical Hermaphrodism and the Masculine Protest—the Cardinal Problem of Nervous Diseases," "Individual-Psychological Treatment of Neurosis," and "The Masculine Attitude in Female Neurotics," all in Alfred Adler, The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology, trans. P. Radin (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1929). For an example of Adler's intolerance of militarism, nationalism, and racism, see "Social Hostility" and "On the Psychology of Political Coercion and War," in Alfred Adler, The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler: A Systematic Presentation in Selections from His Writings, ed. Heinz L. Ansbacher and Rowena R. Ansbacher (New York: Basic Books, 1956), 450-454 and 455-459.

[27] Alfred Adler, Problems of Neurosis: A Book of Case Histories, ed. Philippe Mariet (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), 43.

movements between life stages. But for Adler more than Freud, gender was equally psychological and social.

These influences were not confined to academic discourse. They constituted one part of what this study calls vernacular psychology: an amalgam of continuities and changes in ordinary people's understandings of inner states. If a vernacular is a local dialect that melds "high" and popular language, early twentieth-century vernacular psychology synthesized science and tradition for the modern era. It was not pop psychology, which we might think of as a product of mass culture. Instead, its elements included the Protestant ethic, with its focus on salvation through purposeful effort; Catholic and Jewish communal traditions; dietary regimes; New Thought; Eastern mysticism; advice manuals promising domestic bliss and sexual health; advertising copywriters' promises of personal transformation through the purchase of cosmetics, clothing, cars, and other products; aspirations toward Americanization and class mobility, especially through schooling; and many other influences.[28]

The modern young women in "Boyhood for Girls" used vernacular psychological language to describe their feelings about gender, sexuality, their bodies, and their relationships with the people closest to them. In this they were not the dupes of faceless experts who sought social control by having the masses turn to self-examination instead

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[28] Studies that stress continuities in American psychology include John C. Burnham, Paths into American Culture: Psychology, Medicine, and Morals (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988) and James G. Blight, "Jonathan Edwards's Theory of the Mind: Its Applications and Implications," in Josef Brožek, ed., Explorations in the History of Psychology in the United States (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1984). See also Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of Consumer Culture," in Richard Wrightman Fox and Jackson Lears, eds., The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983); Warren I. Susman, "The Culture of the Thirties," in Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003), 150-183.

of destroying the structures that oppressed them.[29] They were individuals trying to make sense of both inner conflicts and social relations, and their theories were at least as sophisticated as any academic's. Moreover, many of the tomboys in this study were second-generation immigrants from very modest backgrounds. Their use of the psychological vernacular and their willingness to look within for solutions to their problems prove that psychology had a significant purchase on the affective lives of working-class people, contrary to ingrained assumptions.[30] Psychology was not the exclusive province of the American bourgeoisie.

"Boyhood for Girls" demonstrates that vernacular psychology had a very real impact on the lives of tomboys, and not simply those who sought analysis. The ideas of Hall and Adler, for example, were ubiquitous in advice manuals, tracts on mental hygiene, social workers' case studies, and the disciplinary practices of juvenile courts.[31] Moreover, the term inferiority complex appeared countless times in literary journals and the mass media beginning in the early 1920s.[32] Girls did not have to be white, middle-class college students to pick up theories about inner life and gender expression; these theories suffused mass culture as well as institutions designed to regulate girls' lives, from schools to settlement houses. Moreover, young women used this psychological

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[29] For an example of the social control theory, see Philip Cushman, Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 106.

[30] Joel Pfister argues against psychology's relevance to working-class Americans in "On Conceptualizing the Cultural History of Emotional and Psychological Life in America," in Pfister and Schnog, eds., Inventing the Psychological, 23-24.

[31] Heinze, "Jews and American Popular Psychology"; Napoli, Architects of Adjustment; DeLuzio, Female Adolescence in American Scientific Thought.

[32] A fraction of the results from two database searches for "inferiority complex" includes "'Dual Personality' of Franks Slayers Bared by Alienist," New York Times, August 2, 1924, 1; Alain Locke, "Negro Youth Speaks," in Locke, ed., The New Negro (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 48; James C. Young, "Torch of the Ku Klux Burns Close to New York," New York Times, June 8, 1924, 4; Edna Woolman Chase, "The Importance of Vanity," Vogue 64 (November 15, 1924), 57; "An Old but Dangerous Resort," Wall Street Journal, April 17, 1924, 1.

terminology to describe their inner lives and the way their emotions related to the way they expressed gender within a social context. The power of psychology encouraged an inward turn for some girls at adolescence as they struggled to apprehend the relationship between gender and social life.

Adolescent Sexual Culture

After psychology, the second major factor that distinguished modern tomboys' adolescent transformation from earlier generations' was the revolution in the position of youth in American culture beginning in the 1890s. Each year saw more immigrants settle permanently in the United States; as they established families, the demography of large cities skewed younger and younger.[33] The power of working-class young people waxed as they demanded access to the wages they earned. This was especially true of girls, whose parents traditionally expected them to contribute a greater proportion of their earnings to the family economy than boys did.[34] As they attempted to spend more on themselves and secured a greater presence in public space, working girls collectively influenced a new heterosociality—the friendly intermixture of groups of young women and men on more equal terrain, usually with minimal supervision by elders. Coupled with "cheap amusements," heterosociality made for a vibrant youth culture, notable not simply for its nickelodeons, cafes, and public promenades, but also for the way it made people feel. For an adolescent girl curious about boys, what could be more exciting than a trip to the waterfront, where young men displayed their bodies and where she might experience

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[33] Sarah E. Chinn, Inventing Modern Adolescence: The Children of Immigrants in Turn-of-the-Century America (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 13-16.
[34] Peiss, Cheap Amusements, 67-72; Susan A. Glenn, Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 162-166.

a thrill ride holding a fellow's arm? True, second-generation immigrant girls mostly contributed to their families' income and did not socialize with young men unchaperoned.[35] But for others, the years between grammar school and marriage were full of both hard work and the pleasures of social life.

Heterosociality was implicitly sexual. The purpose of girls' social clubs, for example, was not solely to meet young men—members sometimes also enjoyed such activities as debating and working with union activists—but these clubs were often affiliated with boys' organizations, and members used dues to sponsor parties, dances, and mixed outings.[36] But what of girls who felt excluded from the sexualized undercurrents of heterosociality? Early adolescent sexual culture typically demanded conformity to gendered ideals—not those of middle-class respectability, to be sure, but an acceptance of differences between women and men all the same. This was resolutely characterized by young working women's unequal access to spending money, which implied exchanging sexual behavior for nights out.[37] Yet, as this study shows, adolescent tomboys had to learn how to be feminine in order to partake of these pleasures. Gender distinctions had implications for a girl's future as a sexual subject and a sex object: that is, her ability to recognize her sexual desires and then become an eligible match for young men. Becoming somehow feminine was usually a prerequisite for dating and, by extension, for sexual expression and marriage. Not all tomboys found this passage difficult, nor did all comply with it. But for many, adolescent liberation came at an

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[35] Glenn, Daughters of the Shtetl, 162.
[36] Peiss, Cheap Amusements, 59-62.
[37] Elizabeth Alice Clement, Love for Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900-1945 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 223.

emotional price, especially for the great number of tomboys who had sexual desires for boys and wished to marry.

By the 1920s, adolescent sexual culture—heterosociality and its concomitant sexual permissiveness—had spread from urban centers to middle-class suburbs and small towns.[38] Tales of necking in family automobiles, illegal drinking, smoking, and dancing to jazz records circulated among adults and young people alike. Some adults professed shock at young people's behavior, but even those who believed it signaled cultural declension seemed to take pleasure in detailing its horrors. In 1931, F. Scott Fitzgerald fixed "the peak of the younger generation" at 1922 and argued that "though the Jazz Age continued, it became less and less an affair of youth."[39] Adults who wanted in on the fun, literally or vicariously, began to indulge flaming youth; some observed that girls took it as a matter of course that premarital heterosexual experimentation was quite their due.[40] Thus, in the 1920s cultural conversation about adolescence was not confined to psychologists: young people themselves were aware of their social position, including the right to sexual freedom. Dating, the newly prevalent form of courtship, entailed intense competition, with girls measuring their attractiveness not by how pretty they were but through the social regime of popularity: declining party invitations, having a number of young men cut in on a single dance, and generally being in high demand.[41] Girls' adolescent sociality involved implicitly sexualized relations with boys, which not all tomboys felt at ease with.

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[38] Beth L. Bailey, From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 18-19.
[39] F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Echoes of the Jazz Age," in The Crack-Up, ed. Edmund Wilson (New York: New Directions, 1956), 15.
[40] See Eleanor Rowland Wembridge, "Petting and the Campus," in Other People's Daughters (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926), 192-193.
[41] Bailey, From Front Porch to Back Seat, 31-34.

It is reasonable to assume that tomboys born between 1900 and 1910 easily found places as boyish flappers as they came of age. But the flapper's stylized androgyny was not tomboyism. As Laura Doan and Michelle Abate argue, the flapper's goal was not to appear masculine or to pass as a boy, but to embody insouciant youthfulness and not-quite-mature boyish sexuality.[42] Additionally, being a tomboy usually entailed platonic relationships with boys, which were not always expected to lead to a future of freely indulged heterosociality and participation in adolescent sexual culture. True, some modern women reasoned that their tomboyism trained them in a familiarity with boys that easily translated into a pleasurable life of dating. Others, however, felt excluded from adolescent sexual culture because they lacked the power to transform themselves into sexual subjects and sex objects. The fact that young people found androgyny attractive in the 1920s did not always facilitate these transformations. It was not simply gender expression that distinguished tomboys; it was a sense that they were not very different from boys to begin with, that they were boys' equals, not their adjuncts. Despite nabbing sexual license, flappers' easy familiarity with young men ultimately did not entail the destruction of male privilege. Flappers were still social beings with much at stake, particularly ambitions of marriage and family life, and, as many older activists noted, they did not see themselves as political.[43] They probably were, however, more adept at assimilating sexualized androgyny as an expression of equality than tomboys.

The emergence of adolescent sexual culture between the 1900s and the 1920s entailed engagement with the psychological insofar as it required boyish girls to look within themselves for evidence that they were making proper affective realignments.

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[42] Abate, Tomboys, 125-26.
[43] Nancy F. Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 150-152.

Changes in pubescent bodies arrived around the time that tomboys felt pressure from peers and adults alike to start thinking of themselves as different from boys. This could be difficult.

Feminism

Social historians have yet to consider feminism's impact on childrearing in much depth—analyzing not simply the advice manuals that appeared in the early twentieth century, but the way feminism influenced child development itself, directly and indirectly. Children born after about 1890 came of age at a time when the future of gender relations was uncertain. Adults of the period must have been acutely aware of the "woman question," but they had no idea how it would resolve, whether its challenges and ideals would come to fruition permanently. Some looked to mothers' organizations, such as the American Association of University Women and the Child Study Association of America, for clues about "scientific" childrearing. Inasmuch as they imparted beliefs that mother's primary social role was in the home, these groups were not necessarily feminist. Yet, in a significant shift, some promoted motherhood as civic engagement instead of a strictly domestic affair.[44] The generation of girls born between 1900 and 1920 could engage a heritage of ambition and activism, even if their parents wanted nothing to do with feminism. Whether girls had mothers, aunts, or older sisters active in the union movement, suffrage, women's clubs, higher education, or the professions—even if they had simply caught wind of such things—they had access to new ways of thinking about gender. Extensive publicity of feminism nurtured new possibilities, widely debated at all

[44] Julia Grant, Raising Baby by the Book: The Education of American Mothers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 46-47.

levels of society.[45] Even antifeminist women and men must have understood much of the feminist critique of public and private, the double standard, and political disfranchisement in order to argue against it. Raising girls was a matter of deep consequence, for whatever they would become might augur a permanently changed order.

For tomboys, the impact of feminism was uneven but unmistakable. Just as feminism did not win universal adherence, young boyish girls generally did not reason that the equality they exercised with boys on a day-to-day basis had any political significance. Tomboyism did not necessarily lead to dedicated feminist activism. On the other hand, playing with boys was feminist because the very same games and activities had much different connotations in the early twentieth century than they had had earlier. It did not matter what sort of "consciousness" tomboys had. Moreover, a collective sense of tomboy identity seems never to have cohered for boyish girls when they were young; tomboyism was almost always a matter of individual predilection, even a rejection of anything resembling girl-identification. But tomboy play added to and shaped the historical context of changing gender relations. Active play looked more or less the same, but a new backdrop gave the scene a different meaning.

Feminism contributed greatly to turning gendered discipline for girls away from religiously inflected didacticism and toward a more diffuse awareness of the possibility and responsibility of independence. Sometimes this involved deep self-awareness. As ambitious women of the late nineteenth century had shown, desires to make something of oneself in the "wider world" could involve a good deal of introspection, as with the

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[45] Kim E. Nielsen, Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Antifeminism, and the First Red Scare (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001); Laura H. Behling, The Masculine Woman in America, 1890-1935 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), ch. 1.

personal crisis that led Jane Addams to import the settlement house movement to Chicago, creating public roles for educated middle-class women.[46] Sometimes a turn inward accompanied the realization that being a woman was a weighty hindrance, the problem Alice James (William's sister) realized but never solved.[47] It is possible that New Women sought higher education not only to establish themselves in the public sphere and to slake a thirst for knowledge for its own sake, but also to find a secular space that allowed for serious contemplation and self-reflection. Jane Hunter has written that girls' diaries demonstrated this shift. Girls increasingly used them to record secret thoughts, some of them even keeping "public" diaries for their parents and friends to read and secret ones for their eyes only. This claim to privacy, Hunter argues, was a step toward the social and political breakthroughs of New Womanhood.[48]

As modern tomboys grew up, what they were supposed to do with their lives was less clear. A confluence of factors led them to turn inward, to try to imagine who they would become, even when they could articulate their ambitions as well as any young man. The decreasing obligations of moral catechism, the lures of mass culture and its emphasis on sexual expression, and the introspection that characterized some women's turn to public life all came to a head around the time tomboys born between 1900 and 1920 reached puberty.

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[46] Nearly every Addams biography argues that this crisis inspired Addams to "do something." The first may be Christopher Lasch, The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type (New York: Vintage, 1965), 3-37. See also Addams, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements."
[47] Jean Strouse, Alice James: A Biography (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).
[48] Hunter, "Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family," 242-269.

Tomboy Lore: Gender, Affect, and Time

Because this project argues that an inward turn characterized adolescent tomboyism in the early twentieth century, it engages with critical discussions about the expression of feelings and inner states. Affect theory, queer theory, and literary studies of gender nonconformity and eroticism all have a significant impact on its logic. Because empirical sources on children are often ambiguous, fragmented, and indirect, theory suggests ways that cracks in remembrance might be filled while resisting searches for causes and origins.

Affect and Gender

Work on affect has slowly rippled its way from psychoanalysis through philosophy, feminist and queer theory, anthropology, and women's studies, growing especially strong in the 2000s. Roughly speaking, affect theory concerns questions of emotions and embodiment, yet there is no real consensus about how to define it. Some entirely reject the idea that "emotional states" help constitute affect; others, inspired by Raymond Williams's writings on "structures of feeling," argue that affect theory directly concerns emotions.[49] In "Boyhood for Girls," "affect" will refer to emotional states and their context: the circuitry between subjectivity and the social, the expression of feelings and their extension into the world beyond the self. Just as affect theorists reject neat splits between inner and outer, self and society, this study does, too. With this insight, it sometimes has seemed necessary to deemphasize the historical agency of tomboys, for agency seems to imply more or less conscious reasoning, resistance, or other means of

[49] Critics who argue that affect is not synonymous with emotional life follow from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus (1980) and the work of their translator, Brian Massumi. Affect theorists inspired by Williams include Lauren Berlant and Eve Sedgwick.

shaping an environment through knowable, even measurable effort.[50] Attention to affect does more to honor the gray areas of historical evidence, which is especially pertinent to a study of the transitional nature of adolescence.

Affect theory critiques poststructuralist gender theory, including the notion of performativity advanced by Judith Butler in Gender Trouble.[51] Historians still largely misunderstand the concept of gender as performance. According to Butler, performativity is not an individual's adoption of a gender "role," rather like a theatrical costume; neither is performance a conscious, canny way of acting out gender. Rather, the essence of performance is repetition, a first language that becomes second nature.[52] Butler argues that gender is a continuous, unconscious repetition of "performatives": acts, speech, and "speech-acts"—words that "do something." Performatives constitute what is considered female and male in any given combination of thinking, perceiving, and being.[53] Gender comes to us through the way we comprehend language and use it to think about existence.

Although affect and performance are quite distinct in theoretical literature, "Boyhood for Girls" draws on both. As with performativity, affect is not a simply a matter that begins and ends with an individual's conscious expression of emotions. Instead, there is feedback along a repetitive circuit: the expression of feelings, the consequent responses of the external environment and other individuals, subjects'

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[50] Walter Johnson, "On Agency," Journal of Social History 37:1 (Fall 2003), 113-124.
[51] Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1990).
[52] "[G]ender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. … There is no gender identity behind expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results." Ibid., 25.
[53] "[A]cts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality." Ibid., 136.

absorption of those responses, and their reiteration of feelings.[54] Self, other, and environment may converge; they may retreat; they may hover in ambivalence near one another. Affect makes empathy visible, but also anger and aggression. Inspired by affect and gender theories, this history of tomboys allows for subtle adjustments and variations within this repetitive circuit—for broken linkages, for skipped steps, for the gradually decaying sharpness of successive copies, and for the imperfect restoration of those copies. This also suggests that there are links between past, present, and future without asserting transhistorical sameness. Emotions are just as repetitive now as then, but this is not to say that they feel or function exactly the same. Affect helps keep repetitive systems of gender in motion, simultaneously reinforcing them and allowing them freedom to mutate and play.

Gender and affect theory also allow one to posit tomboys' relation to time through tomboy lore: an understanding of girls' feelings about gender nonconformity that gets repeated and passed along between and among tomboys, those closest to them, and adult observers. Lore also helps adult tomboys circulate a collective history among themselves and hand it on to young people. This occurred when Louisa May Alcott fictionalized her youth through the character Jo in Little Women. She and her publishers elided the distinction between fact and fiction in promoting her work. Girls wrote to Alcott as if she

[54] "Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability." Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in Gregg and Seigworth, eds., The Affect Theory Reader (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 1.

were really Jo.[55] It also happened nearly a century later, when "Ann Bannon" (Ann Weldy) constructed charismatic tomboy characters for pulp novels. In this case, tomboy lore had mutated to incorporate homosexual desire into rollicking tales of gender nonconformity. Later, tomboy lesbians recalled these paperbacks as tales that represented who they really were at a time when homosexuality was reviled. A transgender man who grew up as a tomboy and lived as a lesbian in the 1950s remembered, "In the 1950's it was books like Journey to a Woman, or Odd Girls Out, and Twilight Lovers, read discretely [sic], passed from one tan, yellow or brown hand to the other, secretively around the kitchen table … that showed the misunderstood world of women who love women. This journey to self understanding."[56] In these examples, of course, adults and mass culture play suspiciously large roles. But both Little Women and Bannon's lesbian pulp repeated and bequeathed feelings about tomboyism to succeeding generations. The idea of tomboy lore, therefore, requires a synthesis of gender performativity, affect, and time.

A consideration of gender and affective nonconformity provides a good starting point for historical inquiry. Sometimes, after all, it is easier to begin by acknowledging the exceptional rather than making a case for representativeness. By analyzing cases in which links break, or when social change seems to speed up the pace of variation within repetitive circuits, it is possible to clarify how a system was expected to work. It may also enhance understanding of anxiety in the modern era, which, according to cultural

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[55] Barbara Sicherman, "Reading Little Women: The Many Lives of a Text," in Forman-Brunell and Paris, eds., The Girls' History and Culture Reader: The Nineteenth Century, 270-299.
[56] Red Jordan Arobateau, Autumn Changes (Red Jordan Press, 2009), 8.

historians, suffused life in the Northeastern United States in the early twentieth century.[57] As we have seen, gender expression for tomboys was complicated: sometimes their gender crossings fascinated, sometimes they repulsed. This had an impact on the ways boyish girls felt and thought about themselves, the people around them, and the larger worlds in which they lived.

Queer Theory and the Negative Turn

Affect studies has influenced what has been called the negative turn in queer theory. To a great extent, this was an overt response to "gay pride," which some scholars and activists believed achieved imperative power after the Stonewall rebellion of 1969: if you weren't "proud," you stood to be scorned as self-hating and a detriment to the political advancement of LGBT issues.[58] Theorists of the negative turn instead proposed to explore self-hatred, shame, depression, anger, and other emotions that embarrassed the mainstream LGBT movement. The idea was to sift through possibilities that "negative" emotions could be politically productive: queer shame as an alternative to gay pride. Although pride in itself was worthy enough, there were those whose destructive feelings about themselves and about queerness in general constituted a kind of dare. Instead of trying to deny or repudiate these emotions, why not see them as queerness itself? Could there be a place within political coalitions for the sexually and socially abject, and would this increased inclusiveness result in a more democratic queer politics?[59] Although the

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[57] See, for example, T. J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
[58] David M. Halperin and Valerie Traub, "Beyond Gay Pride," in Halperin and Traub, eds., Gay Shame (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 3-4.
[59] Heather Love explores these political questions in "Underdogs: On the Minor in Queer Theory," unpublished paper presented at the Columbia Law School Center for Gender and Sexuality Law

negative turn has been subject to withering accusations of racism and classism,[60] cultural historians ought to consider its relevance to their own research, especially on childhood.

Adolescence is a queer time, even as it was constructed in the past: social scientists of the 1890s and early 1900s remarked extensively upon religious conversions, generational conflict, sexual deviance, and other singular markers of the transition between childhood and adulthood.[61] These in themselves might resonate amid contemporary queer issues—certain rites of passage, such as having children, traditionally have excluded queers; some theorists of the negative turn consider the possibility that this is not a bad thing.[62] Childhood, in fact, plays a leading role in this branch of queer theory, and it may be extended to historical inquiry. In the past, social scientists like G. Stanley Hall saw introspection as especially important for adolescents, as nostalgia for a lost childhood emerged.[63] Tomboys experienced the pubescent transition particularly intensely, remembering the freedom of outdoor play and running

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and Columbia University Institute for Research on Women and Gender Colloquium Series, February 8, 2011.

[60] Gay Shame was a radical activist group that staged anticapitalist, anti-assimilationist actions in San Francisco as a counterpoint to corporate-sponsored Gay Pride events. In 2003, Gay Shame publicly ridiculed queer theorists at a University of Michigan conference. An account of the group's activities can be found in Mattilda, aka Matt Bernstein Sycamore, "Gay Shame: From Queer Autonomous Space to Direct Action Extravaganza," in Mattilda, aka Matt Bernstein Sycamore, ed., That's Revolting! Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation (Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull, 2004), 237-262. For academic critiques of gay shame, see Judith Halberstam, "Shame and White Gay Masculinity," Social Text 23 (Fall/Winter 2005): 219-233; and George Chauncey, "The Trouble with Shame," in Halperin and Traub, eds., Gay Shame, 277-282.

[61] G. Stanley Hall was formative in these inquiries. For considerations of his work, see Joseph F. Kett, Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 217-221; Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England, 121-138; Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1890-1917 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), ch. 3. For theories about queerness in children, see Kathryn Bond Stockton, The Queer Child: Or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

[62] Lee Edelman, No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), esp. ch. 1.

[63] Hall cites numerous studies of adolescence and nostalgia in Adolescence v. 2, 375-383.

wild as they tried to accustom themselves to the demands of feminine womanhood. Looking backward—or "feeling backward," as Heather Love has called it—was a kind of queer antimodernism in its resistance to the obligations of the forward march of time and assurances that the future was nothing but bliss.[64] Tomboys seem to have been especially queer antimodern subjects: they were required to see the gendered selves of their past as nonconforming, but only in relation to their adolescent present and womanly future. At adolescence, they began to realize they had a past, and sometimes that past was more desirable than the present or the future.[65]

If one of the goals of the negative turn is to discover productive uses of feeling bad, historical study reveals that some tomboys' affective lives during adolescence provided space to reimagine the future of gender. By the early twentieth century, it was possible for girls to use confusion about gender to build bridges between what they had been and what they might become. Some tomboys sensed that shameful emotions in adolescence, such as ambivalence about sexuality, had a relationship to the future. It is possible, therefore, that early twentieth-century tomboys helped shape the affective future, especially by contributing to tomboy lore. As they looked back on a childhood in which gender mattered little and ahead to an adulthood in which it did, their feelings multiplied and divided, making a tomboy past and a muddled adolescence accessible to girls of the future. It is possible that this affective legacy influenced late twentieth-century feminists, masculine lesbians, even transgender men.

This logic works against the argument that childhood innocence is a myth. Freud, of course, posited the idea of the sexual child more than a century ago, and sexuality has

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[64] Heather Love, Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 7-9.
[65] Stockton, The Queer Child, introduction.

dominated the work of literary scholars who have examined the historical construction of innocence from Rousseau to recent obsessions with kidnappings and child abuse.[66] Although the idea of sexual innocence is generally shaky, some children, especially tomboys, may be innocent of gender difference. Many tomboys know very well that there are girls and there are boys; they simply do not perceive any consequence to this distinction. When they do become aware of these implications—when they lose this innocence—they can perceive it as a loss. Most often this occurs at adolescence.

Moreover, there is something to be said for a slight variation of sexual innocence among tomboys. It is not that they had no knowledge of sexuality or did not participate in sexual escapades as youngsters—quite a few did. It is that as they grew up, many hesitated to participate in adolescent sexual culture because it required gender conformity. It could be difficult to engage in this world when the price of admission was a gendered transformation involving behavior and mentality. Many tomboys struggled to fulfill heterosexual desires without compromising who they thought they were. And then there were those who did not have heterosexual desires at all: young lesbians, so-called late bloomers, and asexual tomboys who preferred to keep relating to boys as they always had—as comrades, not potential dates. This was, in fact, a type of sexual innocence: neither an absolute lack of knowledge nor a moral halo, but a relationship to social demands that gender expression align with the body differentiated by puberty.

This innocence was queer. It involved longing backward glances, conscious and unconscious resistance to change, and feelings of discomfort. It was a sense of being out of place, out of time; it was an inchoate awareness of the reiterations of gender and affect

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[66] Viviana A. Rotman Zelizer, Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); James R. Kinkaid, Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

and a sense that they were restrictive. Not every tomboy experienced such queer discomfort, but enough of them did to provoke questions about the ways tomboy affects have been handed down through time, including speculation about when and how they changed. In fact, the early twentieth century was crucial, as political and social changes in relations between women and men muddied predictions for the future of gender expression. Similarly, psychoanalytically inflected conversations about sexuality emphasized its role in child development. In all, discourse about gender and sexuality necessarily implied discussion of tomboys and the uncertain outcomes of their childhoods.

The Erotic and the Sexual

Tomboys had specific ways of interacting with the people closest to them, including family members, boy "pals," girl "chums," and women mentors. Boyish girls' gender expression influenced these interactions; often, it was a primary way to define them. For example, the pleasure tomboys often took in their relationships with their fathers was distinct enough to be a recognizable phenomenon. It was also gendered: not masculine or feminine, but boyish—or, rather, tomboyish. Reiterated in speech and acts, circulated and mutated as affect, and passed down from one generation to the next, the father/tomboy relationship and others like it shaped tomboy lore. As malleable fusions of inner and social life, these bonds involved eroticism, which may be understood as the ways desire, fantasy, longing, physical affection, and other manifestations of pleasure are expressed as love, friendship, or other intense attachments. Eroticism may occur within or against

specific regulations of correct thought and behavior; it may also move between them. And it is always situated in time.

It has proved difficult for scholars to define the erotic because of its vexed relationship with the sexual, especially when it comes to the desires of women. Since the 1970s, literary critics and historians of gender and sexuality have debated whether the erotic includes the sexual like a concentric circle (with erogenous sexual contact being only one type of erotic activity), whether the sexual and the erotic are the poles of a continuum, or if some other model enhances understanding of the subject.[67] The question has been critical because of the nature of women's same-sex physical pleasure in the past, especially in the nineteenth-century Anglo-American context. Scholars agree that Victorian women's affective pleasure in relationships with one another often did not take the form of genital contact, but whether to call these same-sex romances "lesbian" is still hotly debated. The search for a lesbian past can be hamstrung by exasperating, phallocentric queries such as "But did these two people have sex?" Questions like these are not laid to rest by imposing a continuum or circular model, but both models signify wholeness and flexibility, and both posit modes of pleasure that can sidestep empirical demands for proof of sexual contact. Still, they can also perplex, for it is difficult to determine the point at which an affectionate touch becomes an intimate caress, or when looking becomes voyeurism.

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[67] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," Signs 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1975), 1-29; Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," Signs 5, no. 4 (Summer 1980): 631-660.; Martha Vicinus, "Distance and Desire: English Boarding School Friendships, 1870-1920," in Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., eds., Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past (New York: New American Library, 1989), 212-229; Lillian Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 31-36.

In “Boyhood for Girls,” the erotic and the sexual are distinct: eroticism is a form of intense pleasure realized mainly through interpersonal relationships that may be intensely affectionate but are not expected to lead to sexual activity. Erotic relationships imply an engagement with affect, for they are constituted through emotions that confound distinctions between self and other and between individual and society. At times, the tomboys in this study felt a oneness with those whom they loved. (Other affective modes, such as rivalry, hostility, fear, and envy, are slighted in the next chapters, although their role is sometimes implicit.) Love, of course, was complicated indeed; beyond its raptures, it might not be reciprocated, it might be ridiculed, it might be destructive in its obsessiveness. Between 1900 and 1940, this was as true of erotic love as it was for sexual desire, at least in everyday experience. Psychoanalysts argued that there was no distinction between the erotic and the sexual, and such thinking grew increasingly resonant in vernacular psychology. But when tomboys born between 1900 and 1920 were children, they seem not to have been aware that adults could interpret their erotic loves (for parents, siblings, friends, women teachers, and others) as polymorphous perversity. This often changed at adolescence, when these boyish young women attempted to reinterpret their desires by looking within.

It may be that eroticism and sexual desire in humans are transhistorical and transcultural, but their manifestations and meanings differ radically through time, space, and place. Some erotic relationships considered appropriate during certain periods become passé, taboo, or reinterpreted as inherently sexual (as with nineteenth-century intimate friendships between women or men, as well as the reconfiguration of father-

daughter affection after World War II as Oedipal).[68] As Sharon Marcus writes, the way a society permits some affective configurations and forbids or simply ignores others defines "the play of the system"—its ability to bend without breaking, to accommodate diverse desires as long as they appear to conform to expectations.[69] During times of rapid historical change, however, systems are strained to the breaking point, or at least it feels that way to many. Historical time's viscosity is variable; as it moves more quickly, it demands rapid reconsideration of affective relationships as a result of tumultuous new interactions among individuals, groups of people, and social worlds. The first decades of the twentieth century were such a time. Freudian thinking about eroticism and sexuality did propose that they were both libidinous. But evidence strongly suggests that tomboys themselves maintained the separation, at least as children. "Boyhood for Girls," therefore, proceeds from this distinction.

Creating Cases

Despite my closet wish to scribe precise arguments crafted from sequences of quotations and statistics gathered from an ideally representative sample of tomboys, in this study I rely for the most part on extended narrative case studies of individual girls. These are not exactly biographical treatments: they are reconstructed from documents both published and archival; they are in many cases interpretations of interpretations. With the notable exception of one diary (see Chapter 4), I consider few direct, first-person accounts of tomboy lives created while these girls were girls. Far from a weakness, however, the methodological process of generating my own case studies has permitted an imaginative

[68] For discussion of the latter, see Rachel Devlin, Relative Intimacy: Fathers, Daughters, and Postwar American Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
[69] Marcus, Between Women, 27.

immersion in details that those who created my sources—including social workers, psychologists, doctors, educators, novelists, and sexologists—considered trivial or irrelevant. I have come to favor what social scientists call intensive rather than extensive analysis: examining the welter of contingencies and possibilities contained within individual histories, perhaps at the expense of arriving at generalizable conclusions. This gambit was both a personal intellectual decision and a strategy suggested by my sources.

The initial challenge I encountered was finding sources to begin with. Historical documentation of childhood, as scholars know, is quite deep, yet a study of gender-nonconforming girls faces significant obstacles. First, tomboys have always been a minority, despite their well-established visibility in American popular culture and mythology.[70] As such, research on tomboys resembles inquiry into other minorities of the past. It is much easier to find them in adult discourse than in first-person documents, such as diaries and letters, written when they were children. Second, although many girls' writings have been preserved in archives all over the country, it is usually difficult to determine whether they were tomboys. It is not enough to find the diary of one girl who liked to play basketball and another who took Theodore Roosevelt as a personal hero. Diaries are not always reflective; generally, girls do not seem to have asked themselves, unprompted, how they felt about their own gender nonconformity. Again, what is said about girls can be more revealing than what girls said about themselves. Third, as I have mentioned, tomboys were everywhere, yet in childhood they did not construct a coherent identity (as we might think of it) in which they believed they had something in common with every other tomboy. If anything, they identified more with boys. This lack of collective identity or consciousness during girlhood did not erase the fact that tomboys

[70] Abate, Tomboys, 6-7.

usually knew they were tomboys—adults and other children told them so. But it certainly did decrease the possibility that they would privately contemplate themselves as tomboys. Finally, it may be simply that by 1900, tomboys disdained diary-keeping because it was a feminized activity.[71] In other words, the quest to find relatively unmediated tomboy "voices" for a period so far in the past was stymied by the nature of the way historical documents are produced and preserved.

But I did find a significant amount of material that gestured in another direction. I came to think deeply about the dynamics back of encounters between tomboys and the adults who observed them. The most important set of documents was a collection of dozens of sexological interviews taken in the 1930s, which I discuss at length in this project's appendix. These were not open-ended oral histories in which subjects determined what was most important in their lives, but controlled, clinically administered interviews with a specific agenda and identical questions. I also found records of a parents' discussion group, considerations of tomboyism in social scientific and medical literature, case files of delinquent girls, and other sources. There was absolutely no agreement among them about what defined a tomboy, how they related to others, and what characterized their inner lives—the questions I wanted to engage—but these spaces of disagreement and disjuncture, I found, were the place to start.

Naturally, the Foucauldian concept of reverse discourse is of great utility; it is undeniable that most of these sources could only have been created through the power of the tomboy subjects to shape the documents as much as their observers and interlocutors

[71] Hunter, "Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family," 245-46.

did.[72] Moreover, the tomboys in my sources shaped this document, even though my power to observe in some ways mimics past generations of clinicians'. Yet in a study such as this, I found that I had to probe the motives of those who created the documents, to see their point of view, to ask whether empathy for the powerful could ever be justified. As it happened, it was not only justifiable but completely necessary. Disconnects abounded—among tomboys, observers, and me, as well as across time—sometimes making it difficult to distinguish who wanted what, who was prepared to do what, who could be coerced into doing what, who would suffer, who would slink away in guilt or shame, who would convince herself she was blameless. This was why case studies seemed necessary. They might occlude their methodology in artful narrative—a primal issue in the history of psychology and social work[73]—but they are better records of encounters, which are always contingent.

I therefore do not see my method as reading against the grain, for documents like many of those I consult could have been created only through densely meaningful interactions between their creators and the girls described in their contents. Reading sources against the grain—turning the tables on the powerful to demonstrate the pervasiveness of oppression and exclusion—is more or less unidirectional and relies on the intelligibility of archives. The postcolonial scholar Ann Stoler has suggested instead that reading "along the grain" turns our attention to the unknown, the unsayable, and the conditional. This strategy

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[72] Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction (New York: Vintage, 1990), 100-102.

[73] For a history of controversies over case narratives in social work, see Karen W. Tice, Tales of Wayward Girls and Immoral Women: Case Records and the Professionalization of Social Work (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

> draws our sensibilities to the archive's granular rather than seamless texture, to the rough surface that mottles its hue and shapes its form. Working along the grain is not to follow a frictionless course but to enter a field of force and will to power, to attend to both the sound and sense therein and their rival and reciprocal energies. It calls on us to understand how intelligibles are sustained and why empires remain so uneasily invested in them.[74]

Read this way, discursive sources about "problem" girls become more than cloaked records of unruliness and heroism, struggle and resistance. Clinical studies become fascinating for their frustrated efforts to resolve chords alternately diminished and dominant. Diaries come to call attention not only to the writer's thoughts and feelings, but also to those she anticipated would eventually read her diary—parents, friends, and yes, in some cases the historian.

Only the case can capture these sources' inconclusiveness and turn it into opportunity. As Carolyn Steedman has put it, "The written case-study allows the writer to enter the present into the past, allows the dream, the wish or the fantasy of the past to shape current time, and treats them as evidence of their own right. … Case-study presents the ebb and flow of memory, the structure of dreams, the stories that people tell to explain themselves to others."[75] This, it must be said, applies to the subjects of case studies, to their authors, and (in this case) to those who first set the agenda to create the sources I analyze.

Boyhood for Girls

The following chapters argue that gendered changes in tomboys' affective lives during the early twentieth century were different from earlier tomboys' experiences. These

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[74] Ann Laura Stoler, Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 53.
[75] Carolyn Kay Steedman, Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 20-21.

changes set the stage for mutations in tomboy lore; these would characterize tomboy lives later in the twentieth century. Although girls had a wealth of new opportunities to participate in athletics and other boyish activities, the shifting importance of affective life made radical demands on the ways they related to others and to themselves. Collectively, these chapters assert that tomboys' erotic relationships were different from those of other girls and that these differences had an outsize impact on adolescent changes. By focusing on affective relationships and the changes of puberty, "Boyhood for Girls" suggests these feelings have a history.

First, I situate tomboy life within the nuclear family structure. As fertility declined throughout the nineteenth century and family size decreased among the middle and working classes alike, tomboys became more visible at home. Gender nonconformity simply attracted more attention when a tomboy was one of two to three children instead of one of ten.[76] These changes accompanied an affective turn, as children and parents fumbled to relate to one another in new ways. One consequence was a more intense bond between tomboys and masculine presences within their households, usually fathers or older brothers, but sometimes cousins, uncles, and occasionally mothers. The affective ties between boyish girls and these family members may be termed masculine gender mentorship. Sometimes fathers taught tomboy daughters to throw like a boy or challenge boys in school; sometimes brothers allowed tomboy sisters to muscle in on their games. In other instances, fathers tested tomboys by sighing that they would have preferred a

[76] In the 1970s, John Demos proposed that decreasing family size had a revolutionary impact on psychological experience within the "hothouse family." Intensified parent-child relationships allowed Oedipal conflicts to assume greater importance. Perhaps there is something to be said for psychohistory. Demos, "Oedipus and America."

boy. As feminists and New Women contested the gender order, the significance of masculine gender mentorship was a far cry from earlier forms of parenting.

Second, I consider tomboys' relationships with "pals"—platonic childhood boy friends. "Palhood" helped define what it meant to be a tomboy. Like the father/tomboy dyad, pal relationships bequeathed permissiveness and freedom. Tomboys and their pals did more than play together; they formed relationships of trust that were in themselves erotic. Tomboys measured their own pleasure in being just like a boy against these socially fulfilling friendships. Pals helped connect tomboys to the wider world. Again, these gendered, affective relationships took shape in time, handed down from ages past and reshaped to influence the future. For girls born between 1900 and 1920, being a pal with a boy partook of debates about female and male equality, whether these girls knew it or not.

Tomboys struggled with palhood at adolescence, finding it difficult to maintain platonic eroticism in the face of expectations that they engage in sexual escapades with boys. By the 1920s, they experienced this pressure not simply from other adolescent girls and boys, but parents, experts, and the lures of mass culture. It could be heartbreaking to realize that the eroticism of being a pal was somehow not as legitimate as participating in regimes of dating. On the other hand, it was also difficult for tomboys who liked boys to present themselves as sexual partners when they had been pals for so long. In other words, for heterosexual tomboys, the process of becoming a sexual subject was interlinked with becoming a sex object, and both could be equally trying. For lesbian tomboys, sexual subjectivity often involved jettisoning pal eroticism too. Many tomboys experienced this loss acutely.

Third, I turn to tomboys' relationships with close female friends—"chums." Tomboy life histories demonstrate that tight friendships with girls became important in adolescent life, around the time that tomboys had to forsake palhood. In many cases, girl chums introduced them to the world of dating and popularity, sometimes with a degree of success. Tomboys did not always form erotic bonds with other girls, but those who did found that these friendships could cushion the blows of isolation and the falling away of pal eroticism. Tomboys were more likely to have one or two true chums during adolescence instead of running with a crowd. This enfolded them within a different kind of pleasure: it could be more openly affectionate. In order for palhood to be erotic, it had to be platonic. This did not always mean a complete absence of physical touching, but it did require it to occur in strictly demarcated contexts, such as within contact sports bound by rules. Chum eroticism, on the other hand, could include overnight visits in which girls slept in the same bed, along with kisses and embraces. Although some adolescent tomboys were uncomfortable with physical affection, others found succor in it. It could comfort them at a confusing time in life. This discussion also shows that by the 1920s young people were learning about homosexuality. Some tomboys applied this realization to chum relationships. Cultural discourse about homosexuality leached into quotidian experience of same-sex eroticism to allow the question "Am I a lesbian?" to play a role in tomboy lore.

Same-sex eroticism is also the focus of the fourth chapter, which analyzes crushes on mentors, especially women teachers, camp counselors, and older girls. "Boyhood for Girls" generally resists conclusions of histories of women's sexuality that posit a tragic decline of diffuse but intense same-sex love in the early twentieth century in favor of a

sexualized model that looked upon homoeroticism at best with suspicion. Though they often included a fair amount of pain, tomboys' erotic lives were incredibly diverse both before and after what Nancy Sahli called "the Fall"—the ascription of pathology onto love between women, which supposedly occurred by the 1920s.[77] Nonetheless, a wealth of evidence attests to changing perceptions of intergenerational eroticism between boyish girls and women mentors. These new interpretations, almost always sexualized, often caused tomboys embarrassment during adolescence. Psychoanalytic interpretations of all eroticism as sexual at base drew scrutiny to tomboys' passion. Their desire for older women might have made more sense in the mid-nineteenth century or so, when a different mode of intergenerational eroticism was available: aspirational love. This was an eroticism originally focused on the desire to know the healing love of Jesus, paralleling a young person's search for a more perfect spiritual model in an older person of the same sex. Twentieth-century tomboys often partook of the heritage of aspirational love, which, in a secularizing society, was losing its power. Aspirational love was still usually associated with women, but it was shifting from a particularly feminine desire for communion with a perfect spiritual being to a desire for "unsexed" affection outside of marriage.

The final chapter turns to pubescent tomboys' feelings about their growing bodies, especially experiences of menarche. Even if tomboys generally were more annoyed than traumatized at the onset of menstruation, it represented a significant rite of passage involving social, mental, and emotional adjustments. It was a gendered affective experience, just as were the other changes in erotic relationships this study analyzes. This

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[77] Nancy Sahli, "Smashing: Women's Relationships before the Fall," Chrysalis 8 (Summer 1979), 17-27.

discussion argues that puberty demanded that tomboys see themselves first and foremost as girls instead of female beings who had much in common with boys. Changes in the body demanded that tomboys sunder their affinity with boys, or the sense that they were essentially no different from their pals even though they had girl bodies. Instead of seeing conventionally feminine girls as their others, tomboys had to consciously align themselves with them, not define themselves against them. As with other affective realignments, this change could be painful. As a tomboy realized that she could no longer see herself as being more like a boy than a girl, adolescent boyishness could not attain. Accompanied by other shifts in affective life—personal, social, and historical—menarche could signal not only an end to childhood but an end to the gender a tomboy had known.

The study concludes with a sketch of subsequent developments in twentieth-century girls' lives and speculates about the inheritance that tomboys who grew up after 1940 might have received. The affective legacies of tomboyism might have helped women channel desires for equality into all kinds of activism—not only various stripes of feminism, but also unionism, black freedom, and pacifism, to name only a few possibilities. This is not to say that all activists were tomboys, but it is to ask whether gendered affect may be transmitted through time and readopted, even by those who thought of themselves as respectably feminine. From the invention of adolescence to Rosie the Riveter, boyhood for girls resounded beyond individual tomboy lives.

Chapter 1 | Families

Consider the relationship between the eponymous tomboy heroine of Horatio Alger's Tattered Tom; or, The Story of a Street Arab (1871) and her nominal patron, a gruff sea captain. The older man "takes an interest" in a tough girl he finds working on the docks, trundling baggage for a few pennies.[1] He scoops her off the waterfront, treats her to a square meal, and takes her for a dazzling ride in an omnibus—all replicating episodes in Alger's Ragged Dick. But despite the author's efforts to give Tom a narrative with what a biographer calls "pepper and hurrah,"[2] she is a girl, and Alger doesn't quite know what to do with her. By generic dictates, he cannot leave her a tomboy at the end of the story, yet her willingness to square off with big boys, bluster in street argot, and ingeniously flee an abusive guardian are all part of her charm, as important to the story as her desire to earn money honestly. And what of this? In the 1870s, it would have been nearly impossible for an ash-covered street girl to bootstrap herself to the respectability of a male Alger

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[1] Horatio Alger, Tattered Tom; or, The Story of a Street Arab (Philadelphia: Polyglot Press, 2002).
[2] Ralph D. Gardner, Horatio Alger; or, The American Hero Era (New York: Arco Publishing, 1978), 205.

hero, for the primary "profession" open to urban women was domestic service.[3] Tom tries and fails to keep house for a lady, so instead of accumulating a few dollars' interest in a bank account, she discovers in the end that she is an heiress.[4] Moreover, the captain is at sea for most of the novel; no moral, tutelary relationship between him and Tom emerges. Alger's dilemma, in essence, was that he simply preferred boy characters, in part because only boys could properly embody the path toward manly middle-class respectability—that is, probity, self-control, and the ambition to accumulate property and participate in the workings of the market.[5]

For a girl character, a relationship with an older man was difficult to sustain. Alger usually modeled manhood by portraying both didactic, paternalistic patronage (a charitable induction into middle-class life) and what may be called masculine gender mentorship. This mentoring, as distinct from parenting, usually required a youth to strive actively to emulate a gendered paragon and had as much to do with self-education as affection. Tom is not eligible for the captain's mentorship, for her fate is to become a lady of charity. In short, though she has a nominal patron, she must be her own mentor; the captain can help her off the streets, but he cannot sponsor her for ladyhood. In order for her to achieve a happy ending, she must channel her boyish charm into a womanhood no less respectable for her acute pertness. Despite the undeniable charisma of its main character, therefore, Tattered Tom is an awkward story. Tom is a girl with a male patron

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[3] Christine Stansell, City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 155.
[4] Glenn Handler has pointed out that "several" Alger boys do, in fact, discover they are heirs to fabulous fortunes. Glenn Handler, "Pandering in the Public Sphere: Masculinity and the Market in Horatio Alger," American Quarterly 48 (September 1996): 437n36.
[5] Bederman, Manliness and Civilization, 13; E. Anthony Rotundo, American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 20-22.

but is ultimately ineligible for Alger's typical homoerotic man-boy mentoring relationships.

Like Tattered Tom (and at least some of Alger's girl readers),[6] tomboys hungered for masculine gender mentorship, usually from fathers, older brothers, and perhaps even mothers. This desire was seamlessly integrated into their erotic lives. It had a heritage stretching at least as far back as the late nineteenth century, and seems to have become more robust after 1900. In the mid-1920s, the brilliant feminist and political radical Crystal Eastman (1881-1928) described her unconventional girlhood in rural New York, recalling her father's indulgence of her boyish ways: "my father stood by me … from the time when I wanted to cut off my hair and go barefoot to the time when I began to study law. … And when I declared that there was no such thing in our family as boys' work and girls' work, and that I must be allowed to do my share of wood-chopping and outdoor chores, he took me seriously and let me try."[7] Mae C., born about twenty years after Eastman, also had a deep affection for her father. "I aped my father in many ways," she told a sex researcher in the 1930s.

> I would take his stick, hat and gloves and pretend I was selling. He always wore one glove and carried the other and I did the same. … I have always hated fluffy girls' clothes and I liked my tailored clothes. That was the one fight between me and mother. She wanted to dress me up in embroidered things and I hated them. My father liked my tailored clothes.[8]

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[6] According to one biographer, a girl Alger was tutoring implored him to write a novel about a street girl, indicating that he was quite aware of the appeal of his books to girls. Gardner, Horatio Alger, 205.

[7] Crystal Eastman, "Mother-Worship," in These Modern Women: Autobiographical Essays from the Twenties, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: The Feminist Press, 1989), 90-91.

[8] George W. Henry, Sex Variants: A Study of Homosexual Patterns (New York: Paul B. Hoeber, 1948), 574-575. Mae C.'s birthdate is approximated from contextual clues within her story.

Mae C.'s affective relationship with her father resembled Eastman's, though a generation separated the two. As mentors, fathers could be distant as well as affectionate, but these women recounted mutual admiration, which flourished precisely because of their gender nonconformity, not in spite of it.

Despite the evident continuity of tomboys' desires for masculine gender mentorship, Americans gradually revised interpretations of gendered family dynamics, especially during and after World War I. Recognizing adolescence as a stage of human development, professionals, parents, and young people marked it off from childhood, thus adding a new stage to the life cycle.[9] During the 1920s, psychoanalytic thought took its place in vernacular psychology, proffering recombinant notions of gender, development, and parent-child relations. Within the ideal family as conceived by professionals and laypeople alike, the enduring experience of masculine gender mentorship came to have negative implications for a girl's maturation. An idealization of masculinity gradually became identification with it, turning the outside in on itself, taking a girl's expression of boyishness from a more or less conscious aspiration to be accepted by a masculine family member to an unconscious (and pathological) wish to be a man.

In 1921, for example, the eminent psychologist A. A. Brill described a "nervous" patient's erotic relationship with her indulgent father. She "always identified herself with her father," he wrote. "She still imitates him practically in everything. The man was exceedingly fond of horses, and her own love of horses goes back to this source." This

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[9] For wide-ranging analysis of the "invention of adolescence" in the early twentieth century (especially the impact of G. Stanley Hall), see Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England, ch. 4; Jeffrey P. Moran, Teaching Sex: The Shaping of Adolescence in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), ch. 1; Chinn, Inventing Modern Adolescence; Bederman, Manliness and Civilization, ch. 3; DeLuzio, Female Adolescence in American Scientific Thought, 1830-1930.

identification resulted in confusion: "she hated to be a woman and always desired to be a man." "We know that at a certain period of her development almost every girl would like to be a boy," Brill wrote. "But when a girl reaches a certain age [and] she begins to realize she cannot do the things that boys do, she gradually adjusts herself to a girl's normal interests and occupations. This is as it should be. As women are biologically different from men, they must be brought up as women and not as men[.] … That is why it is so absolutely necessary to guard most carefully against bringing up a girl a tomboy." The woman "retained what we may call her whole infantile sexuality," Brill concluded. "Her father was to no small degree responsible for this."[10] What happened in tomboys' family lives now supposedly influenced their psychological health as individuals, not just their outward ability to conform to gendered expectations.

As much as possible, this chapter examines the eroticism of family life from the points of view of tomboys themselves, the better to demonstrate that even before vernacular psychology's incorporation of psychoanalytic narratives, the role of male parents and siblings was of primary significance in the ways girls and young women thought of their tomboy selves. Even when grown women believed that being tomboys had simply been "natural" behavior, quite often a masculine presence had been a source of pleasure within family life. Stale nature/nurture debates about family influences that might cause tomboyism are less relevant than what gender nonconformity meant to girls and to the adults who attempted to account for it. These meanings changed between 1900 and 1940, despite continuities in tomboys' affective lives.

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[10] A. A. Brill, Fundamental Conceptions of Psychoanalysis (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1921), 235-238.

This discussion first contextualizes eroticism within changing family ideals beginning around 1900. Two case studies illustrate the impact of historical influences on boyish girls' desires for mentorship and their feelings about their families. As the notion of the modern "democratic" family gathered momentum, expert discourse encouraged fathers to befriend their children, not simply to be breadwinners and occasionally mete out severe discipline.[11] Moreover, within some urban immigrant communities, the process of Americanization began to permit daughters and fathers to form strong ties, which would probably have been harder to sustain in the Old World.[12] Furthermore, tomboys growing up during radical transformations in gender relations could find that male family members encouraged masculine ambitions, even pulling girls' parental allegiance away from mothers. As they realized new possibilities for mentorship from fathers (and older brothers), tomboys laid claim to the pleasures of boyish masculinity. Being mentored was powerful enough to direct their affective lives within their families.

The second section examines an additional case study to gauge the impact of the inward turn and vernacular psychology on experiences of masculine gender mentorship. More and more, adults questioned the appropriateness of a girl's idealization of her father and other masculine figures, whether in early childhood, adolescence, or adulthood. Psychologists, sexologists, physicians, educators, and other authorities often noted a

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[11] Ralph LaRossa, The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 5-14; Robert L. Griswold, Fatherhood in America: A History (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 88-118.

[12] This was not the case across the board. Ethnic historians generally agree that patriarchal family traditions, including distinct gender and age hierarchies, survived much more strongly among Italian immigrants. Indeed, this study has found that Jewish-American tomboys had much more relaxed relationships with their fathers than Italian-American girls did. But Jewish patriarchal traditions negatively affected many second-generation daughters, as the famous novels of Anzia Yezierska portray. For analyses of Italian-American families, see Elizabeth Ewen, Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1925 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1985), 210-216; Peiss, Cheap Amusements, 69-71.

correlation between father-centered erotic devotion and neurosis, mannishness, or homosexuality. Tomboys and their families were often aware of these prescriptions, whether dimly or explicitly. A newly psychologized understanding of gender expression and its supposed origin in family life made tomboys' mental and sexual health dependent on giving up the erotic pleasures of being mentored. In other words, no real differences of feeling between tomboys and their masculine mentors are readily discernable in women's language. Rather, the social meanings of such feelings changed because affective relations in childhood were supposedly incubators of adult gender expression.

Family Ecologies and Masculine Gender Mentorship

In tomboys' family ecologies—organic arrangements, interlocking relationships, rivalries, triangulations, equilibriums of affection, difference, deference, indulgence, and responsibilities—fathers were more important than mothers during childhood. In literary representations of tomboys produced around 1900, authorial hostility to mothers is remarkable.[13] One looks in vain for a Marmee (Jo March's wise, tender mother in Little Women). Even active girls of lite boyishness, including the title characters of Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm (1903) and Pollyanna (1913), are motherless. (It is Pollyanna's father, in fact, who teaches her "the glad game": the unrelenting optimism that has touched—and annoyed—readers for a century.) Tomboys suffer not a whit for maternal absence. Literary "matricide," as Ann Douglas has written, figures prominently in modernist cultural works of the 1920s; it was essential to American authors' rejection of

[13] Abate, Tomboys, xvi-xix.

"Victorian" sentimentality.[14] Yet this shift from motherly influence to masculine invention was evident at the turn of the century, at least in girls' literature. Where Horatio Alger could not realize a street-life fantasy for girls in the 1870s, a new breed of fictional tomboys with dead mothers and permissive fathers emerged.

An extreme case of a nurturing male presence can be found in Bushy: A Romance Founded on Fact (1896), by the journalist Cynthia M. Westover (1858?-1931).[15] Born in Iowa, Westover began accompanying her father, a geologist and prospector, on mining expeditions at age three, after her mother died. Bushy is a fantastic elaboration of Westover's youth. After Bushy's mother dies at the novel's outset, the girl pleads with her father to let her accompany him west. He does so hesitantly, but he and his fellow prospectors quickly recognize her potential for mastery of the manly arts. She wears boys' clothes, fights Indians, and rescues her father from an avalanche. Bushy's efforts to be a "real boy" are motivated by affection for her father—her wish to inspire the joy that appears in his eyes every time she demonstrates her precocious masculine prowess. He is only too happy to reciprocate her devotion. Bushy, in other words, reflects a shift in tomboy representations: more important than emulating a mother is a close connection with a father, who willingly provides masculine gender mentorship. In its portrayal of a quick study in all things boyish who has a reciprocal relationship with her father, Bushy reflects both an early version of the democratic family ideal and the appeal of gender

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[14] Ann Douglas, Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s (New York: The Noonday Press, 1995), ch. 6.

[15] Cynthia M. Westover, Bushy: A Romance Founded on Fact (New York: The Morse Co., 1896). Sources disagree about Westover's birth year, some placing it in 1862. The federal census of 1880 locates a twenty-two-year-old Cynthia Westover in Boulder, Colorado. Westover might have begun to use the 1862 birth date when she moved to New York City in the late 1880s. Information on 1880 census from Ancestry.com, accessed December 3, 2011.

crossing for girls. Tomboys' family lives and their feelings about their parents suggested the confluence of these forces.

Social historians locate the beginning of a transition to a youth-centered family structure in the late nineteenth century, becoming fully realized in the 1920s. The most important factor in the construction of the new "democratic family" was the rapidly declining birthrate, first observable in the urban middle class. By 1910, middle-class families usually produced only one to three children. With more time available for each child, parental attention and devotion changed the affective life of families. In the 1920s, parenting experts advised mothers and fathers to shed authoritarian discipline to become friends to their children.[16] Additionally, the rise of compulsory education and the restriction of child labor enabled young people to develop complex, peer-centered social worlds, which was especially evident in schools. Children, in other words, became more uselessly "priceless" as their labor was outlawed and their ability to earn money declined.[17] As young people became the center of domestic life, the modern democratic family ideal encouraged parents to take a more visible and egalitarian role in the development of children's personalities. In the democratic family, it was no longer as important to regulate what children did as it was to influence who they were.

Fatherhood changed too. By the 1920s, fathers were no longer supposed to be stern patriarchs but "pals" who took an interest in their children's personalities and the psychological welfare of the family.[18] Historians refer to this phenomenon as the New Fatherhood. Typically, however, scholars examine its impact on girls in terms of the

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[16] Paula Fass, The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 53-63.
[17] Zelizer, Pricing the Priceless Child, ch. 2; Chinn, Inventing Modern Adolescence, ch. 2.
[18] Griswold, Fatherhood in America, 88-91; LaRossa, The Modernization of Fatherhood, 133-136.

ways fathers were supposed to model a daughter's choice of husband, a trend that began to emerge in 1920s advice columns. (In fact, father/daughter erotic relations as a distinct cultural problem flowered most fully with neo-Freudianism during and after World War II, not in the 1920s.)[19] These historians' analyses may be a result of a focus on the opinions of parenting experts, psychologists, and social scientists. Yet within the democratic family, modern tomboys' relationships with their fathers were of immense affective significance, as the words of many of them attest. Seeking masculine gender mentorship, tomboys looked first to their fathers, newly accessible as a result of social, cultural, and demographic changes.

Sylvie

"Sylvie" was a thirty-four-year-old married woman who gave a three-hour interview to an experimental psychologist named Agnes Landis in December 1936. Landis, in the midst of gathering data for a study published in 1940 as Sex in Development, spoke to 295 women from late 1934 through 1937, asking them identical questions about their bodies, families, sexual experiences and fantasies, feelings about homosexuality, and other intimate topics.[20] The women's words are preserved not in long, narrative oral histories, but as terse sentences typed onto blanks, housed today in the library of the Kinsey Institute. (For more information on the interviews, see the Appendix in this

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[19] See Devlin, Relative Intimacy; Leerom Medovoi, Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), ch. 7, esp. 295-304.

[20] Carney Landis, Agnes T. Landis, M. Marjorie Bolles, Harriet F. Metzger, Marjorie Wallace Pitts, D. Anthony D'Esopo, Howard C. Moloy, Sophia J. Kleegman, and Robert L. Dickinson, Sex in Development: A Study of the Growth and Development of the Emotional and Sexual Aspects of Personality Together With Physiological, Anatomical, and Medical Information on a Group of 153 Normal Women and 142 Female Psychiatric Patients (New York: Paul B. Hoeber, 1940).

dissertation.) The transcribed snippets of the conversation that went into Sylvie's story demonstrates that a shift in father/daughter relations cut across classes and ethnicities, even in the early 1900s. Moreover, masculine gender mentorship of girls could occur in families with ties to Old World systems of patriarchy. Sylvie's household occupied a transitional stage: her father was both the head of a small, Americanizing Jewish family and an old-fashioned despot who openly favored one child.

Born in 1902 in New York City, Sylvie was the daughter of Russian immigrants who seem to have made the Atlantic crossing about two years before her birth. Her father ran his own stationery store in Newark, though the family seems to have lived mainly in the Jewish community of New York's Lower East Side. His income apparently was enough to support her mother as a housewife, but Sylvie was ashamed of growing up poor. It made her "very unhappy outside of my home—brought up on East Side—felt a drawback." She characterized her free time as a child as "tomboy play," but she couldn't remember wanting to be a boy. Instead, she was jealous of girls: "Envied their nicer surroundings. Began to feel that 9-10 yrs. Grew stronger and stronger."[21] Girls were her other, possessed of a social status she had difficulty achieving, perhaps because she was poor, perhaps because she liked playing with boys despite knowing that she ought to be inside with dolls. She simply did not take to femininity, though part of her seems to have wanted to.

As a man who suffered from arteriosclerosis and died at forty-nine, when his daughter was sixteen, Sylvie's father might not have been healthy enough to cultivate her love of active play. Yet he passed along his thirst for knowledge, seeing something in his

[21] Interview transcript, Case 20N (m), December 10, 1936, folder 3, series III B, box 1, Carney Landis Papers, Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, Bloomington, IN (hereafter CL). The Kinsey Institute is a private, nonprofit research institution and collection.

daughter's intellectual gifts that reminded him of himself. This form of mentorship was relatively common for Jewish-American tomboys. Traditionally, Jewish men dominated the fiercely revered spheres of literacy and higher learning, with families taking the utmost pride in sons who became Yeshiva students and rabbis. But this began to change in Eastern Europe and Russia in the 1870s, as advocates of modernization and secular coeducation won broader support. Increasingly exposed to new ideas and social movements, young women and men educated outside the Pale joined socialist, Zionist, and democratic reform organizations.[22] In the United States, where many Russian Jews sought refuge from civil oppression and official violence, education was invaluable as a means to Americanization.[23] Formal schooling, therefore, was available to Jewish girls as never before. But many times, it seems, learning was still a masculine pursuit.

As a young man in Russia, Sylvie's father might have aspired to attend Yeshiva, for he seems to have embodied a rabbinical student's complacency toward worldly pursuits. Sylvie did not think he was "terribly ambitious," echoing her shame at growing up in financial straits. Yet "he was my ideal of learned people," she said. "I too was striving for knowledge." He might have been the one family member who pushed her to achieve academically, flattered by the way she looked up to him. Sylvie was so talented that shortly after her father's death, one of her teachers offered to adopt her and send her to college. Possibly associating intellectual mastery with the father for whom she grieved, Sylvie declined. As she explained, "Afraid sh'd [sic] be disappointed if I accepted her offer. Didn't know whether I could be worthy."[24]

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[22] Glenn, Daughters of the Shtetl, 9-10.
[23] Melissa R. Klapper, Jewish Girls Coming of Age in America, 1860-1920 (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 106-107.
[24] Interview transcript, Case 20N (m).

In the family's affective life, the tomboy/father bond largely excluded mother and son. Sylvie knew her parents were "not happily married" and that she "received more attention than Mother." Only after her father died did she come to appreciate her mother, who "had a finer disposition" and was "more unselfish." Her older brother was a disappointment, at least to his father, who treated his firstborn son with contempt—quite unusual in Jewish tradition. This, according to Sylvie, was one of her father's weakest points. It might have been that he placed on his son unreasonable expectations, which his boyish, gifted daughter effortlessly fulfilled. Though she believed her mother loved her and her brother equally, Sylvie said she "Had to shield brother from father." "Father ignored brother," she continued. Her brother "had to go to work in grammar school—I went to h.s. [high school] and given opportunity to go to college. Didn't realize father's unfairness to brother till after his death." Sylvie thought that being forced to leave school and other indignities had stricken her brother with psychological problems. His father's attitudes gave her brother "a terrible complex," she said, using Adlerian psychological language absorbed into the vernacular. "Brother a grown person but very frustrated." At forty-one, he was still a bachelor. If he ever resented the way she was favored, he made up with her; Sylvie said they were "very good friends," but they avoided discussing his "problems."[25]

In late 1936, when she spoke to Agnes Landis, Sylvie felt that the bond between her and her father disrupted her small family. She was now uncomfortable with her childhood status as his favorite. "Unusual relationship," she ventured ambiguously. She spoke freely about her idealization of him, but also noted his flaws: "Very fond of me—too much so. … [I]gnored my brother and liked me, too unbalanced." She began to notice

[25] Ibid.

the "friction" in her parents' marriage around age twelve (1914 or 1915). Sylvie and her father, she recalled, were "Not affectionate, but very firendly [sic]." This quality was distinctly lacking in her parents' relationship: "I would have liked them to be a lot more friendly … it bothered me."[26] In other words, even before the Great War a girl could long for her parents to have a companionate marriage, often characterized as a middle-class ideal only available to all Americans in the 1920s.[27] Sylvie's words are fragmentary, as are all the Landis interviewees', but she had misgivings about her father's mentorship. As Landis noted, "During childhood and adolescence she rather rejoiced in this favortism [sic], [and] later began to feel that it wasn't quite as it should be[.]"[28] But just as he was "Not very tolerant of others' foolishness," Sylvie described herself as "intolerant of insincerity and sham," adding, "I get into lots of trouble by being frank."[29] She was still her father's daughter.

In Sylvie's life, masculine gender mentorship reflected the incremental changes in parenting in the United States. Although she and her father were not great pals who stood on equal affective footing, they were close in a way that excluded the other members of the family, allowing them to find mutual affinity for a certain expression of masculinity. Certainly, the process of Americanization affected their expression of pleasure within family life, for their tomboy/father bond might not have been possible in Russia. Although it is impossible to say how their relationship might have changed had he lived, the educational and recreational opportunities Sylvie had as a second-generation daughter

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[26] Ibid.
[27] John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 241; Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism, 156-159.
[28] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, n.d. [1936?], Case 20N (m).
[29] Interview transcript, Case 20N (m).

might have allowed her to maintain her boyishness and her closeness with him as an adolescent.

Sylvie was among the Landis study's normal sample. Although she had sexual problems for which she sought help—Landis described her as "Essentially frigid"[30]—she had the ability to reflect on the shortcomings of her upbringing. Her father's masculine gender mentorship was a joy while he was alive, but it now seemed wrong because of the instability and resentments it caused. Within her reflections, the tomboy/father dyad threw off the balance of the family ecology. Sylvie did not blame herself as much as her father for this disruption. His death left the rest of the family free to reinvent itself; her ties with her mother and brother grew stronger.

Georgie

"Georgie" was a thirty-year-old unmarried psychiatric patient still in the erotic throes of masculine gender mentorship, even though her father had died four years earlier. She too took part in the Landis study, though she was part of the "abnormal" group, diagnosed "Psychopathic Personality without psychosis." She spoke in unvarnished words of a longing for a manly ideal, which she thought she found in her father. Her stories are ambiguous in their one-sidedness. Without commentary from other family members, it is difficult to know if her father was entirely comfortable with her demands for affection both as a child and as an adult. Yet her interview permits access to an internal world less mediated by others' opinions. Although a great deal of information can be gleaned from her Psychiatric Summary—an analysis of her condition prepared by the staff of the hospital to which she was confined—her own words are searing expressions of the logic

[30] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 20N (m).

of eroticism. Her story, resembling Sylvie's in some respects, shows the ideal of the democratic family in extremis, with mutual affection breaking down parent/child hierarchies in ways deemed pathological.

Born in 1906 in suburban New York, Georgie described her problem as a "father complex." (To her doctors, it was an unresolved Oedipal conflict.) "My father was always such an ideal to me that I never seem to want anything to do with other men," she explained.[31] In glowing, highly eroticized language, Georgie remembered his twinkling brown eyes. He had a "Magnetic personality," she said. He was "Always smiling, very loving person. Always proud to take me out and introduce me. Made friends easily. … Draws crowds everywhere." Like Sylvie, Georgie believed she held a preeminent place in her family because her father favored her over her mother and younger brother (who formed an alliance of their own). "Mother was jealous because Dad showered his attentions on me," Georgie said, keenly aware of tendencies within the family, even if she overstated them. "… Brother complained that Dad liked me better." But she also said her father "Idolized mother," who died when Georgie was sixteen (about 1922). "When she died his love settled on me," she said, either repeating the analysis of her doctors or advancing her own vernacular psychological interpretation of her family life. At some point, perhaps repeatedly, she "joked" with her father "and said, 'Let's go to Canada and get married.' He said I was crazy. We only hugged and kissed." They "Had no other relationship as they picture here."[32] Georgie knew her doctors saw her attachment as an expression of incestuous desires.

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[31] Psychiatric Summary, Case 54, n.d. [1936], folder 6, series III C, box 1, CL.
[32] Interview transcript, Case 54, February 25, 1936.

It is difficult to know whether her father saw himself in her, as Sylvie's father did, but Georgie's boyishness was undeniable. Neither she nor her doctors used the word tomboy to describe her, but she said that when she was a child, everyone said she "should have been a boy—so wild." She played with boys exclusively and was the "ring leader in all their games." She almost certainly felt the influence of feminist agitation for gender equality, however indirectly. She had wanted to be a boy since she was six, about 1912. If she were, she said, "Could do things I do and enjoy, [such] as hitch hiking, without being thought terrible. Many things I enjoy, only boys can do."[33] Her doctors noted, "Likes tinkering with machinery and mechanical things," and reported that she told them, "I should have been a boy. … If I were a man I suppose my behavior wouldn't seem so queer."[34] As an adult, she took pride in the masculine way she dressed and acted. "Like modern clothes—no frills," she said. "Like to dress mannish and tailored."[35]

It seems that Georgie's father offered masculine gender mentorship but could be uncomfortable with his daughter's behavior. Like Sylvie's father, he did not teach Georgie the boyish arts directly, but he seems to have enjoyed her gender contrarianism. Their relationship, even if Georgie distorted it, deemphasized parent/child hierarchies and, after her mother died, inverted traditional gender roles. Her father even emerges as a maternal figure: "Have my meals ready when I came home from work. I'd sit in his lap and we'd talk things over." This may be an instance in which the fragmented nature of the interview transcript elides follow-up questions; it also may be that Georgie was combining whatever memories came to mind. But perhaps father and daughter did engage in this queer affection. "Just before he died [c. 1933] he lost all his money," she

[33] Ibid.
[34] Psychiatric Summary, Case 54.
[35] Interview transcript, Case 54.

said. "I had to comfort him."[36] She spoke of a relationship fraught with confusion about generational differences, perhaps mostly on her end. As she told her doctors, "He used to tell me it was wrong that we should be so closely attached to each other."[37] This odd configuration did not characterize all tomboys' mentorship experiences. But it does demonstrate the significance that paternal affection could assume in the inner lives of tomboys.

It is difficult to say how her father saw their relationship, for her story is riddled with contradictions. "Completely unreliable in testimony," wrote her doctors, and it is easy to see why they said so.[38] Her father was present, for instance, when she was sent to a state mental hospital at age thirteen or fourteen (1919 or 1920). She gave more than one explanation for why she was sent away: "I complained of headaches. … I had wanderlust." The hospital she described was a nineteenth-century pile, complete with spire. Patients were treated roughly. She remembered "Restraining treatments … Knocked down and pulled around." "For a long time I resented my parents for sending me there," she said, recalling the way she cried when being taken away (and implicating her father in the decision). "People classed me as unfit to earn my own living, the mind of a 12 year old,"[39] she said—they considered her feeble-minded. She strained to prove them wrong: "Try to force myself out of it."[40]

Angered as she was by her extensive career as a psychiatric patient, Georgie resisted blaming her father. There were times when he had seemed possessive, especially as she entered her teens. He stepped in to break up a romantic relationship with a man in

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Psychiatric Summary, Case 54.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Interview transcript, Case 54.
[40] Ibid.

his fifties, whom she began to date when she was sixteen. "Dad said he'd disown me if I married him," she said. Because she developed further "neuroses" after this affair, "Father said later that perhaps his breaking us up was a mistake." It is possible that this too was a fib. Georgie said that one time her father had chased her down when she ran away. "Once I left and went to New York to work before he knew where I was," she remembered. "Father accused me of having a man in my room all night and father told me to get out." That blowup occurred when she was twenty-five, about 1931. These must have been tremendous rows, not the "spats" she described. She seems to have formed vague but lasting associations between her affection for her father and her sexuality. "[T]his last year I was engaged to a man I didn't love," she said. "Everyone told me to marry him. I broke it off … He was below my station in life, what father would approve of."[41]

Agnes Landis by and large took Georgie at her word but located the problem with her father. "She had marked difficulty in making friends and seemed never to be happy in the company of boyfriends," Landis wrote in her summary of the interview. "The father evidenced considerable jealousy on this score and was no doubt finding a great deal of emotional outlet through his companionship with his daughter."[42] Though critical of the relationship, Landis recognized the intensity of eroticism between them, as well as the significance of unsteady generational hierarchies within the family. Although she could not put this ambiguously pathological relationship into the context of changing relations between adults and children—she did not think historically, and she did not have today's interpretations at her disposal—she did hint that the residual effects of a father/tomboy

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 54.

mentoring relationship could constitute a great part of the daughter's inner life, even into adulthood.

Born fewer than four years apart, though in much different circumstances, Sylvie and Georgie partook of masculine gender mentorship and were affected emotionally by new parenting strategies as they came of age. But their stories also show that changing times could result in affective ruptures. The process of Americanization almost certainly had a significant impact on Sylvie's tomboyism and her relationship with her father. Family members were not all equal—consider the father's terrible relationship with his son—but his relationship with Sylvie implied new egalitarian possibilities in urban immigrant life. Georgie's story also reflects historical shifts within affective life. In its unsteady generational and gender hierarchies, her natal household was perhaps more "democratic" than Sylvie's. But the disruptions caused by tomboy/father eroticism were different only in degree. Georgie and her father apparently fought whenever she tried to act on sexual desires, but Sylvie, too, was kept in the dark about all things sexual, going on her first date only after her father's death. These stories illustrate emotional difficulties and tensions within democratic families, which do not appear often enough in histories of family life. Masculine gender mentorship clearly felt good, but it had variable consequences.

Mentorship and the Inward Turn

After World War I, expert opinion melded with lay thought on boyish girls' gender expression in vernacular psychology. By the 1930s, tomboyism (especially for older girls) had come to indicate a contrary inner essence rather than an understandable

tendency to rebel against behavioral proscriptions as a girl—that is, to do what boys did because it was fun. Interpersonal dynamics within the home figured importantly in searches for the causes and meanings of gender nonconformity, for within vernacular psychology the family retained its traditional functions (moral instruction and character development) and absorbed new imperatives (social and sexual adjustment). Father/daughter relationships usually were not considered as vexing as those between mothers and sons,[43] but it was still possible for fathers' masculine gender mentorship to go too far.

Georgie's history illustrated its flaws and its one overriding danger: the development of sexual maladjustment. In her case, the association between mentorship and sexual abnormality was not entirely settled. Her psychiatrists reported that she said, "I like women all right, but sexual relations with women is sickening." As they remarked, "Has never cared for boys. More interested in father."[44] Landis, too, was puzzled by her denials of desire for women. "The examiner cannot tell whether she has actually had any overt homosexual experience or not," she wrote, but she was "of the opinion that if thrown in such circumstances … [Georgie] probably would respond and find it pleasant." "She vehemently denies … that she has ever felt any strong emotional attachment to them. But at this point her manner is so changed that one cannot help but feel that she is trying to conceal something."[45] Georgie's relationship with her father, coupled with her preference for tailored clothes and "tinkering with machinery," made the connection

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[43] Close mother-son relationships were wholly pathologized by the 1940s. Philip Wylie's venomous attack on "Momism" in his 1942 invective Generation of Vipers was only the most influential articulation of the idea. Rebecca Jo Plant, Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 91-95.
[44] Psychiatric Summary, Case 54.
[45] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 54.

inevitable. The very existence of masculine women in the 1930s offered a disturbing possibility: tomboys might never relinquish their boyishness, instead growing up to be lesbians. Perhaps the most renowned representation of this possibility was in Radclyffe Hall's The Well of Loneliness (1928), which portrayed a masculine girl with close ties to her father. Because family life was considered the most important factor in molding children's personalities, what happened within it had direct implications for young tomboys' future as sexual beings.

Alfred Adler's writings on adjustment echoed throughout vernacular psychological thinking during the 1920s and 1930s. To recall, Adler believed in a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the community, but he was skeptical about the family's capacity to help the child adjust. As he wrote, "the family is not always permeated with the social ideal. Too often we find traditional ideas dominating there."[46] Though he attacked Freud's emphasis on sexuality, Adler sometimes noted the relationship between gender expression, sexual abnormality, and family relationships. In one case study of 1929, he traced a young woman's neurosis to her "indulgent" father's mentorship, which went awry when she was thirteen, after he remarried. "To this girl the thought of being a woman was identified with defeat," Adler wrote, referring to her father's withdrawal of affection. "Thus, if she behaved like a girl and considered the prospect of marriage, she could not endure it; it was easier to go on playing at being a boy by keeping up her athletic pursuits. On the other hand she felt that marriage was a natural and logical social demand."[47] As the next case study demonstrates, women in the 1930s could employ Adlerian concepts to describe their inner lives and express anxiety

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[46] Alfred Adler, "Education and Problem Children," in The Science of Living (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1969), 82.
[47] Alfred Adler, "Lack of Social Feeling, and Masculine Protest," in Problems of Neurosis, 45.

about their evident lack of adjustment. Sexuality and family life were bound up together, and it was entirely possible for women to trace concerns about adjustment to the erotic pleasures of masculine gender mentorship experienced in childhood.

Sophie

One of Agnes Landis's abnormal subjects, "Sophie" gave her interview in April 1936. Her mentor was not her father. Although he had some admirable qualities, Sophie was mostly afraid of him. (Once, when she was making mud pies, he slapped her dirty hands.) Born in 1902, she told Landis she "Never liked" him. He was "Always self-righteous, thrifty, stern, irritable," she said. "Very strict but awfully honest, great deal of integrity. Scolded a lot, bad temper." He was a Russian-Jewish immigrant who settled in the United States in the late nineteenth century, finding work in a sheet metal factory. His seriousness suffused family life. He "Couldn't understand children's play," said Sophie. "He himself worked since age 11 yrs." Nonetheless, she reported that she had "a pretty happy childhood." Her mother, a "Fine button-hole maker," might have been able to work at home instead of in a sweatshop. She "went out of her way to amuse us—play games with us when she could," said Sophie. Her parents' marriage was less than ideal: "I knew it wasn't all that it should be. Mother took her affections out on the children."[48]

It was Sophie's brother, not her father, who mentored her, and this intensely erotic relationship reverberated in her adult life. Her memories of the warmth of her family centered on her tightknit sibling relationships. She was the youngest of six, nine years separating her from her next-oldest sibling, a brother, with eighteen years between her and the family's firstborn, a sister. Her oldest brother, about fourteen when Sophie was

[48] Interview transcript, Case 3 (m), April 3, 1936, folder 1, series III E, box 2, CL.

born, assumed a maternal role in her life while also providing masculine gender mentorship of a sort. She traced one memory to the age of four: she was afraid of the dark, so he soothed her as she drifted off to sleep. "I just liked to be cuddled and held in my brother's arms," she said. As a young man of about eighteen at the time, he was at or near the age of majority in the United States and well past the age of manhood in Judaism. He might have been defying his parents' gendered expectations of him, taking a mother's place in Sophie's emotional life, coming to her aid in the dark when her parents ignored her cries. Apparently living at home, he might have been attending college, inspiring her to pursue academic excellence as her father could not or would not. In the interviews, Agnes Landis tried to reveal subjects' feelings of envy toward men by asking if they noticed their parents favoring the sons. But Sophie deflected the question. "It seemed that mother favored the boys, but I not jealous—favoured [sic] them myself," she said. "As most Jewish families, we're terribly close."[49]

Preferring her brothers came to mean openly emulating the one who showed her doting affection. Sophie told Landis that wanting to be just like him led her to wish she was a boy. These feelings strengthened as her brother grew closer to leaving the household. Sophie explained that she was not a tomboy from the first: "Played with boys so much after I was older. More feminine till 7 or 8 yrs. and after that a regular tomboy." Her brother would have been twenty-one or twenty-two, and apparently he had been dating one young woman for some time. Looking back, Sophie linked her childhood love for her brother to a period of erotic "hero-worship" of his girlfriend, which began when she was about six and he about twenty. She said he was her first "crush," but she reasoned that she "transferred" her desire "from brother to her." Sophie began to play

[49] Ibid.

exclusively with boys only at age ten or so, about 1912.[50] By then her brother had probably married and moved away; Sophie might have found in the company of boys similar pleasures to those she had experienced with her brother. Although she provided few specific memories to give form to the history of her feelings, it is clear that her brother did not look upon her as an annoyance, but rather protected her and allowed her to express her boyishness without judgment. He seems to have been proud of her and flattered by her adulation.

But as an adult, Sophie thought the relationship had not been entirely healthy, seeing her erotic response to her brother's mentoring as the root of her sexual adjustment problems. As she discussed her desire to be a boy, she confided, "Wanted to be like my brother. (You see I know all these things and they bother me.)"[51] She wanted to imitate him so much, she thought, she was willing to replicate his sexual desire for women, even though she was a girl. It might have been that a great part of Sophie's confusion came from the role of gender expression and sexuality in her life. Landis remarked that she was "quite masculine in appearance, with heavy growth of hair on her face," and was "also quite masculine in her manner of speech as well as her attitude."[52] Sophie's doctors added, "Patient tends toward masculinity in dress. She rejects all aspects of femininess [sic]."[53] As a masculine woman, she looked at her tomboy past as part of a narrative of pathology; her mixed-up family life (including her love for her brother) contributed to her poor adjustment. Adler might have recognized her situation as a case of masculine protest.

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[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, n.d. [1936], Case 3 (m).
[53] Psychiatric Summary, n.d. [1936], Case 3 (m).

"There is no question [that] the patient is definitely a homosexual type," Landis reported.[54] Sophie agreed. She said that in 1917, when she was fifteen, "I had a hunch I was a lesbian and didn't want to be." She was still boyish long after her girl peers acceded to adolescent femininity, and, noticing an intense crush on a junior high school teacher, she concluded that there was something amiss. Around the same time, she began going out with boys, probably to immerse herself in adolescent sexual culture, hoping for amelioration of her lesbian desires. She had her first date at age sixteen, but despite a sincere interest in her boyfriend, it did not lead to necking or petting—"all very platonic," she said. "I liked this boy very much." Although she "Always had a beau," it was never terribly serious: "Just kissing and holding hands[.]" Meanwhile, her teacher crush was still vivid, lasting till Sophie was seventeen (about 1919). Then another teacher came along. Sophie said she developed a love for her that burned "all my life." "Tried to break away, always went back," she continued. "Nothing overt except kisses and embraces[.] … Saw this tacher [sic] till I was sick [went to the hospital]. She thought I was a friend[.]"[55] It might have been that as a woman from a different generation, the teacher understood their affection differently—to the teacher, Sophie was a "friend," but the student knew she had "real desire for overt lesbianism" with her.

Sophie's adult reasoning combined various understandings of homosexuality that had been seeded and grown in the years since she was born, not just the ones that were most current. In the first decades of the twentieth century, many American scientists thought homosexuality was an expression of desire "contrary" to one's biological sex. Behind this was the acceptance of gender as purely dichotomous. There were women,

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[54] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 3 (m).
[55] Interview transcript, Case 3 (m).

there were men; they were opposites and sexually attracted to each other (under normal circumstances); lesbians were anatomically women but mentally male. This was the inversion model. Some sexologists referred to female and male inverts as members of a third sex. Sophie, knowing that she was masculine and had sexual desires for women, must have seen some of herself in the inversion model, which would have claimed a significant place in vernacular understandings of homosexuality in 1917, when she first had her hunch. But in 1936, when she gave her interview, American scientists usually no longer subscribed to inversion to explain same-sex attraction. Instead of seeing homosexuality as an expression of desire contrary to one's biological sex, they reasoned that it was the result of a person's position on a spectrum of gender. No one was completely feminine or masculine in every way—including sexual object choice—but a woman with a preponderance of masculinity was probably a lesbian.[56]

Sophie clearly knew something of these scientific theories, both of which centered on the relationship between masculinity in women and sexual abnormality. In the 1920s, she also had had the idea that lesbians were afraid of men, and she thought that a single experience with coital sex had the potential to transform her instantly into a normal, well-adjusted heterosexual. "Definitely set out to have heterosexual experience with boy at age 24," she explained, placing her purposeful engagement with heterosexuality in about 1926. The man was a year younger than she, "Sweet and lovable and irresponsible as hell." The experience was pleasurable: "He didn't force me and I wanted it as much as he. … I felt liberated." But the relationship ended in disappointment: "He married

[56] Jennifer Terry, An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 159-161.

someone else and I fell back on lesbianism."[57] As Sophie's words show, this explanation of homosexuality in women—a fear of men—was a part of vernacular psychology by the 1920s, as was magical thinking about the transformative properties of coitus. And as something to fall back on, lesbianism was not necessarily the opposite of attraction to men but its shadowy, queer relation: inferior and shameful, to be sure, but also the product of an affective circuit that linked them. Sophie articulated a theory of homosexuality that was far more malleable and porous—queer—than much contemporary sexological and psychological discourse. Her experimentation with behavioral solutions to her problems combined a variety of diagnoses, models, systems, and classifications. She was aware of explanations of lesbianism that focused on bad experiences with inept or violent male lovers, but she disregarded academic opinion that this applied mainly to "passive," feminine inverts.[58] In fact, sex with a boy made her feel "liberated." As she described the encounter, "Painful but so fond of this boy—enjoyed it more and more."[59] Indeed, it must have been a relief to know that she could be sexually desirable to some men, even if she did not always feel the same.

After that relationship, Sophie remained desperate to adjust, even though she turned again to lesbianism. "Feel if my affair with the boy had been successful I might have been O.K.," she said, still reminiscing about the gamble she took to prove herself normal, believing that underneath it all she could be cured. At age thirty-four, she traced her confusion about gender expression and sexuality to her family life, especially her erotic relationship with her brother. The men with whom she had had sex were boyish and effeminate—a queer replication of heterosexual gender norms, a pathological fact of

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[57] Interview transcript, Case 3 (m).
[58] Terry, An American Obsession, 63-65.
[59] Interview transcript, Case 3 (m).

which she was well aware. She was interested in "A very boyish type of man (my husband is this) …. Never liked a strong masculine man. My relations with boys were always maternal." Speaking of her husband, whom she married in about 1930, she admitted that she "married him just to make an adjustment[.]" "Didn't realize I was doing anything dangerous or being unfair by marrying," she said later. Yet her proclivities with women were just the opposite: she preferred someone "who'll baby me and take care of me"—someone with qualities like her brother. Older women of a "Strong physical type" appealed to her, although she did not much like the lesbians she had known. "Only had real desire for overt lesbianism with this one teacher," she said. "No overt experience."[60]

Abnormalities and maladjustments suffused Sophie's history—in her sexuality, gender expression, and family life. All were somehow interrelated, but Sophie was not sure how. She was hospitalized about three months after giving birth to a daughter, toward whom she felt "homicidal" urges. Her doctors first diagnosed her with psychoneurosis, "Obsessive compulsion type," before labeling her "Manic-depressive, depressed." In her eight months as a psychiatric patient, she underwent therapeutic treatments that exposed her to psychological language and logic, but she had heard of these concepts before. She knew of lesbianism as a teenager and recognized it as a phenomenon with roots in the psyche; at no time did she refer to her problems as congenital. Her interview hints that she considered her illness—which today might be diagnosed postpartum psychosis—an outgrowth of maladjustment. She wept during the interview, and began sobbing toward the end. As Landis reported, "she was eager to come to the discussion of lesbianism, and everything else she was questioned about, she would always say, 'But this does not really have anything to do with what is bothering

[60] Ibid.

me. You don't seem to touch on that.' She was then invited to speak freely … and a volcano of emotion came forth."[61] "How should I know I couldn't feel toward my child as I feel toward other children?" Sophie asked. "Why can I feel homicidal? Having insight and understand [sic], why can't I do something about it?"[62] Landis sympathized, writing that Sophie "has exceptional insight into herself. Can't understand why, having recognized all this, she can't do anything about it."[63]

Her psychiatrists were less charitable. It was they who most strongly related Sophie's family life to her sexual and psychological abnormalities; they were the ones who brought up incestuous desire. In the first place, her residual family ecologies prevented final resolution of her Oedipus complex. Noting her "extremely strong attachment to her brother" and her "Antagonism and hatred toward [her] father," they found a disposition toward a bad marital relationship. "In marriage has maintained her attachment to brother and mother, relying much more upon them than upon her husband," they wrote. Taken into adulthood, father-hatred and mother-love were evidence that heterosexual adjustment—that is, the likelihood that a woman would transfer erotic love for her father to sexual attraction to her husband—could not be achieved. "Has always been narcissistic and self-centered," they observed. "Has been very inconsiderate of husband, thinking only of herself. … Patient was very independent and not submissive, never asking advice." Today, their final analysis is simply incoherent: "Believed to be a case in which the Oedipus situation was solved, but remained in consciousness. Her pregnancy may therefore be considered as a fullfillment [sic] of … an incestuous wish with the development of a guilty feeling toward the child and the reaction to this to do

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[61] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 3 (m).
[62] Interview transcript, Case 3 (m).
[63] Ibid.

away with the child."[64] To attempt a translation: she knew she wanted to have sex with her older brother, acted out her desires by becoming pregnant by her effeminate husband, then wanted to murder her daughter to assuage her guilt about her brother.

In Freudian psychoanalysis, desire for the father was normative during the Oedipal stage of a girl's development. In Sophie, however, it had never really worked itself out. Authored by Agnes Landis's husband, Carney, Sex in Development argued that breaking primary erotic ties with the natal family was crucial to women's sexual health, for it allowed them to overcome sexual taboos inculcated during early childhood and progress toward pleasure within marriage. Speaking of the psychopathic patients included in the study, the report read: "Practically all of them had had difficulty in achieving an adult status of personal emotional independence. While they remained closely tied to their families, they showed great resentment of parental restrictions and were unable to work out the family ties in any usual way."[65] Sophie was not diagnosed psychopathic, but this logic applied to her situation. The masculine gender mentorship her brother offered remained palpable in the way she thought of herself as an adult. This inability to transfer her erotic feelings to her husband showed that her brother's mentorship had directed her toward gender nonconformity, sexual maladjustment, and psychological illness. Her lifelong lack of femininity perhaps showed most forcefully in her inability to assume a maternal role toward her daughter.

Memories of her brother's mentorship figured strongly in Sophie's understanding of herself. She was far from unusual. The demands of the inward turn, which included reckoning with one's gender and sexual expression, figured in the life histories of many

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[64] Psychiatric Summary, Case 3 (m).
[65] Landis et al., Sex in Development, 183.

tomboys in the first decades of the twentieth century. As they tried to come to a deeper understanding of what it meant to have an erotic relationship with fathers and sometimes brothers, tomboys often reasoned that their positions in their families enabled them to learn to be their boyish selves. In very few cases did they think their tomboyism was explicable as a congenital state—something they were born with, something that had nothing to do with their family ecologies. Perhaps this changed in time. In the 1920s and 1930s, however, many tomboy women subscribed to vernacular psychological reasoning that family life was primarily responsible for the formation of adults' gender and sexual expression. As Adler believed, maladjustment within the household was likely to produce neurotic children. Freudian logic was present too, as with Sophie's hypothesis that erotic desires could be transferred from one object to another. Of course, she and Georgie were psychiatric patients who had experience with various therapeutic regimes. But Sylvie, too, employed psychological language, even though she was the daughter of poor, immigrant parents and counted among the study's normal group. Her story, as well as Georgie's and Sophie's, demonstrate the affective power of masculine gender mentorship, both in its possibilities and its pitfalls.

Family Ecologies in Vernacular Psychology and Tomboy Lore

As the cases of Sylvie, Georgie, and Sophie imply, tomboys' affective separation from masculine gender mentors (especially fathers) at adolescence was crucial to their gender normality and sexual adjustment, at least as it was articulated in American vernacular psychology in the mid-1930s. Sylvie might have had the most fortunate outcome of these three cases because her father died when she was sixteen, allowing her greater intimacy

with her mother and older brother. Though she was poorly adjusted sexually and remained somewhat masculine, there was hope for her because of her father's absence. Georgie's father was dead too, but he continued to animate her erotic life, perhaps because they had become excessively close after her mother's death. It was clear to her and to those who observed her that this relationship lay at the root of her problems, for it (and not Georgie's boyish waywardness) took up most of the time she spent talking to Landis. Sophie thought her admiration of her brother, fourteen years her senior, had actually caused her tomboyishness and her lesbian desires for older women. All three women interpreted masculine gender mentorship as both a joy and a problem. The 1930s, therefore, were a time of transition in vernacular psychology and the ways tomboy women employed it to analyze their childhoods. No matter how important fathers or older brothers had been, adolescent tomboys had to separate themselves from their influence or risk abnormal sexual development and gender expression.

This thinking had begun to shift in the 1920s toward a Freudian preoccupation with Oedipal eroticism between adolescent girls and their fathers, but it did not blossom fully in vernacular psychology until after World War II. Fathers were to become models for the husbands their daughters would eventually take. They ideally influenced their daughters' femininity (including sexual passivity), not their boyishness or masculinity. Oedipal eroticism set the course for girls' sexual adjustment directly and permanently. Broadway plays, teen magazines, advice literature, and other forms of postwar mass culture portrayed father/daughter Oedipal relationships positively. Fictional fathers

figured strongly in girls' normal sexual adjustment, helping them pick out their first pair of high heels and evaluating the boys who came calling.[66]

The eroticism of the postwar Oedipal ideal differed from early twentieth-century masculine gender mentorship in that it occurred in adolescence, not childhood; it was also to be offered as a prototype for normal sexual development, not an indulgent toleration and winking encouragement of tomboys' gender-role defiance. Postwar psychologists assumed that normal girls were closer to their mothers in childhood, which made a "preference" for the father somewhat quizzical, even deviant. Tomboyism continued to exist, of course; most advice givers assured parents that it was a completely normal stage in a girl's development. But close childhood relationships with fathers were cultural problems. Masculine gender mentorship never disappeared from tomboy lives, but it was not always an ideal relationship, at least in vernacular psychological reasoning: instead of directing tomboys' heterosexual adjustment, it opened doors to the erotic, nonsexual pleasures of being a boy. Masculine gender mentorship, therefore, ignored normal feminine sexual development to the detriment of adolescent tomboys' psychological health.

It is just possible that tomboy lore absorbed this association between sexual abnormality and boyish girls' childhood idealization of their fathers, gradually transforming it into a logical explanation of lesbianism. Dispensing with earlier suppositions that homosexuality was congenital, postwar psychoanalysis held that sexual abnormalities resulted from pathological family life. For both lesbians and gay men,

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[66] Devlin, Relative Intimacy.

defective mothering was largely at fault.[67] But the location of homosexual development within the home provided opportunities for queer women and men to examine their childhoods and their relationships to their parents. Although this could often be accompanied by anguish and anger at mothers and fathers, it did allow for the repetition and elaboration of a lore about abnormal sexual expression. For women (especially butch lesbians), masculine gender mentorship and tomboy childhoods seemingly came to inform who they thought they were as adults.

In 1996, the anthropologist Kath Weston found these stories mundane, even trite: "Ho-hum. Another lesbian childhood chronicle of softball games. Or schoolyard scraps. Or running around the neighborhood playing gang-bangers. Or righting wrongs as el Zorro. Tomboy stories are among the most predictable, repetitive, even boring parts of life histories collected from late-twentieth-century women who grew up to call themselves some variant of 'gay.'" Yet Weston also noted the place of tomboy lore in lesbian identity: "the very repetitiveness of these accounts can tell you a lot about the place where gender meets sexuality, age, nation, race, and class."[68] Fathers could be important in these stories. One lesbian construction worker who spoke with Weston "believed she could have uncovered her 'true' lesbian identity much earlier in life, if only she had paid attention to (gendered) clues from her past. … Her childhood stories create continuity: the girl raised as her 'father's son' grows up to do the father's job."[69]

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[67] Terry, An American Obsession, 290-296 and chap. 9; Robert Reynolds, "The Inner and Outer World of Queer Life," in Joy Damousi and Robert Reynolds, eds., History on the Couch: Essays in History and Psychoanalysis (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 47-59.
[68] Kath Weston, Render Me, Gender Me: Lesbians Talk Sex, Class, Color, Nation, Studmuffins… (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 60.
[69] Ibid., 60-61.

Fathers were not always affectionate mentors, but tales of their nurturing presence are apparently still common enough in lesbian life histories. Ironically, it may be that this aspect of tomboy lore grew in part from a pathologizing psychological discourse at midcentury.

Chapter 2 | Pals

"The greatest changes that I think could take place in the on coming years is for youth to have more in common with one another," wrote a fifteen-year-old tomboy in a composition titled "Our Troubles."

> For girls and boys to be pals and not so much silly ness about sweethearts. The kind of a boy that I admire is one who has sense and wants to be a pal and talk about things impersonally.
>
> We, the girls of today, ought to get away from the sextual impulses and have boy friends we can go with and have a good clean time. …[1]

It was 1926 or 1927, and the author was confined to a progressive institution for delinquent girls in California for selling "dope" (which turned out to be Castoria, a commercial children's laxative).[2] Her plaint expressed a longing for relationships with boys that partook of youthful similarities, not the "sextual impulses" that were supposed to divide young women and men around her age. The girls and boys she knew had no "sense": they had been overtaken by feelings that to her were inexplicable. She saw

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[1] Author's name withheld, "Our Troubles," n.d., box 15, folder 165, Miriam Van Waters Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Cambridge, MA (hereafter MVW). Misspellings, grammatical errors, and emphasis in original.

[2] Staff report, December 8, 1926, folder 161, box 14, MVW, 1.

sexuality as an advancing front—in her life, in the social life of her age cohort, and historically: she began by invoking "the on coming years"; she issued her call to "the girls of today." Her hope, which she probably knew was in vain, was that the situation could be reversed.

She wanted to talk "impersonally": not stoically, in a detached or affectively deficient manner, but in a way characteristic of platonic friendship between girls and boys—of what this chapter refers to as palhood. Tomboys overwhelmingly preferred this sort of erotic relationship with boys, including at the age when they became teenagers and were supposed to start dating. Born in 1915, the Landis interviewee "Vy" recalled her first boyfriend, whom she met at dancing school when she was ten and he twelve. "I thought it was nice to have a fellow that you like a lot," she said. "Went with him for 10 years." But their pleasures did not lead to sexual touching. "No hugging and kissing," she said. "Not even in skating would he hold my hands, we were good pals." Vy shared the delinquent girl's wish for "impersonal" conversation: "Nice girls … don't talk about their dates all the time. Talk about something besides boys. You might like them but let it go at that."[3] Pals, in a sense, were comrades, friends whose relationship came shaded with the masculine: tight and trusting while supposedly aloof from the "sextual impulses" that so distressed the delinquent girl and annoyed Vy. Being a pal was a comfortable way to relate to boys.

But even though palhood was platonic—that is, devoid of overt sexual expression—it was highly eroticized during the early twentieth century. Both girls and boys could have pals and be pals, but the platonic eroticism that constituted palhood was often a way boys or men could relate to male companions. It was not necessarily

[3] Interview transcript, Case 1, December 13, 1934, box 1, series III C, folder 1, CL.

homoerotic, if we understand homoeroticism as implying homosexual desire. Instead, palhood signaled a masculine sort of loyalty to other boys or men, in venues that included neighborhoods, worksites, schools, sports teams, scout troops, and military units. The latter played a significant role in the construction of male friendship during and after the Great War. American and British soldiers wrote movingly of pals the way veterans of more recent conflicts have spoken of buddies. At the outbreak of war, large groups of friends from the same towns in Britain and Ireland enlisted en masse and were organized into Pals Battalions. (The practice came to an end after 1916, when it became clear that the slaughter of a single Pals Battalion would devastate an entire community and undermine local morale.) The homoerotic intimacy of the trenches suffused war poetry.[4] Lieutenant Raymond Heywood's Roses, Pearls, and Tears (1918) included the verse "Pals o' Mine": "Morning came— / Out of its golden mist I heard / Laughter and the echoed tramp / Of a thousand laughing lads. / … / They passed along—a khaki throng / With a smile and a jest, and I heard the song / Of those dear laughing lads. …"[5] And as the American Patrick Terrance McCoy explained in a 1918 memoir,

> If you've never been in places where all was discomfort, where death was beckoning you always, where every minute was likely to be your last, where your life might depend upon the instant and unselfish action and perhaps sacrifice of your pal, where you were always watching him and he was always watching you, ready and willing to die if need be that the other might live, then you don't quite understand what I mean by the term "pal."[6]

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[4] See Santanu Das, Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[5] Raymond Heywood, "Pals o' Mine," in Roses, Pearls, and Tears (London: Erskine MacDonald Ltd., 1918), 12.
[6] Patrick Terrance McCoy, Kiltie McCoy: An American Boy with an Irish Name Fighting in France as a Scotch Soldier (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1918), 204.

This was the form of friendship in which American tomboys sought to find space for themselves: they wanted access to the kind of palhood characterized by masculine platonic eroticism, and often they wanted to sustain it after they crossed the threshold of puberty. If palhood was the way boy comrades related to each other, tomboys wished to devote part of their boyishness to forming similar bonds. Their gender expression therefore included affective relationships with others. But the growing cultural emphasis on youthful introspection and the lures of adolescent sexual culture strained efforts to maintaining the platonic eroticism of palhood. Both factors strongly urged tomboys to come to see themselves as beings with heterosexual (and implicitly feminine) desires for boys and as objects of a male gaze. In other words, they were simultaneously to become sexual subjects and sex objects, shifting their relationship with boys from the platonic eroticism of beings with similar gender expression to a sexualized configuration of opposites. Tomboys' responses to these pressures varied. There were those who dealt with this realignment without much difficulty. These tended to be girls who were interested in pleasurable sexual play quite early, often before puberty. But other tomboys had trouble. Many felt little or no desire for boys but loved egalitarian pal play; it was hard to sustain palhood once girl and boy peers moved in other social directions. Other tomboys did feel heterosexual desire but were loath to surrender the erotic content of their friendships with boys—they wanted to reconcile the two, to live in both modes at once. Independently, many boyish girls arrived at Vy's compromise: find a boy who also takes more pleasure in platonic palhood than heterosexual touching, then date him for as long as possible.

The inward turn and adolescent sexual culture elicited and reinforced these feelings. But two additional influences shaped tomboys' young lives and desires for palhood: movements for gender equality and formal attempts to institutionalize homoeroticism in "boy work." Early twentieth-century tomboys constituted pal relationships at a time when adult feminists and bohemians were attempting to challenge distinctions between sexes through nonsexual friendship. At the same time, men sought to direct working-class boys' propensity to bond with each other in "gangs" to productive uses, such as in clubs and Scout troops. These contextual elements shaped tomboy eroticism, contributing first to the joy of childhood comradeship, then the pain and confusion of adolescence. As sexual identity categories (heterosexual, homosexual, invert, pervert, and so on) emerged in vernacular psychological reasoning, tomboys' aspiration to participate in implicitly masculine palhood could be pathological, especially at puberty. Each of the next sections explores the impact of these historical dynamics—the inward turn, adolescent sexual culture, feminism and bohemianism, and the boy problem—on life histories of boyish girls, collectively arguing for the centrality of platonic eroticism in tomboys' affective lives with boy pals.

Good Pals and Flappers

What was taken to be gender equality in 1930 looked very different from what prewar radicals had imagined. Friendship between young women and men shifted from an imperfectly realized utopian vision to an expectation of nonchalant banter and fun; flirtation likely drew on, then slowly supplanted, platonic eroticism. Tomboys who came of age during the early twentieth century grew up as these changes occurred, often

registering them quite consciously. The future as imagined in the 1900s and 1910s—the dream of affective female/male equality—conflicted with what unfolded. As the first modern tomboys reached adolescence, they found that palhood was untenable, even though it seemed to fulfill recent social prophecy to the letter. Where their experience differed from nineteenth-century girls' lay in the expectation not that they would marry but that they would participate in the new regime of dating and implicitly sexualized heterosocial activity. Moreover, many of them wanted to very badly.

Adults were aware of this shift too. The Harper's factotum writer Duncan Aikman drew a contrast between two short generations of young women, illustrating how many youth rejected visions of platonic eroticism between girls and boys. Accustomed to writing pithily about foreign policy and small-town American life, Aikman seems to have lacked the words New Woman and feminism when he took up pen in 1926 to describe the waning influence of the kind of creature he called the "good pal." But in his essay "Amazons of Freedom," these were undoubtedly his subjects:

> The young virgin [of the early twentieth century] … prided herself on sharing in all male sports that were physiologically attainable, slapped us [men] on the back and "rough-housed" with us in an ostentatiously sexless camaraderie, talked pertly of her equal powers and the equal rights coming to her, and almost wept that she could not be a man and play football and Rooseveltian politics.[7]

Simultaneously, the "good pal" sought to "reform" unwilling cads, to make them into "Rotarians" and believers in "prohibition-for-efficiency's sake." "The 'good pal,'" Aikman wrote, "had spent a good deal of effort warping her feminine soul to the technic of sexless camaraderie, and she intended to make us pay for it." But the good pal's fortunes were eclipsed by "her younger sister," the flapper. Because the good pal, according to Aikman, did finally achieve equality, the flapper was able to grow up

[7] Duncan Aikman, "Amazons of Freedom," Harper's Magazine, June 1926, 27.

"without an inferiority sense based on sex. … The flapper felt no need either to emphasize her sex with an elaborate ritual of delicacy [as Victorian prudes had done] or to hide it in a misleading ritual of man-to-man comradeship."[8]

Though overdrawn, Aikman's characterization of recent social history was not entirely inaccurate. Some "advanced" women and men of the 1900s and 1910s did, in fact, speak excitedly of a future in which gender distinctions would have withered. In 1913, the modernist intellectual Randolph Bourne wrote a friend that women and men habitués of a Greenwich Village salon "talk much about the 'Human Sex,' which they claim to have invented, and which is simply a generic name for those whose masculine brutalities and egotisms and feminine pettiness and stupidities have been purged away so that there is left stuff for a genuine comradeship and healthy frank regard and understanding."[9] The inward turn—the cultural shift from upstanding character to healthy personality—animated these discussions.[10] As Christine Stansell notes, the utopian ideal of the human sex enabled feminists, both women and men, to elaborate the possibilities of gender and sexual liberation: "The preoccupation with the self linked feminism to an incipient twentieth-century cult of personality: ideas of ever-expanding capabilities replaced the Victorian construct of a stable character. … In the sun of modernity, blooming fields of individual personalities would bear a harvest of enhanced humanity[.]"[11] Reflecting the turn to inner life in its expression of utopian gender

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[8] Ibid., 27, 28.
[9] Quoted in Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism, 35; also quoted in Christine Stansell, American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 234.
[10] For a foundational discussion of the character-to-personality transformation, see Warren I. Susman, "'Personality' and the Making of Twentieth-Century Culture," in Culture as History, 271-285.
[11] Stansell, American Moderns, 234.

equality, the human sex was a vision, but it also helped lay the groundwork for middle-class young people to experiment with sexuality. Aikman explained this logic. His rhetorical blows against "sexless camaraderie" were powered by the same thinking that alienated many tomboys from adolescent sexual culture. Adlerian psychological language underpins his approval of the flapper's lighthearted flouting of sexual reserve: "She … explain[s] that old-fashioned dignity was just a form of inferiority complex, anyway—a girl's confession that she wasn't up to facing life on its own terms."[12]

It might seem that attention-grabbing calls for free love from such notorious figures as Emma Goldman had a greater impact on this cultural transformation than bohemian notions of platonic friendship did. But friendship based in equality did advance such an agenda, however unwittingly. Randolph Bourne's most abiding erotic relationship was a platonic friendship with Alyse Gregory, a suffragist and feminist.[13] Yet voices advocating nonsexual friendship grew fewer, especially after the watershed of war, possibly because mass culture and its reflections in psychological thinking seemed to proclaim that sexuality and erotic feeling were so similar as to be indistinguishable. Middle-class youth culture of the 1920s, riveted to the hijinks of the flapper (did her male equivalent even exist?), shifted notions of gender equality away from politics to sexuality, bending the inward turn in a different direction. This had implications for girls, especially tomboys who prized the nonsexual intimacy of palhood.

Some radicals continued to idealize friendship into the 1920s, but it was increasingly difficult to maintain that erotic attraction was separable from sexual desire. In 1924, Floyd Dell, former editor of the innovative socialist journal The Masses, struck

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[12] Aikman, "Amazons of Freedom," 31.
[13] Stansell, American Moderns, 267-268.

an equivocal position in an essay titled "Can Men and Women Be Friends?" His answer was an ambivalent yes, but for the time being the site of different-sex friendship had to be marriage. This was because ardent friendship was a kind of intimacy charged with barely subsumed sexual desire, which could only express itself through certain conventional behaviors. "[T]he universal rite of friendship is talk," Dell argued. "Talk … would seem to be well within the reach of all. Yet it isn't. For the talk of friendship requires privacy … and it requires time. … [T]he desire for privacy and uncounted hours of time together is, when considered from that point of view, scandalous in its implications[.]" It made sense for dear friends to get married because "friendship between the sexes is usually spiced with some degree of sexual attraction. … It is worth while to wonder if a great deal of 'romance' is not, after all, friendship mistaking itself for something else; or rather, finding its only opportunity for expression in that mistake. Among civilized people, after the romance has ended, the friendship remains." But wholly mistaking friendship for love, as women and men often did, was "rather a wasteful proceeding." Dell sought a future in which the passions of friendship and sexual attraction could be distinguished, but in the end it would require reconceiving the institution of marriage (and the consequent thrill of extramarital affairs).[14]

Both Aikman and Dell wrote about different-sex friendship, and both considered the place of eroticism within it. For Dell more than Aikman, however, the eroticism of friendship shaded too closely into sexual attraction; this ambiguity might wreak destruction on individual relationships, at least in the present. Although both writers considered conversation a significant "rite" of friendship, Aikman also wrote bemusedly

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[14] Floyd Dell, "Can Men and Women Be Friends?" in Freda Kirchwey, ed., Our Changing Morality: A Symposium (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1925), 181-193, quotations from 187-188, 189-190, 190.

of play. He located talk and masculine sports in the "good pal" and carefree heterosexual flirtation in the flapper, cleaving apart different sorts of affective relations and their links to gender expression. Palhood—"man-to-man comradeship," "sexless camaraderie"—was for boyish girls and mannish women. In a way, palhood resembled repression: if it was certain that the good pal "wasn't up to facing life on its own terms," as Aikman's flapper argued, it must also be the case that sexuality was truth, whether the good pal admitted it or not.

Playing with boys as equals usually did not translate into an explicit awareness that adult women had less power than men and a determination to do something about it. Nonetheless, the pain and confusion tomboys often experienced at adolescence came from confronting the meanings of differences between the sexes. Naturally, there were tomboys who made excellent flappers. If bobbed hair was desirable, well, tomboys had been defiantly shearing off their curls for years. But boyishness became confounding when an adolescent girl related strongly to boys' culture instead of inhabiting the androgyny of flapperdom.[15] In the end, some adolescent tomboys grew frustrated that although they longed to participate in youth culture, boys could not see them as anything but pals. At other times, tomboys found themselves excluded from youth culture. And some rejected it entirely.

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[15] Judith Halberstam distinguishes androgyny from masculinity: "The androgyne represents some version of gender mixing, but this rarely adds up to total ambiguity; when a woman is mistaken consistently for a man, … what marks her gender presentation is not androgyny but masculinity." Judith Halberstam, Female Masculinity (Duke University Press, 1998), 57. The female androgyne is supposed to be "ambiguous" but rarely is because others can tell her gender. The problem with this argument is that non-androgynous self-described tomboys were usually recognizable as girls, no matter how much they resembled boys. It is difficult to argue that their tomboyism was somehow deficient because they were not sufficiently "masculine" enough to confuse others.

Because the Landis questionnaire did not include detailed questions about friendships with boys, subjects had to volunteer memories of individual pals themselves. This they seldom did, which might indicate that pals played a relatively small role in their tomboy childhoods. But this conclusion should not be granted. Rather than a close friendship with a single boy stretching several years, palhood seems to have been engagement with a tight gang of boy friends—loyalty to the group. In contrast, friendship with girl "chums" (discussed in Chapter 3) often consisted of a girl dyad's erotic inseparability. Naturally, as adolescence came to demand a realignment toward heterosexual romance in the 1920s—sometimes with an individual boy, sometimes with a series of dates with multiple young men—tomboys had to sort through their feelings about palhood and its relationship to a murky future as women. As the following case demonstrates, this could entail a crisis. Sincere desires for popularity conflicted with the enjoyment of palhood's masculine affective pleasures.

Flo

"Flo" did not describe her pals in detail; she simply told Agnes Landis that as a girl she "played right with boys" and therefore had "no need" to harbor a wish to be a boy when she was little.[16] But though her interview lacks recollections of individual boys, she provided extensive information about palhood and platonic eroticism. Like many tomboys, she felt excluded from adolescent sexual culture. For much of her youth, she wanted what other girls had, but had no idea how to get it.

Born in New York City in 1913, Flo was at once a good girl and a tomboy, complying with her parents' minimal restrictions but pushing their permissiveness

[16] Interview transcript, Case 3N (m), April 25, 1936, folder 1, series III B, box 1, CL.

whenever she could. At age twenty-two, she recalled growing up "in an open district in the Bronx." "Had to do lessons before I could play," she continued. "Very obedient child. Went to bed earlier than other children." Her mother and father were native-born, middle-class Orthodox Jews who only sometimes punished her for her escapades. "Could go ahead because I was usually out of sight," she explained; perhaps her mother was too busy caring for Flo's younger siblings to keep a close watch. But Flo's transgressions occasionally called for stronger measures than mere reprimands, signaling that she was not a feminine angel. "Corporal punishment usually [by] father," she said. "Mother was likely to discipline me for little things. Greatest punishment if mother would tell father what I did. Mother get insulted and not speak."[17]

But as Flo encountered adolescent sexual culture along with her peers, she noticed there was something different about her. She was one of several women in the Landis study to use the word popularity to refer to a great wish—not simply the ability to fulfill libidinous desire but the acquisition of a knowing ease with boys that was directly related to sex appeal. The historian Elizabeth Clement, who has also analyzed the Landis interviews, captures the essence of this conflict: many Landis subjects "emphasize[d] that their interest [in dating] centered on participation in the system itself, and not on the attentions of, or desires for, any particular young man."[18] As a tomboy, Flo mostly did what boys did. She did not recall any childhood reckoning of the meaning of anatomical differences between herself and her pals, although she knew what they were: "Knew what boys' body looked like. More interested in little girls' bodies." Although she "loved dolls," Flo said she was "More envious of girls" than boys "for their femininity. I such a

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Clement, Love for Sale, 219.

tomboy. … [There was] one girl I envied—very developed at grade school age. Popular with boys—oversexed, slow mentally." She drew a telling contrast between the popular girl and herself: "Felt superior to her mentally but envied her sexually."[19] Intelligence and sex appeal could not coexist in the body of one girl, nor could tomboy/boy palhood necessarily transfer seamlessly into the regime of dating.

Flo was not the first to realize this. In 1921, when Flo was eight, the conservative journalist Ruth Abeling addressed modern women, connecting palhood to feminism and stressing that they were ingredients for a recipe of unmarriageabity.

> You [the modern woman] believed in single standards to the very last. You didn't want to bother with the fussy feminine things. You were meeting him on his own ground. You were a pal. … And you thought he liked you for it, so each day you tried to be a little more smart [pert, sassy], a little more swagger, a little more clever. And the days kept slipping uneventfully by until suddenly he met that little girl chum of yours who reveled in fanciful frills, and was such a girly girl and they ran away the next day and were married. … No man wants … a betrousered pal for a wife. He wants an old-fashioned girl, even one who is willing to live up to the highest side of a double standard.[20]

The sociologists Robert and Helen Merrell Lynd also described the system of popularity as it was constituted in Muncie, Indiana, in the 1920s. As a high school girl told them, "The chief thing is if the boys like you and you can get them for the dances."[21] It was not, then, simply a matter of being a friend, it was the second part of this student's equation: a girl had to be enticing enough to lure boys into dating rituals. As Beth Bailey has pointed out, young women "had to <u>be seen</u> with popular men in the 'right' places, indignantly

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[19] Interview transcript, Case 3N (m).
[20] Ruth Agnes Abeling, "Why She Lost Him," quoted in <u>The Herald of Gospel Liberty</u> 113 (October 20, 1921), 1000.
[21] Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, <u>Middletown: A Study in American Culture</u> (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1956), 216.

turn down requests for dates made at the 'last minute' (which could be weeks in advance), and cultivate the impression that they were greatly in demand."[22] Part of the point of popularity was a girls' teasing insistence on her unavailability, not her platonic, everyday camaraderie with boys.

Flo spoke freely to Agnes Landis of her preoccupation with being popular and her simultaneous fear of sex with men. Evidently, she struggled to reconcile the two precisely because popularity was strongly associated with sexuality, about which she was apprehensive. She revealed purposeful actions she took to achieve her goals: like Sophie (see Chapter 1), Flo attempted to change her relationships with boys and engaged in sexual activity, determined to come to enjoy it. She had her first date in 1929, the summer she was fifteen. "At camp, I didn't understand necking at all," she said, evoking campfires abuzz with teenage girls' confidences about their sexual experiences. "First experience [with necking], I stopped everything," she continued. "Allowed him to kiss my shoulder—nothing else—a bit frightened." But she was "Quite excited to have a date. Again went with him. Made up my mind to be more amenable. We lay on our backs and looked at stars." It is not clear whether this second date included more necking or the simple intimacy of quiet stargazing. Sometimes, of course, boys do sense girls' discomfort and become more reserved on the second date. On the other hand, Flo's resolve to be "more amenable" and her feelings at summer's end—"After I got back to school I began romancing about him"—indicate that the couple probably did enjoy further kisses. Perhaps Flo sometimes kissed him first. Memories of this first boyfriend lingered: "Great sensation satisfied me completely."[23]

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[22] Bailey, From Front Porch to Back Seat, 26.
[23] Interview transcript, Case 3N (m).

But as girls often find, camp is a world apart. Kathryn Kent has described how camp can "become a counterpublic space for the inculcation and nurturance of (sometimes) antinationalist, antibourgeois, and antiheterosexist identities and practices."[24] Even if Flo and her first boyfriend went to a coed camp that imparted specific gender roles, religious values, and a political ideology—Jewish camps were often socialist or Zionist—it seems that camp was indeed a "counterpublic space," a marked break from what she knew at school, a place where the everyday, unwritten rules of adolescent life were suspended. She could be a tomboy freely and perhaps achieve high social status among other girls for her boyish skills. In this topsy-turvy context, it is not surprising that she could be popular and a boy would find her attractive.

It was quite different during the school year. The experience of sexual gratification was cognitively incompatible with Flo's unease with dating. She was no stranger to genital pleasure, having started masturbating when she was ten as she thought of "erotic stories." These included The Sheik (1919), which she read when she was eleven or twelve, about 1925. Edith Hull's bestseller, later adapted for the screen heartthrob Rudolph Valentino, pulsed with torrid sexual passion depicted through rape scenes: "She writhed in his arms as he crushed her to him in a sudden access of possessive passion. His head bent slowly down to her, his eyes burned deeper, and, held immovable, she endured the first kiss she had ever received. And the touch of his scorching lips, the clasp of his arms, the close union with his warm, strong body robbed

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[24] Kathryn R. Kent, "'No Trespassing': Girl Scout Camp and the Limits of the Counterpublic Sphere," in Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, eds., Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 175.

her of all strength, of all power of resistance."[25] Flo told Agnes Landis she had rape fantasies for years but assured her she had outgrown them. Being aroused by thoughts of forced submission does not indicate that Flo was unhealthy; arguably, she gained a sense of sexual subjectivity through reading stories like The Sheik: she learned what aroused her.

Still, she struggled to fit in. Her mother even hauled her off to the doctor to get her to stop masturbating at age thirteen and told her she "couldn't have children[.]" This compounded Flo's sense that she was somehow queer. "Left me with a feeling that I was different from other girls," she said. "Hated myself for it always. But felt this need simply had to be satisfied." Yet she was "not aware of any connection" between these pleasures and the social context in which they were properly to be expressed (dating and petting), or even their relationship to reproductive sexuality. She explained her childhood logic: "Thought they [babies] originated from a kiss. Thought God deposited a seed there, not father." A high school hygiene course in about 1929 challenged this reasoning but ultimately dispelled no confusion. "Learned about sperm and egg," she said. "Knew nothing of sexual intercourse—knew vaguely something of touching—all vague." No wonder she was uncomfortable with being caressed and kissed: not only did intimacy required renouncing palhood, Flow was also unsure of the accuracy of what she knew. It was not until she was eighteen (about 1932) that she learned about the role of intercourse in reproduction from her future husband: "he astonished at my ignorance."[26]

Flo graduated from college at the age of twenty, which makes it likely that she finished high school at sixteen. But throughout her school years, she had trouble coming

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[25] E. M. Hull, The Sheik (1921), Project Gutenberg EBook 7031, http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/7031/pg7031.html, accessed March 30, 2012.
[26] Interview transcript, Case 3N (m).

to terms with the way sexuality and gender expression related to the regime of popularity. Starting in about 1928, her mother was anxious about Flo's gender expression: she was not feminine enough to fit into adolescent sexual culture. "Mother wanted me to do things I disliked: complexion, posture, boy friends," Flo remembered. These pressures coincided with a dawning wish to be a boy, which lasted a few years: "In adolescence felt girls restrictions more. Once I went out with boys, all changed." She first "went out formally" (probably meaning in a setting outside of camp) when she was seventeen, in 1930 or 1931, after she had enrolled in college. She first learned that human beings can have sex for pleasure at the same age, "Through petting experiences." This might have been an encounter with the fellow she went out with "formally." "Boy asked for more but I didn't know quite what he wanted," she remembered. Although she had started dating, it did not ease her feeling of estrangement, of doubt that she was a desirable young woman, that her gender expression did not somehow mark her off. Flo spoke of a "Panic period" when she was eighteen (about 1932): "would I have men friends or not. Fear of not being the popular girl." Although she told Agnes Landis she had dated about twenty boys, she was still uncomfortable being sexual, which she thought lowered her estimation among the men she knew: "Thought a popular girl always permitted liberties."[27]

Some adults recognized such conflicts among tomboys but often misinterpreted them. Because many American psychologists and coeducators believed so strongly that free socializing among girls and boys would provide them with the necessary environment for heterosexual development, they tended to overlook the confusion of boyish girls, write it off as growing pains, or blame a girl's parents for her lack of adjustment. In 1929 the feminist psychologist Leta Hollingworth emphasized,

[27] Ibid.

"Heterosexuality can be established in no other way than by social contact and actual acquaintanceship with those of the opposite sex."[28] Hollingworth was a member of Greenwich Village's modernist Heterodoxy circle of women professionals, thinkers, artists, and activists; her beliefs on childrearing centered on preparing girls and boys for a liberated future, not traditional marriage.[29] In 1926 another psychologist argued that "tomboy attitudes … are normal and wholesome and fairly characterize a superior type of girl."[30] Yet some of this author's tomboy case studies betrayed ambivalence similar to Flo's. "I had always liked boys, and I still did [as a teenager]," said one. "They were good friends. Until I was fifteen … I always played with boys and continued on this basis of frank companionship all through high school." This young woman then noticed the other girls mooning over the boys. "This attitude of theirs was incomprehensible to me. … Finally, however, I pretended, merely for the sake of being like the others, that I too was in love. … But I was not sincere; I was merely trying to be like the others."[31] This young woman, like Flo, had a hard time extricating herself from palhood's platonic eroticism.

Flo was clearly bright; she must have soaked up these messages from adults and peers and responded to their expectations. But even as a college student, she continued to prefer palhood to flirtation even as she longed for a companionate marriage that included healthy heterosexual expression. These feelings might have led her to plunge into a brief yet scandalous relationship with a member of the faculty. Perhaps it felt safer to be with

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[28] Leta S. Hollingworth, The Psychology of the Adolescent (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1929), 118.
[29] Judith Schwarz, Radical Feminists of Heterodoxy: Greenwich Village 1912-1940, rev. ed. (Norwich, VT: New Victoria Publishers, 1986), 20.
[30] E. Leigh Mudge, Varieties of Adolescent Experience (New York and London: Century, 1926), 55.
[31] Ibid., 62-63.

an intellectual instead of an undergraduate oaf. "Went several times," Flo said. "Had to stop because it was talk of college. … This not at all intimate. Not even kisses. Had me on ice." On one date, with a man in a "Grand glorious ROTC uniform" (who might have been the professor—the transcript is unclear), she actively shaped the encounter. "The ROTC man I finally allowed to kiss me," she said. "Picked out a place with nice view and let him kiss me. I was quite disappointed. Stars didn't fall or anything." She wanted to be sexual, going so far as to arrange a storybook meeting, but she couldn't find the pleasure in it. "Then at once decided I was in love—must follow," she explained: kissing naturally caused most girls to fall for their suitors without a second thought, the way fairy tale princesses do, but being "in love" was a conscious decision for her. "From then on petted twice but usually platonic. … Discussed things on high plane. Stopped because he didn't take me to ROTC dance."[32] Although Flo preferred palhood, she wanted to fit in, to give the appearance of a girl in the ecstasies of romance so that she might seem normal—popular. For his part, this young man's actions may indicate a reluctance to present Flo to his peers at the dance, perhaps because she was still quite boyish and looked awkward in a dress.

Flo did marry and learn to enjoy sex quite a bit, or so she professed. Her valuation of palhood had changed, but it was part of what she enjoyed in marriage. "Relations with husband—they are satisfactory in every way," she said, adding, "Proud of the friendship between us."[33] Agnes Landis described her as "a thoroughly dependable subject with whom excellent rapport was established. … She appears to be a very happy, exceptionally well adjusted person, who expresses complete contentment in her

[32] Interview transcript, Case 3N (m).
[33] Interview transcript, Case 3N (m).

manner."[34] Flo was still aware of the way others perceived her and her relationship with her husband, but they all remarked about the excellence of the match. Flo, perhaps, was popular.

The Boyish Erotic Imaginary

The platonic eroticism of masculine palhood was not only well established in the material lives of tomboys and their boy friends, it was also constituted by repetitive portrayals of boys' relationships with one another in imaginative cultural work, especially children's fiction. Reading supplemented tomboys' affective worlds, and they only rarely preferred books with female characters who lived to bring light to adults in sentimental, domestic settings. Instead, they often sought to insert themselves into all-male tales of adventure. By the 1920s, it was a truism among educators that girls would read "boys' books" in addition to "girls' books," but that the same was not true for boys. "Most girls like so-called 'boys' books' much better than they do their own suitably feminine fiction," read a typical magazine assessment. "And if the boys do not return the compliment, it is only because 'girls' books' are in general so flat and insipid that the girls themselves are ashamed to read them."[35] If "most girls" were apt to choose boys' books, it seems that tomboys did so almost exclusively. Born in 1873, the physician Sara Josephine Baker described her girlhood "pet reading": "neither Elsie Dinsmore nor fairy stories, but the classic stories of Horatio Alger, Jr., and Toby Tyler, or Ten Weeks with a Circus[.]"[36] Adventure books for girls existed, but their endings could be disappointing: an inevitable

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[34] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 3N (m), n.d. (1936).
[35] "Some Books for Boys," The Independent, December 11, 1920, 376.
[36] S. Josephine Baker, Fighting for Life (Huntington, NY: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1980), 9.

return to domestic duty after a bout of excitement.[37] Cheap serial fiction for boys, on the other hand, delivered thrills, masculine bonding, happy endings, and the promise of yet another volume packed with the exotic and the eerie. This was the format tomboys preferred. Reading brought them closer to their pals, as they passed the books among themselves and almost certainly debated the relative merits of the novels' characters, settings, and storylines. Until the introduction of Nancy Drew in 1930, there was no best-selling series for girls that embraced any trace of the masculine platonic eroticism that figured so strongly in tomboys' affective lives.[38]

As is well known, the Nancy Drew Mysteries inspired many girl readers who grew up to become feminists.[39] Yet Nancy's independence seems not to have been modeled after a new type of modern woman but rather after daring boy characters. She was unique in that she was the first female series heroine to live in an imaginative world that deftly incorporated traces of all-male settings. Nancy, of course, is a girl, as are her two trusties, George and Bess. But in many respects, the three might as well be boy pals who solve the never-ending series of mysteries that crop up in their hometown. It is less important that Nancy drives a roadster than that she lives out her ambitions in a world in which all other female characters (especially mothers) play marginal roles: one of the

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[37] Sally Mitchell, The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), ch. 5; J. S. Bratton, "British Imperialism and the Reproduction of Femininity in Girls' Fiction, 1900-1930," in Jeffrey Richards, ed., Imperialism and Juvenile Literature (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 195-215.

[38] In 1933 the Goldsmith Publishing Company introduced a truly hardboiled pseudo-Nancy named Dorothy Dixon, perhaps to outdo Nancy's boyishness. Not settling for a mere roadster, Dorothy flies a plane and even faces machine-gun fire from an enemy. Goldsmith withdrew her after only four novels. Anne Scott MacLeod, "Nancy Drew and Her Rivals: No Contest," in American Childhood: Essays on Children's Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 37-38.

[39] See Carolyn G. Heilbrun, "Nancy Drew: A Moment in Feminist History," in Carolyn Stewart Dyer and Nancy Tillman Romalov, eds., Rediscovering Nancy Drew (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995), 11-21.

hallmarks of boys' adventure stories. Nancy is not a tomboy; that honor goes to George. Rather, she embodies the fearlessness, competence, honor, and judgment of many boys' series heroes. Her sidekicks, like boy characters', set off her virtue, but this is not retiring grace, modesty, or charity—it is admirable boyish masculinity, with a few de rigueur nods toward such feminine activities as dancing lessons. It is as if Nancy and her friends were boys inside girl bodies, renewing the vigor of shopworn plots of cheap fiction for boy readers.

Nancy Drew was the creation of children's fiction mogul Edward Stratemeyer, whose "syndicate" hired a network of ghostwriters to churn out series novels (sometimes finishing a book in two weeks). Stratemeyer established nearly 100 series, including Tom Swift and the Hardy Boys, between 1905 and his death in 1930.[40] Stratemeyer Syndicate fiction included books for very young readers, such as the Bobbsey Twins, which starred girl and boy characters and reached a mixed audience. But Stratemeyer's adventure and mystery series for girls did not reach the same level of market success as his books for boys—until the appearance of the first five Nancy Drew novels. During the 1920s, Stratemeyer became convinced that there was an untapped audience of adolescent girls (like his two daughters) eager for a series starring a heroine who was just as fearless and competent as his boy characters—a girl who could not only drive a car but fix it, a girl who could talk back to adults, a girl who could land a punch if she had to. He was right. A few years after her debut, Nancy was outselling her boy counterparts, probably because

[40] Deidre Johnson, "From Paragraphs to Pages: The Writing and Development of the Stratemeyer Syndicate Series," in Dyer and Romalov, eds., Rediscovering Nancy Drew, 29.

she was a hit with boy readers too. Macy's sold six thousand Nancy Drew mysteries during the six-week Christmas season of 1934.[41]

In 1929, Edward Stratemeyer hired Mildred Augustine Wirt to ghost the Nancy Drew books under the pseudonym Carolyn Keene. Born in 1905, Mildred was a decided tomboy, the only girl the boys accepted as one of their own. She and her pals bided their time in class until recess. "We had a hut that we built down there on the school yard and we had fights … during recess time … we had organized battles, with sticks, and we'd pound each other [until] they put a stop to that," she said in an interview.[42] Mildred was a ravenous reader, too, and grew up devouring the Stratemeyer books intended for her pals.[43] She became a star athlete at the University of Iowa and soon established a career as a Midwestern newspaperwoman. Stratemeyer provided the inspiration and terse outlines for the first five Nancy Drew "breeder" novels (released simultaneously to generate reader interest). "An up-to-date American girl at her best," he described the character in his initial memo, "bright, clever, resourceful and full of energy."[44] He died shortly after the launch of the Nancy Drew Mysteries, although he read drafts of the first three novels. One of his daughters, Harriet Adams, took his place as editor of the series, and she and Mildred Wirt (later Benson) decisively shaped the character for nearly twenty years.

Benson's early twentieth-century tomboyism and her indubitable affection for the palhood portrayed in boys' books influenced the way she and Adams developed the

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[41] Ilana Nash, "Radical Notions: Nancy Drew and Her Readers, 1930-1949," in Miriam Forman-Brunell and Leslie Paris, eds., The Girls' History and Culture Reader: The Twentieth Century (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 186.
[42] Melanie Rehak, Girl Sleuth: Nancy Drew and the Women Who Created Her (Orlando: Harcourt, 2005), 41.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 1.

novels' plots and Nancy Drew as a character. The sixteen-year-old sleuth reflected the input of both women. According to Benson, Adams often rewrote Nancy according to her own ideals of womanhood, which resulted in periodic friction. "I think the whole thing here, there was a beginning conflict in what is Nancy," Benson said in the late 1970s. "Mrs. Adams was an entirely different person; she was more cultured and more refined. I was probably a rough and tumble newspaper person who had to earn a living, and I was out in the world. That was my type of Nancy."[45] As a result, Nancy could do boy things with steely expertise (and go unpunished for them), but she also was not the tomboy Benson had been and wanted Nancy to be. The compromise probably reinforced the Nancy's resemblance to the syndicate's boy heroes—not in her directly gendered characterization, but in her world of family, friends, and enemies, which bore more than a passing resemblance to the male galaxies of affectionate friendship in Stratemeyer's boy books.

Before Adams ordered revisions to the entire series in the 1950s, enhancing Nancy's feminine concern for others and all but erasing people of color—ironically, an effort to make the stories less racist by eliminating denigrating descriptions and dialect[46]—the mysteries resembled books for boys in their marginalization of female characters other than Nancy, George, and Bess. Most importantly, Nancy's mother is dead, leaving the girl sleuth to develop a deep affection for her father, a lawyer who tosses her the unsolved mysteries he encounters in his work. This and other authorial arrangements effectively transpose girls into the foundational elements of fiction for

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[45] Quoted in Johnson, "From Paragraphs to Pages," 36-37.
[46] Diana Beeson and Bonnie Brennan, "Translating Nancy Drew from Print to Film," in Dyer and Romalov, eds., Rediscovering Nancy Drew, 193-207.

boys, notably male palhood of the type described in World War I memoirs and poetry.[47] As boy characters bond through dangerous adventure away from girls and women, abetted by indulgent, honorable, but tough male mentors, they repetitively develop attributes of adult masculinity through the pleasures of being with each other. True, some boy characters constantly need rescuing, but in an all-boy world they complement the masculinity of the hero instead of hindering the mission the way a trembling girl would. This is what distinguished Nancy Drew from most other marquee stars of serial fiction: she was a girl playing the male lead in a play with no female characters of consequence—a Peter Pan untamed by Wendy or Tinkerbell.

Tomboy readers who, like Benson, preferred books for boys undoubtedly longed for a heroine who could not only do boyish things but also immerse herself in an charged universe of masculine bonding and friendship. This, after all, was an everyday tomboy aspiration and accomplishment. Girls eagerly consumed and sometimes tried to influence the direction of various series for both girls and boys; their correspondence suggests that some of them responded to the friendships based in platonic eroticism portrayed in boys' novels. In the early 1930s, eight-year-old Mary Charnley of Pasadena wrote to "Victor Appleton" (a pseudonym for a number of Stratemeyer authors) about her fanatic devotion to his Don Sturdy series of global adventure thrillers (published from 1925 to 1935). "They are the only books we have that have enough action in them," she explained. "… Won't you please write another two or three … to satisfy my insatiable love of thrilling and exciting adventure. Please emphatically do not make Mrs. Sturdy and Ruth so weepy

[47] The motherless girl, of course, was a staple in nineteenth-century women's fiction (as perhaps it had been since the time of Cinderella), but Victorian women usually intended motherlessness as a hindrance to a girl's development as a woman. See Carolyn G. Heilbrun, Writing a Woman's Life (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988). Nancy Drew faced no such limitation.

and weak." Appreciating the books' portrayal of friendship, Mary also encouraged Appleton to keep up the boy characters' friendly banter: "Jimmy's and 'Brick's' humor is keen, in other words it is swell!"[48] Another California girl, eight-year-old Martha Bullitt, also offered her positive assessment of the Don Sturdy series: "I like adventure storys so I wish you would write another book. I think they are more interesting than any of the other books." Martha also suggested that Appleton be more consistent in his plot and character stylizations and do more to elaborate on the boy characters' friendships. "The book I have just been reading is 'Don Sturdy captured by head hunters,'" she wrote. "It was interesting but I am getting cureus [curious] to know what became of [the character] Susolo." In a postscript she added, "I like it better when Teddy goes along [with Don]."[49]

There is no archival evidence that Edward Stratemeyer or Harriet Adams actively tried to discourage girls from reading their boys' series and turn to Nancy Drew or other girls' series in order to promote any feminine ideal. In a 1923 response to a letter from Chislaine Tysen, a fan of the Radio Boys series, a Stratemeyer employee writing for the author "Allen Chapman" encouraged her interest in the books: "The 'Radio Boys Series' books are 'boys' books,' of course, because they are about boys; but that is no reason—and in this Miss Tysen evidently agrees with Mr. Chapman—why a gay and fun-loving girl should not like to read about 'Bob' and 'Jimmy' and the others and their happy and adventurous doings."[50] A 1929 response to Barbara Jane Brinser, of Elmira, New York, underlined this attitude: "Mr. Ferris ["author" of the X Bar X Boys series] is glad to learn

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[48] Mary Vernon Charnley to "Victor Appleton," n.d., "Fanmail, 1930-1934" folder, box 56, Stratemeyer Syndicate Records, New York Public Library, New York, NY. Mary's thirteen-year-old sister Barbara also added, "I love the 'Don Sturdys' too."

[49] Martha Bell Bullitt to "Victor Appleton," January 9, 1932, "Fanmail, 1930-1934" folder, box 56, Stratemeyer Syndicate Records.

[50] Stratemeyer Syndicate letter to Chislaine Tysen, July 2, 1923, "Allen Chapman Fanmail" folder, box 31, Stratemeyer Records.

that the girls, as well as the boys, enjoy reading his books." The letter also informed Barbara Jane that there was a new X Bar X Boys book "only very recently on the market," implying that she had urged the author to keep producing the boys' novels she loved.[51] Edward Stratemeyer did not care if the girls who consumed his products did not play house. He wanted to sell books.

Nancy Drew was not the "feminist" many women remember. "The popular definition of feminism purveyed most often in American culture is the belief that women can be competent and independent," critic Ilana Nash argues. "Nancy Drew conforms to this vague description, which is why so many women have credited Nancy with inspiring their ambitions." But "[t]his series has nothing kind to say about women at large, for they embody incompleteness or one-sidedness—all [other characters] are 'too' something, or 'not enough' something—in order to heighten Nancy's unrealistic balancing of multiple subject positions."[52] This goes for George and Bess as well, who are too masculine and too feminine, respectively. But instead of wishing for Nancy to espouse a more radical appreciation for the advancement all women, it is more instructive to consider her as one character among the thousands that populated mass-market children's fiction. In this light, the Nancy Drew mysteries clearly belong to the same imaginary of such minor series as the Don Sturdy adventures, named for a boy who, though tough, also embodies a kind of Apollonian mean of virtue, competence, bravery, intelligence, and charity. Don Sturdy and other boy characters not only reflected the virtues of masculine palhood, they modeled it for boys and girls alike.

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[51] Stratemeyer Syndicate letter to Barbara Jane Brinser, September 18, 1929, "Fanmail 'James Cody Ferris' 1927-1930" folder, box 31, Stratemeyer Records.
[52] Nash, "Radical Notions," 189, 190-191.

Beth

Tomboys accessed this masculine erotic imaginary long before 1930, when Mildred Benson and Harriet Adams transposed daring sleuthing and boyish relationships into a register with massive appeal to girl (and boy) consumers. Identifying with adventurers like Don Sturdy, Tom Swift, and the Hardy Boys allowed boyish girls to efface personal circumstances and the gendered limitations adults and peers attempted to impose on them. Series fans like Mary, Martha, Chislaine, and Barbara Jane might not be considered tomboys judged simply on the basis of their reading preferences. But tomboys' real-life escapades in the exclusive company of girls apparently only occurred within single-sex institutional settings, including juvenile halls, Girl Scout camps, and women's colleges.[53] Adventure in the material world reinforced the pleasures of masculine platonic eroticism experienced in reading, just as series fiction reflected and gave cultural meaning to tomboys' exploits with their pals. Tomboys held themselves in essence no different from boys, even when they knew their bodies had different parts (see Chapter 5). Thus, being pals to boys allowed them privileged access to a masculine world in which girls were marginal and often denigrated, much as the scenarios of series fiction had them.

Becoming adolescent girls, therefore, demanded a radical affective realignment for many tomboys, who nurtured pal relationships both in real life and in the imaginary shaped by their reading and other forms of cultural consumption. They had to withdraw from these pleasures to become eligible for the system of dating and the regime of popularity. Going out with boys did hold appeal, but many tomboys wanted to fuse dating

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[53] See, for example, Sherrie A. Inness, Intimate Communities: Representation and Social Transformation in Women's College Fiction, 1895-1910 (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995), chs. 2 and 3; Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).

with palhood, to participate in adolescent sexual culture in a way that felt comfortable. At times tomboys accomplished the transition with relative ease, but others experienced a sense of loss when palhood (and its attendant platonic eroticism) no longer became tenable. It often required a transformation in imaginative life as well as new restrictions on behavior; it required an inward turn. Although the next case does not enumerate favorite reading material, it does show that palhood entailed a rich sense of belonging that was enhanced by the pleasures of the tomboy imagination.

At seventeen, "Beth" was among the younger women who spoke to Agnes Landis. She was born in 1920 in Brooklyn and raised in a rural area of Long Island.[54] Beth grew up close to the capital of mass culture and came of age amid widespread adolescent heterosexual experimentation, but at the time of her interview she was doing her best to preserve her tomboyism, overlaying the palhood she cherished with a thin veneer of romance, speaking extensively of the pleasures of adventure, trying to construct a new erotic life that built on palhood's foundations instead of washing them away. She was too young to have been a flapper, but had she been born ten years earlier she might have rejected the flapper's exuberant boyishness because it was planted too firmly in heterosexual expression. Beth was attracted to boys, but in her own tomboy way. She believed in palhood.

On Long Island, she and her pals (and sometimes her sister) imbued their very environment with simmering meaning spiced with the bonds of friendship. Beth said they went on hikes "every Saturday." She recalled the local geography with place-names that were possibly bestowed and handed down by country children themselves, for they feature on no contemporary map of the island. "We were most congenial—all out-of-door

[54] Interview transcript, Case 104, July 28, 1937, folder 13, series III C, box 1, CL.

people," Beth said of her friends. Every week she and her pals packed a "lunch basket," which would include "a big bottle of root beer[.]" "Walked thru the woods—3 miles to Contact Point." As she remembered, she and the boys "built a raft—I went out on it. Fell off in quick sand." Beth's fear was overshadowed by her embarrassment in front of her pals: "Quite scared by my fall off the raft … I looked funny calling for help." The boyish imaginary she and her pals constructed depended on affective relationships to their country surroundings. One boy, Beth said, "went half way across the bay on this raft—told me about it."[55] If this pal was referring to the best-known inlet on Long Island—South Oyster Bay—he would have been poling that raft for many miles. Beth might have meant a different, smaller "bay," but the pals must have been constantly spinning tall tales among themselves. Swimming, picking cattails, stepping lightly to avoid "snipers" in the marshes: these were not simply fun things to do, but a way to shape nature, to interpret the pleasures it offered.

Beginning in about 1900, adult male "boy workers" also came to think that outdoor living would promote virtuous masculinity and health in all boys. Earlier generations of reformers had concentrated on the malnourished, overworked, and delinquent youth of the slums, but an emerging cohort of clergymen, settlement house club leaders, camp directors, and scoutmasters believed that improvement was necessary for the effete sons of the elite, too.[56] Boy-workers of the Young Men's Christian Association and other organizations sought to bring the insights of the new adolescent psychology to bear on masculine character development. Following G. Stanley Hall, they downplayed class and ethnic distinctions in favor of a universal model of development

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[55] Ibid.
[56] David I. Macleod, Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920 (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 97.

rooted in biological morphology.[57] Immersion in nature not only toughened boys by strengthening their bodies, it also delivered them into a world where they could learn teamwork and loyalty. Nature fostered the growth of the boy-organism, both physically and morally. The Boy Scouts (founded in Britain in 1908) are only the best-known organization that promoted this philosophy in the early decades of the twentieth century. The Scout troop, some held, was only a logical extension of the boy's "gang." As the boy-worker Joseph Adams Puffer wrote in 1912, "Of all present-day organizations for the improvement and the happiness of normal boyhood, the institution of the Boy Scout [sic] is built at once on the soundest psychology and the shrewdest insight into boy nature. The Scout Patrol is simply a boys' gang[.]"[58] Puffer also described the eroticism in all boys' gangs: "The gang … is for the boy one of the three primary social groups"—the family, the community, and the "play group"; "for the normal boy the play group is the gang." The gang, Puffer continued,

> appears useless or stupid to those who have never felt the inner impulse which caused it, or who, having felt, have forgotten. The boy's reaction to his gang is neither more nor less reasonable than the reaction of a mother to her babe, the tribesman to his chief, or the lover to his sweetheart. All these alike belong to the ancient, instinctive, ultra-rational parts of our human nature. They are felt, and obeyed; but only in part are they to be explained, for no man understands any of them fully unless he knows how it feels from the inside.[59]

Rather than view Puffer and other boy-workers with ironic amusement, it is better to take them seriously as adults who saw and appreciated the benefits of homoeroticism realized through boys' contact with nature, alongside one another and with men.[60] It is

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[57] Kett, Rites of Passage, 222-223.
[58] Joseph Adams Puffer, The Boy and His Gang (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912), 157.
[59] Ibid., 7.
[60] See Seth Koven's related treatment of urban "cross-class brotherhood" in Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 70.

easy to make light of boy-workers' writings, often so suffused with naiveté, national chauvinism, nostalgia, reactionary politics, and phrases that today have double meanings suggesting a pedophilic gaze.[61] For all the boy-workers' earnestness, working-class and poor youth often shrugged off their efforts.[62] Yet these men might have been on to something. They were adept at describing the erotic pleasures of nature-play, which were real enough (as Beth's interview suggests). Even if their prescriptions fell on deaf ears, even if the country boy was far from a paragon of innocence and virtue compared to the city slicker, growing up in the country or even having a chance to escape the city streets in the company of other boys and charismatic, avuncular men could very well be a source of erotic pleasure.

In any case, tomboys who grew up in the country had more chances to play with boys in "wild" settings, to contribute to suffusing this "wilderness" with erotic meaning, to imagine it as more dangerous than it really was (or to place themselves, seemingly invincible, in real danger), and to tame this wilderness to their satisfaction. Beth said she only wanted to be a boy "once in a while." This was because she was so adept at being a boy-in-nature in the first place. "I was a regular tomboy all through childhood, so didn't have to wish for it then," she explained. "I ran around in overalls. Hicked [sic] and climbed trees." Only as a young adult did she realize that what she was doing was exercising a kind of equality: "Went so much with boys, did everything they did. Didn't feel underprejudiced." In other words, at age seventeen (1937) she knew there was a feminist critique of gender inequality, but it is not clear that she could have articulated this "underprejudice" as a child. Asked what she had considered "the most important

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[61] See, for example, Kenneth B. Kidd, Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 42-48.
[62] Kett, Rites of Passage, 222.

differences" between girls and boys when she was very young, she paused. "Gosh I don't know," she said. "Perhaps the games they played—and boys not as catty as girls. Difference in clothing too." As a patient at a New York psychiatric hospital, away from the country, she was sometimes segregated from male patients, and her leisure was gendered: she said she would "like to do the carpenting [sic] the boys do in O-T," occupational therapy.[63]

As she grew up, Beth wanted to extend her pal relationships into adolescence, and it seems that palhood continued to play a great part in her forays into heterosexuality. One boy in particular suffused her thoughts. It was he with whom she had her first date, at age sixteen; she had known him nine years (since about 1927). "I had a swell time, old friends," she said. "Liked the boy terribly. He was often around our home, but I only went with him once. We went to the Museum." Beth and her family had moved to Brooklyn when she was about ten; if her memories are accurate, she and the boy must have known each other for about two years while she lived on Long Island. She spoke of the pleasures of rural friendship: "Think a lot about all the things we used to do. Sit on top of chicken coup [sic] and drink ginger ale." Knowing this boy from a young age, Beth did not want to draw a distinction between the eroticism of palhood and her present feelings of attraction. Asked if she had sexual fantasies, she elided the two states: "Used to think a lot about walking with boys, talking—wished I were grown up so [I] could go with the older boys. Thought the young boys were just shrimps." Talking, not petting, was most important to her. She told Landis she had "been kissed loads of times," but this might have been an exaggeration—she had only dated three boys. With the fellow who had been her pal before their single date, she said, she was not very intimate: "Very

[63] Interview transcript, Case 104.

friendly. Never pet, spent most of our time in conversation." He might have gone to sea soon after their trip to the museum. "Imagine him in his navy uniform (he's in the Merchant Marine) his smile," she said. "When I was first here [at the hospital], I thought he was one of the doctors helping me to get well."[64] Even in the part of her life that consisted in hallucinations, her old pal was both a comfort and an erotic object.

Beth was diagnosed with "dementia praecox, catatonic." In psychiatric usage, dementia praecox (also called schizophrenia) was the "precocious" development of dementia, meaning that its onset occurred before senility, usually in young people Beth's age. As defined by German psychiatrists in the late nineteenth century, the catatonic form of dementia praecox often began with depression and "nervousness," descending into delusionary states and hallucinations.[65] Doctors at the hospital treated Beth with hydrotherapy and insulin shock. The latter was a cutting-edge therapy discovered by the psychiatrist Manfred Joshua Sakel. In Austria, Sakel had been using insulin to treat narcotics addicts in withdrawal, but in 1927 he accidentally gave a man an overdose, sending him into hypoglycemic shock, convulsions, and coma. Sakel revived him with an emergency injection of glucose. The patient was not only an addict but schizophrenic, and he experienced some remission of his symptoms.[66] During the winter months of 1934-1935, Sakel published no less than thirteen reports about insulin shock in German-language medical journals, claiming an "improvement" rate greater than eighty-eight percent in schizophrenics. In 1936 he visited a hospital in upstate New York to

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[64] Ibid.
[65] Richard Noll, American Madness: The Rise and Fall of Dementia Praecox (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 92.
[66] Edward Shorter and David Healy, Shock Therapy: A History of Electroconvulsive Treatment in Mental Illness (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 14-15.

demonstrate the technique to American psychiatrists.[67] Doctors from Beth's institution (the New York Psychiatric Institute and Hospital) must have been in attendance.

Beth was admitted in about March 1937. Her treatment, according to her psychiatrists, demonstrated the efficacy of the new somatic therapy: she "showed marked improvement and some insight into her problems." Improvement and insight: Beth was changing both her behavior and her inner life. The mad behavior was disturbing to the doctors, hospital staff, and probably other patients. "During hospital stay patient completely out of contact [with reality], clumsy in movements[,] hypomanic in behavior on ward, rhyming, etc., destructive," noted her chart. "Habit of constantly spitting and voiding on the floor while in what appears to be a manic state." After her insulin coma (or comas), Beth "had no recall of activity during disturbed period."[68] It is likely that she received insulin treatment shortly before her interview. Landis seems to have found her outgoing and charming—not at all what one might expect from a young woman with her diagnosis. "The patient is a very pleasant, cooperative subject[,] smiling and happy throughout the interview," Landis wrote. "She seems eager to impart as full and complete knowledge as possible." This "improvement" in Beth's obstreperous behavior paralleled her "insight" into the way her feelings related to her social environment. At least in her psychiatrists' estimation, she could now consciously take a step back from her hallucinations and describe them—logically explaining, for example, that she mistook her doctor for her beloved pal—thus moving closer to transforming feelings of platonic erotic attachment for pals into mature heterosexual desire. "To this day she likes boys a great deal as companions [but] with the exception of one boy has never thought of them

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[67] Elliot S. Valenstein, Great and Desperate Cures: The Rise and Decline of Psychosurgery and Other Radical Treatments for Mental Illness (New York: Basic Books, 1986).
[68] Psychiatric Summary, n.d. [1937], Case 104.

emotionally," Landis remarked, either oblivious to Beth's fulsome descriptions of pal eroticism or unwilling to give palhood the status of real sexual "emotions." Landis concluded that Beth might be on her way to some kind of heterosexual adjustment: "She is still very young … so that her sex attachments are pretty much undifferentiated."[69]

Agnes Landis effectively pathologized Beth's eroticism, which disability scholars would consider a difference created by the social world of the time, not an inherent defect in Beth. For instance, she was ambivalent about dating. Landis observed that she wanted a boyfriend very much, but she wrote that Beth had not completed the requisite affective transition from palhood to a desire for heterosexual touching. According to Landis, palhood and sexuality were categorically distinct. Beth, she wrote, "played almost entirely with boys in childhood but their relationships were that of a tomboy, never sexual."[70] The young woman would have to realize and embody this distinction in order to progress toward psychosexual maturity. This was a disability embodied not simply by abnormal subjects like Beth; quite a few normal tomboys came to fall under the rubric of psychosexual immaturity when they expressed little desire for heterosexual contact. Being a tomboy was not a disability in itself, but not wanting to date or to relate to boys as other than as platonic pals was.

Though she was confined to a psychiatric ward and reportedly suffered from delusions and an "emotional collapse" (Landis's words), Beth was far from unique. Tomboys in the normal sample, too, experienced a disconnect between the platonic erotic pleasures they experienced as girls and the expectations that they come to see themselves as desirous of boys (and to make themselves into objects boys could admire). Born in

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[69] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, n.d. [1937], Case 104.
[70] Ibid.

1913, "Mae," a daughter of Eastern European immigrants, said she "had lots of friends (boys) not really boy-friends—10 perhaps." "I think I'm funny in some ways," she continued. "Daydream about what I wish I would say to a boy but never do." She thought she had been "in love with 3 or 4" boys, but during adolescence she was not sure how to translate these feelings into new relationships that were both comfortable for her and acceptable within young people's sexual culture. As she entered her teens, she said, she "Believe[d] a girl should be friendly with fellows, just pals, nothing else." "Only liked to be with fellows that didn't become very personal," she went on. At the age of twenty-one, she had developed a certain resolve, but she seems to have known that it did not necessarily overlap with what boys (and her girl friends) expected of her. "Now I know the facts and know just how far I want to go," she said. "When fellows expect more than I want to give them, I just don't go with them." Only her sister's recent marriage had altered her thinking. As Landis remarked, "She used to think sex relations would be so horrible, and now her attitude has completely changed."[71]

Mae and Beth realized that the transition between palhood and "mature" heterosexuality involved an inward turn. In Beth's case, "insight" was accomplished by submission to insulin coma and physical restraint, likely without consent. (She was, after all, quite a few years younger than legal adulthood.) As a teenager, Mae realized her transformation gradually, first by learning about sex and then by judging her own willingness to engage in it. Although neither young woman provided qualitative descriptions of what historians call youth culture—the dances, the parked cars, the darkened movie houses—they emphasized their ambivalence about the implicitly sexualized realm of adolescent heterosociality. Both made compromises: Mae's seem to

[71] Interview transcript, Case 55N, May 27, 1935, folder 5, series III D, box 2, CL.

have been conscious decisions, while Beth's were an ambiguous sliding between desires, both platonic and sexual. It may be that Beth was never able to leave institutionalized life, but as she grew up she might have made attempts to extend and elaborate her erotic life on her own terms. And these, of course, might have been discouraged by psychiatrists eager to see her make a correct adjustment to heterosexuality. Both young women's stories demonstrate the variety of tomboys' responses to demands that they conform, not just in terms of gender expression but in their affective lives.

Tomboy Lore after the Good Pal

These demands were being confronted for the first time, sometimes painfully, by tomboys born between 1900 and 1920 or so. Tomboys found joy in being pals with boys as children, but they, not boys, were obliged to shed a masculine gender expression they found natural, to transform themselves into sexual objects by becoming feminine, to change the way they looked at boys as pals, and to convince boys that they were no longer pal material themselves but potential sweethearts. Of course, as the literature on early twentieth-century masculinity makes clear, boys who were weak, sickly, effeminate, or otherwise queer also faced pressure to transform themselves,[72] but no one suggested that boys who were already acceptably masculine become feminine. As demanding as the rites of becoming a man could be, being masculine was never a social liability for a boy. Tomboys who continued to be boyish during adolescence or mannish in adulthood might find themselves socially ineligible for marriage, a huge

[72] See, for example, Rotundo, American Manhood, 242; Michael S. Kimmel, The History of Men: Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 45-48; Kevin P. Murphy, Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, and the Politics of Progressive Era Reform (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

disappointment for those who were sexually attracted to boys. And for girls who had no romantic designs on young fellows at all—those who were attracted to other girls, those who preferred not to express sexual desire with others, or those who came to enjoy companionate marriage but did not like sex—masculinity marked them as doubly queer. By the 1930s, adolescent girls and boys alike apparently considered intensely erotic but nonsexual friendship—palhood—an inferior form of heterosocial relationship. Like tomboyism, girls would have to discard palhood at adolescence.

The growing awareness of sexual categories in the 1930s probably influenced a wholesale shift in representations of tomboys and their boy friends. It seems that adults registered tomboys' difficulties with proper heterosexual adjustment and increasingly cast them as queer—not as homosexual per se, but as young sexual outsiders with the potential for gross abnormality as adults. If many unpopular girls had trouble with adolescent sexual culture's initiation rites, as they did, the tomboy became an important synecdoche for them. Advice books from the 1940s offered parents ambiguous warnings about the boyish girl at adolescence. One counseled, "The tomboy girl must … be permitted her boyishness," but went on to issue a warning. "One thing the tomboy girl must keep in mind—with all her boy comradeship she must not neglect her own sex. The girl who forsakes other girls during this period [puberty], or any other period for that matter, is courting trouble."[73] Intriguingly, the book pointed out that an adolescent girl who was seen too much with boys could get a bad reputation in school as boy-crazy. But this was not the conclusion most authors drew. The Child Study Association of America's widely circulated Parents' Questions (1936/1947) addressed the subject

[73] Frances Bruce Strain, The Normal Sex Interests of Children: From Infancy to Childhood (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), 134-135.

obliquely. "Being a tomboy for a while is not too serious in a girl's normal development," the authors began. "Eventually, however, both boys and girls must accept their own sexual role if they are to avoid running into serious difficulty, and if they are to have satisfying normal relationships with men and women." The book assured fathers, "if you and your wife are happily married and content with your roles in life, the child's boyishness is almost sure to pass. If she shows no signs of change in her early teens, however, it may be wise to seek professional help."[74] Literature of this sort tended not to pathologize childhood tomboyism except in its nebulous influence over an adolescent girl's heterosexual development, which psychologically inflected books like Parents' Questions did not fully demystify.

Tomboys were not necessarily lesbians, then—the word seems to have been too taboo to mention in print—but they were queer. It is not surprising that the 1930s and 1940s witnessed emerging representations of tomboys as outcasts. By midcentury, perhaps the most sensitive sculptor of multidimensional tomboy characters was Carson McCullers (1917-1967). One of her first short stories, "Like That" (1936), portrays a thirteen-year-old tomboy struggling to accept her older sister's own transformation into a young woman with an interest in heterosexuality. McCullers describes the tomboy's exquisite confusion as she encounters adolescent sexual culture and resolves to resist its imperatives, as her sister was unable to do. "… I'm as hardboiled as the next person," McCullers's tomboy narrator asserts, both proudly and somewhat defensively.

> … I'm glad I'm thirteen and still wear socks and can do what I please. I don't want to be any older if I'd get like Sis has. But I wouldn't. … I'd never let any boy or any thing make me act like she does. … I know there's no way I can make

[74] The Child Study Association of America, Parents' Questions, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 133, 134.

> myself stay thirteen all my life, but I know I'd never let anything really change me at all—no matter what it is.
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> I skate and ride my bike and go to the school football games every Friday. But when one afternoon the kids all got quiet in the gym basement and then started telling certain things—about being married and all—I got up quick so I wouldn't hear and went up and played basketball. And when some of the kids said they were going to start wearing lipstick and stockings I said I wouldn't for a hundred dollars.[75]

McCullers wrote "Like That" while she was a university student in New York City—only a train fare from the New York Psychiatric Institute and Hospital, where, at the same time, adult tomboys were relaying the same sorts of messages about gender and sexual alienation to Agnes Landis. McCullers's story ends on a childishly defiant note that rings somewhat false: "You see I'd never be like Sis is now. I wouldn't. Anybody could know that if they knew me. I just wouldn't, that's all. I don't want to grow up—if it's like that."[76]

Strikingly, the narrator of "Like That" seems distanced from palhood. If she has or had boy friends, she does not describe them. Her story is about gender and alienation from adolescent sexual culture, but she does not recall a time when she ever fit in with a gang of pals, as many tomboys did. She is profoundly lonely. McCullers deepened this loneliness in her creation of Frankie Addams, the twelve-year-old protagonist of The Member of the Wedding (1946): "This was the summer when for a long time she had not been a member. She belonged to no club and was a member of nothing in the world. Frankie was an unjoined person who hung around in doorways, and she was afraid."[77] Frankie does not run with a group of boys; instead, she is part of an erotic triangle with

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[75] Carson McCullers, "Like That," in Collected Stories of Carson McCullers (New York: Mariner Books, 1998), 56-57.
[76] Ibid., 57.
[77] Carson McCullers, The Member of the Wedding (New York: Mariner Books, 2004), 3.

her younger cousin and her family's Negro domestic, a relationship based on mutual exclusion. More than anything, Frankie wants to comprehend and somehow inhabit the attraction of her brother and his fiancée, both of whom she loves, but she cannot find the space to do so. Like other tomboys, Frankie is motherless, but her father does not dote on her the way Nancy Drew's does, and she has no access to platonic eroticism with boys through palhood. Frankie's tomboyism is finally existential, the essence of who she is. Her portrayal is one end-result of the inward turn and the alienating effects of adolescent sexual culture on many tomboys.

Not all authors so roundly excluded tomboy characters from social life, but many portrayed them as somehow queer. A new form of palhood emerged, or reemerged: a sentimental tomboy/sissy friendship.[78] Explicit representations of these relationships are difficult to find before World War II—or, rather, they had quite a few literary predecessors, but these were not queer. It is difficult to argue, for example, that Jo March and her sensitive pal Laurie were wholly excised from their social world because they were different. Moreover, although some critics hold that Jo and others like her "help masculinize effeminate boys,"[79] this ability seems to have been more important in the nineteenth century. Tomboy/sissy friendships seem to have disappeared after 1900, bided their time, and reconstituted themselves sometime during the Depression. When the tomboy/sissy dyad fully reappeared in the 1940s, isolation and gender dysfunction had become part of authors' repertoire. This was not necessarily a natural development. As the Landis interviews demonstrate, tomboys born between 1900 and 1920 did not make

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[78] Kristen Beth Proehl, "Battling Girlhood: Sympathy, Race, and the Tomboy Narrative in American Literature," Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 2011, chs. 4 and 5.
[79] Abate, Tomboys, xvii. See also Mary Elliott, "The Closet of the Heart: Legacies of Domesticity in Tomboy Narratives and Lesbian Pulp Fiction, 1850-1965," Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1999.

friends with effeminate boys, probably because they had nothing in common: only one boyish girl remembered being friends with a sissy as a child.[80] And unlike McCullers's narrator in "Like That," many tomboys in the Landis study wanted very much to grow up, to take some place in adolescent sexual culture, even if they were not sure how. "Always more of a pal to boys, playing base ball etc.," said "Connie," age twenty-five. "Always liked those who didn't like me. Only gone out with one fellow steadily. … Have maybe had dates with 20 boys more than once. […] Can't remember my first date, maybe it was junior year high school (age 17) perhaps only skating. Had almost no dates in school. All since."[81]

What accounts for this gap in representations of tomboys' friendships with effeminate boys between the 1900s and the 1940s? Why did post-World War II literary tomboys and sissies end up gravitating toward each other, even prior to adolescence, when similar portrayals are harder to find before the war? In brief, the inward turn and exclusion from adolescent sexual culture made it easier for authors to imagine tomboys and sissies as queer; it is quite possible that these two factors were even more important than cultural pressure to conform to "traditional" gender roles. In fact, this representational shift by and large occurred before 1945. It became logical to have tomboys and sissies bond by necessity because no one else would have them. McCullers was born in 1917; the younger Landis tomboys were born around the same time. She probably experienced the same sort of alienation and was affected by the inward turn, even though she grew up far from the supposed centers of youth culture. Tomboy angst was a product of these two historical forces, and boyish girls' literary friendships became

[80] Interview transcript, Case 19, January 10, 1935, folder 2, series III C, box 1, CL.
[81] Interview transcript, Case 18N, March 18, 1935, folder 2, series III D, box 2, CL.

insulated between single fellow gender nonconformists, not with a group of "masculine" pals.

But McCullers was instrumental in articulating changes in tomboy lore, particularly in the depiction of palhood (or its very absence) and its relationship to adolescent sexual culture. McCullers, of course, did not single-handedly steer the course of tomboy representations; rather, she sensed the affective conflicts many pubescent tomboys experienced, gave them voice, and contributed substantially to their circulation as lore. The minor author Ruth Seid ("Jo Sinclair") portrayed another sort of queer friendship in her novel The Changelings (1955), which depicted two adolescent tomboys coming together: one African American, one Jewish.[82] This was not a tomboy/sissy friendship, of course, but it may be seen as a variation of queerness—certainly in the 1950s interracial friendship between two gender-nonconforming girls could have raised eyebrows, both for its political implications and its gestures toward girls' homoeroticism. In fact, in the opening pages of the novel the Jewish girl's adolescent pals violently exclude her by sexually assaulting her, linking adolescent sexual culture with a traumatic threat to her existence. In journalist Hal Ellson's pulp paperback Tomboy (1950), a delinquent girl copes with her gang's moves to exclude her from her leadership position by joining forces with a weaker pal to hop a freight bound as far away from home as they can get.[83] Moving portrayals of queer friendship were made possible by changes that took place in the lives of tomboys born between 1900 and 1920, particularly those who (like McCullers and Seid) grew up to write about them in the 1940s and 1950s. In other words,

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[82] Jo Sinclair, The Changelings (New York: The Feminist Press, 1983).
[83] Hal Ellson, Tomboy (New York: Bantam, 1957).

tomboys as a group would always have pals, but palhood came to mean something much different after the 1930s.

Chapter 3 | Chums

The American psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan lectured extensively about the necessity of "chums" in the 1940s; colleagues published these thoughts after his death in The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry (1953).[1] According to Sullivan, in "preadolescence" (roughly between the ages of eight and a half and ten), a young person discovers "a specific new type of interest in a particular member of the same sex who becomes a chum or a close friend. This change represents the beginning of something like full-blown, psychiatrically defined love. In other words, the other fellow takes on a perfectly novel relationship with the person concerned: he becomes of practically equal importance in all fields of value."[2] Having a chum was more than having a friend—it could be a form of intimacy unequaled even in family life. As Sullivan went on, "All of you who have children are sure that your children love you; when you say that, you are expressing a pleasant illusion. But if you will look very closely at one of your children when he finally

[1] Harry Stack Sullivan, The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry, ed. Helen Swick Perry and Mary Ladd Gawel (New York: W. W. Norton, 1953). See the Editors' Preface (vii-x) for information about the lectures upon which the book drew. Sullivan's thoughts on chums dated from 1944-1945.
[2] Ibid., 245. Emphases in original.

finds a chum … you will discover something very different in the relationship—namely, that your child begins to develop a real sensitivity to what matters to another person."[3]

Born in rural New York in 1892—only a few years before many of the tomboys in this study—Sullivan was an awkward child with few friends. But at the age of eight, according to one biographical sketch, he made a close friend in Clarence Bellinger, an older boy who, like Sullivan, would grow up to be a prominent psychiatrist.[4] Though their friendship did not last into adulthood, it almost certainly had an impact on Sullivan's ideas about how humans learn to enmesh themselves into the world around them, ideally to develop a new concern for others in addition to advancing individual desires. In other words, having a chum was a same-sex erotic relationship, distinct from others in that it allowed the preadolescent to find himself (Sullivan, whose clinical practice in the 1920s centered on gay male schizophrenics, admitted that he knew little about girls' close friendships).[5] This process took place in an interpersonal childhood space aloof from the acquisitive, egoistic world of modern Western society.[6] Finding a chum went a good way toward building a human being's mental health, which would enable him to treat others with dignity as an adult. Thus, in Sullivan's thinking, same-sex eroticism not only was normal at the preadolescent stage of life, it also was central to the well-being of society.

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[3] Ibid.
[4] F. Barton Evans, Harry Stack Sullivan: Interpersonal Theory and Psychotherapy (London: Routledge, 1996), 27-28.
[5] Sullivan, The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry, 248. Sullivan treated schizophrenic gay men in the 1920s; this clinical experience, he admitted, limited his ability to discuss girls and women in much depth. He was also gay himself. For descriptions of his 1920s practice and its impact on queer life at midcentury, see Allan Bérubé, Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II (New York: Free Press, 2000), ch. 1, and Naoko Wake, Private Practices: Harry Stack Sullivan, the Science of Homosexuality, and American Liberalism (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011).
[6] Sullivan, The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry, 247.

Tomboys, too, had chums. Although tomboys tended to disdain girls as playmates, when it came to sharing confidences, girl chums were more important than boy pals, especially during adolescence, a little later than Sullivan's theory would have it. (Perhaps Sullivan could have noted this gendered age variation had he analyzed more women, especially former tomboys.) Ironically, the same youth culture that often alienated tomboys from the heterosocial world of dating and sexual experimentation allowed their chum relationships to assume greater emotional significance at adolescence. With diminishing access to boys as platonic pals, tomboys often found opportunities to bond with other girls, together furnishing small rooms of intimacy in which they could be themselves, or even try to unlearn their tomboyism. Between the 1910s and the 1930s, chums shared precious knowledge about puberty and sexuality (with varying degrees of accuracy) in an age when adolescents were quickly acquiring an air of knowingness without much corresponding increase in their formal sex education.[7] Girl chums helped tomboys make sense of it all.

Having a chum also helped some tomboys realize they had sexual desires for other girls. The same-sex eroticism that Sullivan observed did, in some cases, blossom into youthful sexual desires, sometimes even lesbian relationships. The overweening role of sexuality in youth culture seems to have allowed some adolescent tomboys to consider the possibility that they were lesbians by facilitating the simple recognition of same-sex attraction as sexual rather than "romantic"—or perhaps as a state that merged the two (for

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[7] Despite efforts of American health reformers in the 1910s, formal sex education in schools was too controversial to implement widely until the 1940s. Moran, Teaching Sex, ch. 2. Yet by the time thorough, expert-approved curricula became available in the 1940s and 1950s, school systems readily adopted them, usually with the enthusiastic support of parents. Susan K. Freeman, Sex Goes to School: Girls and Sex Education before the 1960s (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), ch. 1.

surely they were never two poles). Similar developments occurred in vernacular psychology. For girls born between 1900 and 1920, the contemporaneous shift from inversion to homosexuality in academic psychological thinking played out unevenly. By 1940, some young women strung together the pieces of their tomboy lives—their gender nonconformity, their intense chum relationships—into stories of recognizing homosexual desire. Other former tomboys who considered themselves heterosexual laid adult struggles to adjust sexually to obsessions with chums. Although medical and psychological authorities did not always believe tomboys became lesbians,[8] by the 1940s the relationship between tomboyism and lesbianism had become part of tomboy lore (or perhaps its lesbian counterpart). The evidence indicates that before the Second World War, most women who described themselves as tomboys did not seek out or express desire for homosexual contact. But having a chum could be one way into asking questions about one's sexuality, pondering alternatives, seeking satisfaction in the arms of another girl.

This chapter tracks changes in youth culture and their effects on tomboys' erotic relationships with chums (when they had them) between the 1910s and 1930s. It was not simply a matter of a tragic decline of homoerotic love between girls, paralleling the historiographical narrative of romantic affection between adult women offered by Carroll

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[8] Arguing against assertions by sex researcher George W. Henry and others that tomboys often became lesbians, the Landis study held that tomboyism—or at least girls' wish to be boys—was relatively normal. Sixty-one percent of the normal group in the Landis study had wanted to be boys. Only some of those who felt "resentment over the social handicap of being a woman" went on to "play a man's role … both in social relations and in sexual attachments." Landis et al., Sex in Development, 78-80. Although Henry wrote that "If a boy is obviously a sissy or a girl is obviously a tomboy it may be undesirable to emphasize the conventional sex pattern[,]" he also believed that "Well-adjusted adult men and women usually have been predominantly male or female from early childhood. A sissy or tomboy begins his or her psychosexual development with a handicap." Henry, Sex Variants, 1026.

Smith-Rosenberg, Lillian Faderman, and other pioneering chroniclers of women's history.[9] Rather, young girls continued to be warm companions long after the nineteenth-century model of same-sex romantic love supposedly disappeared. Moreover, psychoanalytic thinking began to allow for a "homosexual stage" in the course of normal childhood development, which made having an exclusive chum entirely normal yet added an erotic component to the relationship.[10] On the other hand, informal sexual information gleaned both from mass culture and from medical testimony, including knowledge of homosexuality, seeped into the silent thoughts and spoken conversations of young people. Increasingly frank discussion of sexuality, in turn, allowed some tomboys to interpret having a chum as an initial step toward adult lesbianism. In some cases this realization was a way of finding oneself; in others it was something from which to flee.

Western culture did not become more "sexualized" during the first decades of the twentieth century, as Michel Foucault has demonstrated.[11] But tomboy lore did, in fact, shift as young people engaged enthusiastically in sexual escapades, consumed suggestive media, and constructed their own heterosocial forums of "cheap amusements," school functions, and unchaperoned activities. Having a chum did not always make a tomboy a lesbian in her own mind, but with such notions as the sexual child at her disposal, it was easier to make the link. Essentially, as Americans' interest in sex took on a new character, interpreting one's tomboy experiences as lesbian came to make more intuitive

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[9] Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual"; Lillian Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present (New York: Harper, 1998 [1981]).

[10] Freud, Three Essays. Popular expressions of this theory abounded for decades. See, for example, Wilfrid Lay, Man's Unconscious Conflict: A Popular Exposition of Psychoanalysis (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1917), 134-136; Strain, The Normal Sex Interests of Children, 26-30.

[11] Foucault, The History of Sexuality, esp. parts 1 and 2.

sense. This is not at all to say that it was easier to be a lesbian—homophobic backlash sometimes reached terrifying heights in the 1930s[12]—but it did become easier to imagine oneself so. The tomboy-chum relationships described in the next pages demonstrate these two shifts.

Beyond Boys

By the 1900s, many social scientists, educators, and other adult observers noted that boys tended to form "gangs," while girls formed smaller "cliques" centered on a dominant personality or else paired off to become "best friends."[13] One female religious educator explained the difference to parents using gendered language: gangs formed because boys naturally wanted to "do something," while girls gathered into cliques to share feelings and "introspection."[14] Most tomboys, it seems, needed both gangs of pals and individual chums, though often at different stages of life. In this way, again, tomboys were girls who were like boys in most but not all ways. Certainly, they rebelled against gender stereotypes by palling around with boys and joining their gangs, but often they also found deep pleasure in the erotic bonds all "normal" girls were supposed to feel. At some point in their lives, many tomboys had at least one close girl friend. They usually came together around the time of puberty, when it became clear to tomboys that their bodies were changing ways that made them more like other girls than they had previously considered. Many times these adolescent friendships also introduced tomboys to the ways

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[12] George Chauncey, Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940 (New York: Basic Books, 1993), ch. 12.
[13] See, for example, "Crime, Juvenile," in The Americana Supplement, v. 1 (The Scientific American Compiling Department, 1911), 359.
[14] Mary Eliza Moxcey, Girlhood and Character (New York and Cincinnati: The Abingdon Press, 1916), 109-110.

of heterosexuality and the pleasures of a new heterosocial world. And in some cases, especially for tomboys who had no interest in dating, having a chum was a haven in this unfamiliar terrain.

The Landis interviews, unfortunately, do not provide extensive information about women's childhood friendships with girls or boys: the results of the few questions about chums went untabulated in the final study; follow-up questions went unasked; and explicit queries about chums featured only in the questionnaire for single women. It may be that this was because the report's authors assumed it was entirely normal for girls to have exclusive chums, rendering discussion of the topic less significant than answers about crushes on adults, for example. Crunching the numbers, the published study's composite case illustrating the "normal course of development" for young women indicated that a large number of all 295 subjects remembered having close girl friends (and developing crushes on them) during their prepubescent years—that is, around the time that Sullivan proposed but before the age that the tomboy women had them. The authors' invented normal composite, "Miss A.," "had occasional crushes on teachers and playmates her own age" before she was twelve. "These friendships with particular girls of her own age consisted of closer association with them than with other members in her group of friends."[15] It was all very benign, and not necessarily explicitly erotic. A normal woman drew apart from her chums at puberty.

It seems, however, that unlike the normal Miss A., tomboys formed close friendships with girls at or after age twelve. Additionally, they reserved their crush relationships for older girls, teachers, and other female beings whom they could admire, often silently, from a distance. Chums became important as their bodies changed and as

[15] Landis et al., Sex in Development, 121.

honesty about sexuality and reproduction became dear. In many cases, chums helped tomboys navigate the gulf between childhood ignorance and adult knowledge. Although tomboys sometimes learned about sexuality from their boy pals (especially dirty jokes and vulgar language) and older sisters, chums could provide a vast amount of additional information. When tomboys did not flee all sexual knowledge, as some did, they usually felt more comfortable talking sex with chums than with pals. The joy they found in "impersonal" relationships with boys during childhood could later be equaled by sharing confidences with girls.

For tomboys, becoming a woman and finding ways to accommodate the demands of changing femininity in the early twentieth century was difficult enough. Boyish girls often found themselves deserted by pals as their age cohort acceded to regimes of dating and popularity. Additionally, many mothers' reticence about explaining puberty and sex could lead to bewilderment, even resentment. It seemed important, therefore, to find an accepting alternative somewhere, and chums could fit the bill. Despite the absence of extensive information about the pleasures of being the close confidants of other girls in the Landis interviews, it is clear that these figures appeared in tomboys' lives more or less at the same age, and that they filled in an affective gap between two stages of life: first, early childhood, and second, late adolescence or young womanhood. Two case studies illustrate this point.

Lee

Born near New York City in December 1903, "Lee" was probably tougher than most girls her age—events in her life would have made her so. It is impossible to know if she

looked like a boy, but she said she was "Never satisfied with just girls [as a child]. Always wanted boys best as playmates." A chum appeared in her life when she was thirteen, about 1917.[16] This was an in-between age for Lee, occurring after a long period of turmoil and sexual exploitation, and before a similar time of betrayal and uncertainty. Although she described her early adolescent years as fraught with just as much anxiety as her childhood, it appears that at this age she developed a bit more confidence in facing her fears, and it may be that having a chum at the same time allowed her to see herself differently. In other words, her chum relationship might not have caused these tensions to ease, but it did coincide with efforts to resolve certain problems centering on sexuality and heterosocial life.

Lee remembered her first few years with fondness: she was her father's "favorite child." "I used to sleep with him when brother was born (I 3 years), he used to tickle my back, bring me flowers and give me a penny a day," she said. But her father was ill with tuberculosis and diabetes and attempted suicide because, as Lee said, he "Felt he was in the way." He succumbed to his sickness when Lee was five, probably in 1909. Her baby brother also died, apparently shortly thereafter. Alone in New York City with a daughter to care for, Lee's mother went to work and boarded her out. During the early twentieth century, placing children in boarding houses was not an unusual measure for poor mothers who needed to work after the death of a husband. Some preferred boarding children to placing them in orphanages.[17] Lee was moved from house to house until she was ten (1914 or so), during which time she only saw her mother once a month.[18]

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[16] Interview transcript, Case 20N, May 8, 1935, folder 2, series III D, box 2, CL.
[17] Linda Gordon, Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 108-109.
[18] Interview transcript, Case 20N.

Perhaps Lee chose to forget significant hardships of the years before her father died, but her life after his death was starkly worse. At age six, she was afflicted with St. Vitus Dance (chorea minor), a serious childhood illness likely caused by a strep throat infection, which she might have picked up in the boarding house.[19] She was hospitalized for eleven weeks, also suffering from "nervous prostration"[20]—not the type of diagnosis one might expect for a six-year-old girl, but Lee's life had become much more difficult. Sickness might have been the least of her perils, as what passed for her home life became frightening and confusing. Unsupervised children of all ages and adults mingled in the boarding houses where she lived, increasing the chances that young people like Lee would be mistreated or given a sense of unease around others. Indeed, this was the case. When she was six, a little boy showed her his penis while they were playing beneath a table. "I felt guilty but very interested," she said, reflecting a sense of childish curiosity and pleasure intermixed with a sense that something was wrong. Around the same time, she slept in the same bed with a thirteen-year-old girl. "Remember she used to get on top of me, and she beat me to keep me quiet," Lee said. "Felt I was being misused and resented it." The girl held Lee's mouth shut so she couldn't cry out. A couple of years later, another girl taught her how to masturbate using a pencil. This, apparently, was how Lee learned about copulation, although she had no idea how or where babies gestated until years later.[21] She went on to describe another incident: "At the same time [there

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[19] In children, St. Vitus Dance/chorea minor is an infectious disease of the immune system strongly correlated with poverty and overcrowding. Its symptoms can include rapid changes in mood, including flashes of anger or agitation. The name of the disease refers to uncontrollable jerking movements in the limbs, another common symptom. St. Vitus is the patron saint of dancers. Alberto Albanese and Joseph Jancovic, eds., Hyperkinetic Movement Disorders: Differential Diagnosis and Treatment (Chichester, UK: John Wiley and Sons, 2012), 175-177.
[20] Interview transcript, Case 20N.
[21] Ibid.

was] a man in that household who masturbated with me. I enjoyed his handling me, but felt guilty when he wanted me to touch him. He was 35 years and I 8 years." The man "Liked me to play with him and sit on his lap. … Felt that if mother found out I'd be punished. Son of landlady knew it. Man later arrested." It only happened twice, but Lee said she was "Glad to be through with it."[22] With the exception of the episode with the older girl, Lee's mixed feelings about her continual exploitation—the confusion she experienced from the coupling of pleasure with fear and hurt—expressed themselves in guilt, a sense that she was in the wrong, that her mother would blame her. Yet she did not mention any instance of being scolded for playing with boys. The happiness she experienced in the company of her pals probably accompanied a certain amount of relief that she was relatively safe among them.

Her mother remarried when Lee was ten, but she left her new husband nine months later and went to work again, as a live-in companion to an elderly woman. For six months Lee lived together with her mother, and as an adult she remembered this as the happiest period in her life.[23] The months with her stepfamily had been tense at best, and her recollections seem to indicate that her mother was growing increasingly "nervous"—vernacular psychological language for erratic thinking and behavior.[24] Lee recalled her mother beating her for things her stepsister had done: "Got so I'd jump when I saw her … thought she was going to hit me." Finally having her mother to herself after such a

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 20N, n.d. [1935].
[24] See Justine S. Murison, The Politics of Anxiety in Nineteenth-Century American Literature (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 12-13.

turbulent marriage must have felt wonderful, even if Lee did think "she was always maladjusted."[25] Certainly, this mother/daughter relationship was complex.

Things were to grow worse again with her mother, but not before Lee found at least one chum, who was in a position to help her try to untangle the emotionally complicated aspects of her affective history. It must have been difficult for Lee to fit in with other teenagers after the destabilizing events of her childhood: her mother was divorced and her father deceased, and she seems to have felt mostly alone in the absence of boy pals to serve as playmates. But when she was thirteen, she found a twelve-year-old girl friend, who might have been in the same grade. They grew close, but their physical affection was limited; it is not surprising that Lee felt uncomfortable with certain displays of intimacy. "Never, even as a child, liked to have girls kiss me," she said, adding that she never slept over at her friend's house. On the other hand, she sometimes felt unselfconscious letting others know about her chum relationship: "Just once in awhile walked down street with [our] arms around each other."[26] Even though this physical affection was minimal, she experienced emotional closeness at a time in her life when she probably needed it dearly.

Between the ages of twelve and fifteen (about 1916-1919)—after her mother's divorce and before yet another traumatic event—Lee learned a great deal about her body and sexuality, both from her mother and, perhaps more significantly, from her friends. Although her younger chum might not have taught her a great deal of "objective" information—Lee already knew much about sex—the two likely explored the meanings of their feelings about boys and toward their changing bodies. Her mother did confer

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[25] Interview transcript, Case 20N.
[26] Ibid.

some knowledge when Lee was twelve, possibly after Lee saw her in the nude: "Mother said I would have pubic hair when older … Felt kind of proud." When she menstruated, at fourteen, Lee was nonplussed; her mother had explained it ahead of time. Lee said she "felt grown-up." Her mother also told her where babies grew and how they were born. Even though Lee had learned all about intercourse during her years in boarding houses, this had been a mystery: "Previously believed they [babies] came through mouth."[27]

But Lee, like many girls, did not go to her mother every time she needed information about sex. After her troubling boarding-house experiences, it must have been difficult to make sense of normal teenage sexuality, regulated by young people and their parents alike during this historical period of transition between formal courtship and dating.[28] Some sources of information were absolutely forbidden. Around the same age that she found her chum, Lee began perusing "medical magazines" she was not supposed to look at. A girl friend (probably her chum) explained the word fuck, although Lee had almost certainly already heard it. Lee could have given her chum just as much information, although she does not seem to have shared her stories of molestation. During the years she had her chum, she came into a funny feeling: "Went through a stage when I was shy and afraid of men—liked them but afraid—age 13 or 14 years." "Aside from feeling terribly guilty about masturbation with this man [in the boarding house], I had no curiosity until age of 13 or 14," she emphasized.[29] In other words, Lee's chum was present as she tried to see herself as a sexual subject: a young woman with the capability to express desire and attempt to fulfill it. It is clear that Lee and her chum came together during a period of questioning and confusion, perhaps for both of them. Lee had known

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Bailey, From Front Porch to Back Seat, ch. 1.
[29] Interview transcript, Case 20N.

boy pals and obtained a great deal of information about sexuality, but like other tomboys, she struggled to find a way to mobilize this knowledge in ways that felt comfortable.

Lee entered her teens just as the United States mobilized for war. She had her first date at fifteen, in about 1919. As she told Landis, she was already feeling guilty for experiencing pleasure at the hands of an adult and felt "shy and afraid of men" at this time. Her mixed feelings about this date are understandable: although she was "Very excited, self-conscious quivered all over," she remembered "wishing it were someone else. Didn't like this boy." The date was "fixed up," perhaps by her chum.[30] Still trying to find her place in the world of normal adolescence and living with an increasingly "nervous" mother, she would have encountered adults' admonitions and threats about being sexually active. During the war years, many young women, some as young as Lee, migrated to cities in search of work and to mingle with young men in the military. Feverish public concern about "girl delinquents" led to involuntary commitments both in private charitable homes, such as New York's venerable House of the Good Shepard, and in public juvenile halls established in many states by the early 1910s. New York City reformers, some of whom had worked with private institutions, persuaded lawmakers to open a public facility in 1910.[31] Here, young women were inspected for venereal disease and often held as wards of the state until they convinced authorities they could "go right." Meanwhile, soldiers and sailors were treated to stern lectures (including graphic illustrations of syphilis infections) about the dangers of consorting with girls who congregated around military bases and embarkation points, looking for a good time.[32]

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Mary E. Odem, Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 113-115.
[32] Moran, Teaching Sex, 72.

Soldiers infected with venereal disease were not eligible for Veterans Administration benefits in the 1920s,[33] but during the war military and medical authorities blamed sexually active young women, not their partners, for a public health crisis.

In other words, the cultural association between girls' sexual freedom and delinquency was strong in 1919. Considering the circumstances, therefore, it is not difficult to imagine that Lee's entry into dating life led her "maladjusted" mother to panic and send her to reform school. To Lee, it all started when she refused to take an aspirin because she learned in school that it was bad. (Aspirin was a relatively new and seemingly uncontroversial synthetic drug, used then as now to lower fevers and kill pain; it is unclear why teachers would have told students it was dangerous.)[34] When Lee entered the reform school, a nurse took a "smear"—probably a Wasserman test for syphilis, indicating that her mother or school matrons believed she was sexually active—and told her that "Mother sent me there because I was disobedient. Mother told me it would be good for me." Lee mentioned the exact address of the school, but her memory here was faulty (or there was an error in transcribing her interview); the building at that location in Brooklyn is a redbrick row house, not the "Gray stone building" she recalled.[35]

But in other respects, her memory of the experience was vivid. The school had a "Small dark office and my room. Bars before the windows, locked up there for 2 weeks … not allowed to read or do anything." She was probably held there until she was

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[33] Anne C. Rose, Psychology and Selfhood in the Segregated South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 19.
[34] Diarmuid Jeffreys, Aspirin: The Remarkable Story of a Wonder Drug (New York: Bloomsbury, 2004).
[35] Interview transcript, Case 20N. This description of the building is taken from an image on Google Maps, accessed January 15, 2012.

allowed to stay with the rest of the girls, and was released in two more weeks, about a month after she was first committed. "Used to cry a lot, while there and since," she said. "… Always felt it took something out of me." Even at the time of her interview, when she was thirty-one, Lee was baffled about what she had done to deserve such severe punishment: "Remember a letter to cousin, ought to be ashamed of myself, I didn't know why." Even though authorities at the school told her she didn't belong there, Lee always had "a terrible feeling lest others think I had done something terrible[.]" She quit high school when she was fifteen, the same year she was sent to reform school. It may be that her sense of shame led to this departure; certainly her neighborhood peers and teachers would have ostracized her. At some point she took a short business course and later studied nursing for two years. At the time of her interview, she had been working in a doctor's office for five years. She seems to have had few good friends of her own age, if any.[36]

What are we to make of Lee's friendship with her chum? Her history is more harrowing than many others', but it does appear that having a close friend could be a way for a tomboy like her to feel her way toward aspects of adolescent life that attracted her. Lee's early teenage years were a time when she felt more stable in her relationships with others, including her mother and her chum. Although she was apprehensive about dating and the new ways she was expected to associate with men and boys, she managed to take steps to fit in and exercise sexual independence. Being fixed up with a boy made her feel special, even if she did not care for him. Having a chum coincided with these life changes, indicating that close friendships with girls could help adolescent tomboys comprehend the new expectations placed upon them, particularly at a time when it was

[36] Interview transcript, Case 20N.

not at all clear how adolescent girls and boys would relate to each other in the future. Lee's peers probably saw her as somewhat awkward and in need of being pushed into the world of dating, yet apparently it was only adults who punished her for "disobedience." The evidence points to the possibility that having a chum, being able to walk arm-in-arm with her through the city streets, and together unearthing secrets about the human body and its capacity for pleasure could help a tomboy feel accepted when adults could not always be trusted.

Bert

At age nineteen, "Bert" did not mention any difficulty in trusting adults. Then again, she did not encounter the molestation and mistreatment at the hands of her elders that Lee did. Bert was a young woman with plenty of curiosity about sex, dating, and love, but she thought there was one significant obstacle to participating in the activities that preoccupied her peers: her body. She stood just over five feet tall and weighed nearly 200 pounds. According to her case history, she was taking thyroid medication; as the doctor noted, "She must be an endocrine type of case[.]"[37] Bert said that except for a younger brother, all her family members were "stout," adding, "I the stoutest." She even put her father on a diet, perhaps after learning about nutrition in home economics classes at the settlement house where she occasionally worked.[38]

Her feelings of sticking out among her age group went back at least to early adolescence. When she graduated from grammar school at age thirteen, she "Insisted on

[37] Physician's Report, Case 61N, June 5, 1935, folder 5, series III D, box 2, CL.
[38] Interview transcript, Case 61N, April 16 and June 5, 1935.

being placed at back of stage" because she was "so stout."[39] It was about 1929, and as an adolescent girl Bert surely felt doubly out of place as American mass-market purveyors of Parisian fashions were selling modish garments for women with slender, boyish figures.[40] Bert also could have picked up these messages from her peers, lessons in school, and her older sister's True Story magazines, which she insisted were "trash" but secretly enjoyed reading. She knew her size made her undesirable for dating and had trouble seeing herself as a sexual subject and a sexual object. "When I do these things [masturbate], I just think what I'm going to look like when I'm 100 lbs lighter," she said, making it sound as if she were trying to "reduce," which countless American women were also attempting in the 1930s.[41] "My body so altogether different from other girls," she continued. "I wonder about boys, marriage etc." Because of the hardships of the Depression, she had more time than she wished to think about her body and its apparent aberrance. "What causes my [sexual] daydreams is no work to do half the time—nothing else to do," she said. There was a fellow she had liked very much for four years, but he regarded her as a companion of convenience: "We're very friendly but he sees me only when there is no one else. Makes me kind of mad. Came to me when he was out of a job, and the minute he gets a job he takes someone else out."[42]

It was not just her body that made her feel like an anomaly. Bert was like many tomboys in that she had a hard time reconciling heterosexual curiosity with her predilection for masculine activities and gender expression as a young woman. Having a

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Veronica Manlow, Designing Clothes: Culture and Organization of the Fashion Industry (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2009), 44-45.
[41] Historians have traced the explosion of anti-fat public health campaigns to the 1890s and the first wave of obsession with dieting to the 1920s. Peter N. Stearns, Fat History: Bodies and Beauty in the Modern West (New York: New York University Press, 2007), ch. 1.
[42] Interview transcript, Case 61N.

body that did not conform to the expectations of fashion and health advice surely intensified this problem. Bert grew up palling around with boys, but she surely played sports on girls' teams, too. As an occasional worker in "Gen. Recreation" at a New York settlement house, she had probably played sports there for many years and was hired to work with younger girls after she came of age. "I'm not built for athletics but love it," she said. As a child, she thought "all girls were sissies." "I was always told, why don't you play with the girls," she remembered. "I hate it. Mother doesn't see why girls should be athletic." It is possible, too, that her mother was trying to discourage her from sports because of her size, not just her expression of boyish masculinity. She said that as a girl she sought companions based only on their athletic capability: "I didn't care anything about race or nationality, so long as they could play." Her love of sports and boyishness continued into young womanhood. When she thought about the type of man she might fall in love with, she imagined someone as "athletic" as she. She had had little use for fussing over her clothes and hair as a child, and as a nineteen-year-old, she was "annoyed" at the idea of wearing makeup. She was close with her sister, but, as she explained, "My sister so different, feminine. I the pal type, not so good when you're 19 years[.]"[43] Landis knew what "the pal type" meant, writing, "She has been pals with many boys, her position seems to be mainly that of the comfortable friend to resort to when 'your best girl is out of town'. There have been very few intimacies though the desire on her part has been very great."[44]

Despite her evident frustration with her peers' judgment of her size and sexual desirability, Bert was far from a tortured soul. The chums she found as she began puberty

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 61N, n.d. [1935].

surely gave her a sense that a fat tomboy could find an affective space within adolescent sexual culture, in which she yearned to immerse herself. Even though she disdained girls as "sissies," when she was twelve (in 1928) she and two best friends went around in a "trio." She favored one, "a pretty blue eyed blonde." Besides being "stout," Bert was also Russian Jewish and probably dark-haired (her father had brown hair), so it is possible that this fair girl's acceptance and affection helped her feel included in American beauty culture and perhaps more at home with the process of Americanization. She and her "pretty" chum exchanged kisses and hugs and spent the night at each other's house. (It is unclear from the transcript, but they might have included the other girl in these overnight visits. Bert was physically affectionate only with the blond girl.) Bert and her chum also had the same birthday, making them feel more akin.[45]

For Bert, age twelve was one of the most significant years of her life, when having a best girl friend or two would have helped her navigate a number of turning points. Indeed, when asked throughout her interview how old she was when various events in the development of her body and her sexuality occurred, she repeatedly mentioned her twelfth year, especially the summer of 1928. It was then that she menstruated, had her first boyfriend, and started masturbating. Menarche was not an earth-shaking experience. "I knew what it was all about," she said. "I just picked it up from my sister and her friends. … I think for the first minute I was scared, and then felt very important." The boy she liked was fifteen, and she was flattered by his attention. "No actual dates, but a terrible crush. I thought I was in love," she said. She later added, "He was an older boy. Proud because I got to go with him." Of course, pride cannot be mustered without an audience of sorts, so Bert surely gained respect from her friends,

[45] Interview transcript, Case 61N.

older sister, and perhaps her parents through this young man's acceptance. This was the first time a boy had ever regarded her as something more than a pal. Considering that she was still a boyish girl in addition to being obese, going with him almost certainly let her feel that she did not have to change in order to fit in—an extension of how she felt among her chums. Masturbation accompanied her attraction to this young man. She said that it started "About the time I matured—busts began to grow—menstruation"; she thought she might have "heard about it from other girls."[46] These "other girls" might have been her sister and her sister's friends, but Bert's own trio of chums were in the habit of sharing intimate spaces and many confidences. Bert was still boyish as an adolescent girl, and her chums evidently let her continue to be so.

Sadly, the pretty girl whom Bert loved so dearly died, changing her friendship with the other girl in the threesome: "we left were friendly but kind of lost," she remembered. This loss apparently occurred as she was about to go to high school, at age thirteen (about 1929). As she recalled, the transition was upsetting: "in grammar school we were all one family, felt lost in high school—very unhappy." It was made clear to her—probably by her family, perhaps by school authorities—that there were limits to her aspirations. "I think everybody has big plans to be president or his secretary," she mused.[47] ("Secretary" was formerly a man's profession. The job had been feminized by the 1930s; woman secretaries ranked several notches above stenographers, typists, and switchboard operators in the pink-collar sector.[48] Being the "secretary" of Franklin

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[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Dorothy Sue Cobble, The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), ch. 7; Sharon Strom, Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

Roosevelt—arguably the most powerful president up to that point—would have been a terrific achievement for a young woman.) Bert continued, "I wanted to study nursing. It would take too long, couldn't afford it. … I felt it was terribly unjust that I couldn't do the thing I wanted to[.]"[49] She did graduate when she was sixteen, in 1932, and managed to attend business school for a full year, which was longer than the few months other women (like Lee) took to finish such a course. As an underemployed woman who apparently lived at home, lasting extrafamilial connections were hard to come by. She said she had had "One friend for a long time," but it is not clear from her transcript if this was her chum or another friend she made later. "Usually go with a group of girls," she said. She never had another chum like the one she had when she was twelve. Instead, as an adult she nourished crushes on male "superiors" and strangers, who she realized were probably nothing like what she imagined.[50]

Nonetheless, it is clear that having a chum made Bert feel good at a time when the stirring winds of urban youth culture might otherwise have pushed her toward a sense of exclusion. The loss of her chum occurred as Bert was imagining ways to fit into the wider world, beyond family and school. Tellingly, in her interview she did not speak of her body with deprecation when asked about her early childhood; it might not have been much of a social problem until she was thirteen or so. Of course, close friendships during adolescence do not necessarily endure through adulthood, and Bert might have remembered her chum with greater warmth because she had died. But her history indicates that one way for tomboys to weather the gales of adolescent relationships and demands for gender conformity was to have chums who accepted them. The fact that she

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[49] Interview transcript, Case 61N.
[50] Ibid.

described her chum as attractive—a great deal more so than Bert thought of herself—demonstrates that it was important for some tomboys to forge attachments to girls who were in some way better able to fit in. Bert was one tomboy who refused to give up sports and a distaste for the accouterments of femininity, even into young womanhood. Perhaps the social difficulties that came from being a case of "pathological obesity" (in her doctor's words) allowed her to remain boyish—she felt sexually undesirable because of her body and therefore might not have seen the point in attempting a feminine transformation. On the other hand, it may be that residual feelings of being accepted by a pretty girl despite her boyishness and her size gave her a certain nonchalance about maintaining her gender expression.

Tomboy friendships did not exist outside history. Lee and Bert were born in the same metropolitan area to families who seem to have been of the respectable working-class sort, but they were separated by over twelve years. The details of their stories are vastly different, not just in terms of biographical events but also in the historical contexts that influenced their lives. Born in December 1903, Lee came of age in an era when many adults saw the future of gender expression and relations between women and men as terribly unsettled. Moral reformers improvised methods of policing the sexuality of young women (especially those of the working class), gradually discovering that working with law enforcement and judicial authorities often had unintended consequences. Mothers (like Lee's) sometimes initiated delinquency charges against adolescent girls who preferred leisure to paid labor that could support the family.[51] Moral and sex panics during and after the Great War affected education, paid work, and recreation, with teachers, social workers, and parents seeking to keep children out of harm's way. And

[51] Odem, Delinquent Daughters, 167-172.

advocates of mandatory schooling and the abolition of child labor sought to change perceptions of childhood innocence among working-class parents.[52] These contests of power between women and men and young people and their elders formed a significant part of the backdrop to Lee's relationship with her chum beginning at age twelve (about 1916) and her brief but traumatic incarceration at age fifteen (about 1919).

By contrast, Bert's early childhood in the 1910s and 1920s was apparently more stable, only partly because her family was not plunged into poverty at the death of a breadwinner. When Bert was born, in 1916, moral conflicts between young people and adults about leisure, money, labor, and sexuality were well under way. These issues were not completely resolved at the time of the Depression, but as Bert forged a deep friendship with another girl and simultaneously came to experience heterosexual desire, in about 1928, childrearing experts often advised parents that it was natural for teenage girls and boys to want to date, neck, and pet.[53] Although they usually counseled parents to have frank "talks" with teenagers about controlling their urges and (often) finding eugenically appropriate partners, they assured readers that sexual desires were normal. Paradoxically, youthful sexual experimentation was both dangerous—concerns about delinquent girls only intensified—and necessary for the health of the nation and the "race." Therefore, when Bert found her chum and went on her first "date" (at a significantly younger age than Lee), she was participating in adolescent sexual culture in a way for which Lee was punished.

Both tomboys, then, seem to have desired, needed, and nourished relationships with chums, but for slightly different reasons, which seem to have had as much to do with

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[52] Gary S. Cross, The Cute and the Cool: Wondrous Innocence and Modern American Children's Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 23.
[53] See, for example, Wembridge, "Petting and the Campus."

historical circumstances as with variations in personality and life history. Being a boyish girl was far from a new experience in the early twentieth century, but tomboys' place in adolescent sexual culture grew more ambiguous. The intimacy of chum relationships could provide one venue for sorting out resulting difficulties for the tomboys who had them (of course, not all of them did). Away from parents, siblings, boys, and even other girls, these friendships could smooth over transitions in gender expression when tomboys wanted to become more feminine. Yet they could also grant girls the freedom to continue being boyish in adolescence; it appears that sometimes chums—even those considered feminine—accepted tomboys without judgment.

The intervention of mass culture, commercial amusements, and schooling made adolescent chums more important to tomboys around the First World War. Bert harbored more curiosity about adolescent sexual culture than Lee did, and at a younger age, probably because it had coalesced into a more commanding presence in young people's lives in the 1920s than it had been earlier in the century. (It is also true that Lee might have felt more tentative about her own adult sexual subjectivity, considering her history.) Lee, therefore, came of age at a time when heterosocial and heterosexual relationships were seemingly shifting at a faster pace and more problematically than they were during Bert's adolescence. Urban, working-class girls Lee's age rebelled against parents by stepping out with young men during adolescence—groups of young people had been doing so since the 1890s[54]—but by the late 1920s many adults considered this behavior normal, even for white, middle-class girls. Chums could help tomboys locate themselves in this world; they could also help them choose to ignore it. As Lee's case demonstrates, chums could convey sensitive information about normal gender expression and sexuality.

[54] Peiss, Cheap Amusements; Chinn, Inventing Modern Adolescence.

Although Lee went through a two-year period of shyness around boys and men, she was fixed up on a date in about 1919, perhaps at her chum's suggestion. It is unclear why she was sent to reform school, but Lee indicated that her mother was frustrated by what she perceived as her daughter's rebelliousness—her refusal to swallow an aspirin served as the pretext. The shame Lee recalled seems to have been so overwhelming that she left school and perhaps withdrew from her friendships.

Lee went on her first date in the midst of a national moral panic about young women's sexual expression. In contrast, Bert got to "go with" her first, older "boyfriend" at a time (1928) when many young people and their knowing elders mocked the Mrs. Grundys and wizened chaperones still abroad. It seems that Bert's pretty chum gave her a sense that even though she was a fat tomboy and therefore undesirable to many young men, she could still find respect among her peers. At age nineteen, she had not been able to shed her pal status, which left her frustrated because she sorely wanted to date. On the other hand, besides possible efforts to lose weight, she was not in any hurry to become acceptably feminine. Even though her chum's life ended tragically and Bert felt "lost" in high school, having a dear friend just as she menstruated for the first time, had her first date, and began masturbating helped her realize she was not unlike other girls. Bert's history demonstrates that chums could help tomboys find a place to be themselves in 1920s youth culture.

Tomboys, Chums, and Lesbian Desire

As historians of sexuality have noted, the early twentieth century saw the category "homosexual" vie with and eventually replace "invert" in the American lexicon of

psychology and sexology.[55] To recall, inverts were women and men whose gender expression, comportment, and sexual desire mirrored those of the "opposite" sex. A woman who appeared mannish, was sexually aggressive, and desired other women (usually passive, feminine types) was an invert, while a feminine woman with same-sex desires was not. Psychologists and sexologists sometimes used "inversion" interchangeably with "psychical hermaphroditism," denoting a woman or man who had the psychological qualities (including desire) of the "opposite" sex, or sometimes both sexes at once. In contrast, the later term homosexual was more encompassing. It included women and men of a variety of gender expressions who had same-sex partners. In high and vernacular psychological discourses of the 1930s, when Agnes Landis conducted her interviews, the notion of "universal bisexuality"—that no individual was entirely female or male—was quite common.

This was an idea from the early years of the century—promulgated especially by Sigmund Freud and the early German sexologist Otto Weininger—and confirmed by more recent discoveries of hormonal function in the burgeoning science of endocrinology.[56] During the interviews, at the beginning of a line of questions designed to elicit memories of crushes and other "homoerotic" experiences, Landis explained that everyone had elements of femaleness and maleness.[57] Following Weininger's hypothesis of universal bisexuality, some social science texts plotted "female" and "male" as poles of a spectrum and suggested that most people fit somewhere relatively close to, but not

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[55] George Chauncey, "From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and the Changing Conception of Female Deviance," Salmagundi 58-59 (Fall 1982/Winter 1983): 114-146.
[56] Joanne Meyerowitz, How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 23-28.
[57] Landis et al., Sex in Development, 51-52.

directly at, their proper pole.[58] Crossing the center of the spectrum and moving far toward the "wrong" pole, however, was dangerous, a possible indicator of homosexual desire or at the very least gender maladjustment.

In this historical context, some lesbians who had been tomboys in the early twentieth century came to see their youthful chum relationships as presaging their adult homosexuality. By the 1930s, many of them were using psychological references to explain the link. Writing late in the decade, "Diana Frederics" (the pseudonym of educator and author Frances Rummell)[59] recalled that as a tomboy growing up among a houseful of boys—including three brothers and a few college-student boarders—there was "no secret mystery of charm enshrouding the male sex[.] My impressionable years were flooded with male habits, male viewpoints, male psychology."[60] These influences, she thought, contributed to her tomboyishness and, by extension, her lesbianism. She associated with boy pals constantly, but during her senior year of high school, she met a chum, Ruth, who stirred her heart. Confused about her feelings, she perused a sexological text—probably Richard von Krafft-Ebing's widely circulated Psychopathia Sexualis—in her father's library. "I felt like another 'case' on file in a psychological laboratory," she wrote. "I was, then, a 'pervert,' 'uranian,' 'homosexual'—no matter, all added up to the same thing."[61] Reflecting changes in medical and psychological discourse, Diana

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[58] See, for example, Lewis M. Terman and Catharine Cox Miles, Sex and Personality: Studies in Masculinity and Femininity (New York: Russell & Russell, 1936). Terman and Miles devised the M-F Test, which rendered subjects' gender expression along a gradient.
[59] A 2010 episode of the PBS series History Detectives uncovered the author's real name. See also http://outhistory.org/wiki/Diana_Frederics:_Diana,_A_Strange_Autobiography,_1939, accessed January 27, 2012.
[60] Diana Frederics, Diana: A Strange Autobiography (New York: New York University Press, 1995, 10.
[61] Ibid., 18. The word urning was coined by Karl-Heinrich Ulrichs. In Psychopathia Sexualis, Krafft-Ebing used the word to describe individuals who sexually desired others of the same sex.

believed these early twentieth-century categories were different words for a single phenomenon. The bright lines of archaic sexological distinctions had grown hazy and dim, an entire array of possibilities merged into "the same thing."

If the book was, in fact, Psychopathia Sexualis, Diana probably saw herself in passages discussing women gender nonconformists. "The female urning may chiefly be found in the haunts of boys," wrote Krafft-Ebing. "She is the rival in their play, preferring the rocking-horse, playing at soldiers, etc., to dolls and other girlish occupations."[62] Horrified, Diana began to avoid Ruth: "My first step toward psychological treatment was compelling and involuntary. I did not even recognize it as such. Not yet in control of my emotions, I depended on instinct—and my instinct was to hide."[63] At age sixteen (about 1923), the author's first hint that she was a lesbian arrived as she tried to make sense of an infatuation with a chum, and, interpreting her adolescent feelings from the vantage of the late 1930s, she cast her subsequent actions in the language of vernacular psychology.

Frances Rummell's birth year (1907) coincided with many Landis subjects'.[64] The few who recognized their desires as homosexual[65] usually also understood the eroticism

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[62] Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis, 398-399.
[63] Frederics, Diana, 20.
[64] Rummell was thirty-two in 1939, the year Diana was published. The California Death Index lists Frances Rummell's birthplace as Missouri, not Kentucky, as she wrote in Diana. Ancestry.com, California Death Index, 1940-1997 (database online). Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2000, accessed February 5, 2012. It is unclear how many Landis subjects were born in 1907, for the final study tabulated ages, not birth years. Yet the interviews were conducted over about two and a half years (December 1934-May 1937) on women aged fifteen to thirty-five. The youngest subjects were born around 1920; the oldest in the 1890s.
[65] The final study counted only nine subjects who had had "overt" homosexual experiences, but another ninety-four had "Intense mental and physical attachment to women" and were "more attached to women than to men friends," although they had not had "complete overt experience." (The report did not explain the meaning of "complete.") A further 112 subjects had had crushes on girls after the age of sixteen and were open to the idea of "interest in women either in phantasy or if social restraint were removed[.]" Landis et al., Sex in Development, 286.

of their adolescent chum relationships as harbingers of adult sexual expression. (Significantly, none explicitly "identified" as lesbian or homosexual, as we would understand it today, although Sex in Development reported that one "had worked out a form of adjustment which did not include heterosexual orientation.")[66] Although the interviews' probable setting (a psychiatric hospital office) and explicit purpose (to gather scientific data about psychosexual development) would have influenced the normal subjects to reckon with their histories using psychological terminology, not all of them would have been exposed to its language and logic in their formal education. And the psychiatric patients must have learned something about psychology during the course of their treatment, but this is not to say that they did not arrive at the hospital without its language at their disposal. For many subjects, normal and abnormal, psychological vocabulary came from somewhere outside traditional academic settings—from media, most likely, or informal conversations among friends. Additionally, coming of age at a time when young people were expected to experiment with sexuality influenced the ways these young women thought about their desires. Although the subjects of the cases that follow did not call themselves lesbians, their thinking about same-sex desire demonstrates that Rummell was not unique. A psychological interpretation of abnormal sexual development was within the ken of ordinary young women.

Harriet

At age twenty-two, "Harriet" had many questions about her sexual feelings, which accounted for her willingness to provide extensive information for the Landis study. "An exceptionally frank cooperative person," the psychologist noted. "Eager for knowledge

[66] Ibid., 151.

and help on some of the problems that are troubling her. … Really welcomes an opportunity to talk." These "problems" included deriving intense pleasure from masturbation, which made Harriet feel guilty, and whether she was a virgin: "Once while necking I came home and found blood on my pants. He'd had his finger in my vagina—do you suppose it could have ruptured my hymen? What to do when you're so passionate you can't stop at a kiss. What shall a girl do?"[67] If the word lesbian is defined strictly as a woman with exclusive sexual desire for other women, Harriet plainly did not fit the bill. But at some point, in her teens or even earlier, she learned about homosexuality and wondered if it described her. As a young woman, she implicitly connected her sporadic wishes for sexual contact with other girls to the eroticism of her close friendships.

A second-generation German-Jewish New Yorker born in 1913, Harriet wanted to be a boy "lots … Since a little girl—as long as I can remember." Aware of the early twentieth-century feminist critique of gender inequality, the social impact of which must have suffused her young life, she explained, "Boys had more freedom. Girls have to cow-tow [sic] to others. … As a child I restricted, they not. If I got hurt I was punished by having to sew doilies."[68] Her penance was gendered: for boyish infractions, she was forced to engage in intricate needlework, a skill imparted in formal industrial schooling to many working-class girls in the Progressive Era.[69] There was also a well-established air of female respectability surrounding the skilled needle trades for Jewish women.[70] Yet, like other tomboys, Harriet shrugged off most distinctions between herself and the boys

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[67] Interview transcript, Case 82N, November 20, 1935, box 2, series III D, folder 7, CL.
[68] Ibid.
[69] David Nasaw, Schooled to Order: A Social History of Public Schooling in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 125; Karen Graves, Girls' Schooling During the Progressive Era: From Female Scholar to Domesticated Citizen (New York: Routledge, 1998), 114.
[70] Glenn, Daughters of the Shtetl, 18-30.

she knew: "No important differences except boys extra freedom."[71] Even as a girl, she knew some social distinctions were unjust.

But being a tomboy, having some access to boyish ways, arts, experiences, and knowledge, gave Harriet an unconventional awareness of sexuality. This was not a unique experience for tomboys, but many preferred to sequester themselves from such knowledge for as long as possible. Harriet was not inordinately curious as a child; she simply happened upon bits of information haphazardly. The dirty words boys scribbled on walls didn't faze her. She "understood most of them" and seemed unimpressed with vulgarity as a girl. She explained that before she was six (about 1919), she learned about sex "In the street[.]" "This girl friend a tomboy also," she remembered. "Climbing in the woods. Boys on the street said unless we'd do something they wouldn't let us up [in the trees]. I asked her what it was about. She told me about 'fuck' and what it meant." This information had little effect on Harriet: "Didn't bother me in the least. Never thought about."[72]

But her boy pals could only provide a certain amount of information about sexuality, almost certainly because they had less access to gendered knowledge about menstruation, reproduction, and childbirth. Harriet continued to piece together bits of information, depending more and more on her two older sisters. She remembered her mother's efforts at obfuscation with humor: "Asked mother where I came from. She said bought me in 5 & 10. I was a cheap child." "Understood nothing till I was 14 yrs.," she continued. "Went to work and girls talked."[73] Labor, in fact, was a central experience of working-class youth in the early twentieth century, and places of employment were a

[71] Interview transcript, Case 82N.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.

primary venue for the exchange of sexual knowledge. Young women of varying ages talked among themselves and with young men who worked with or supervised them.[74] Harriet completed high school when she was eighteen (about 1931), yet her entry into the labor force four years earlier suggests that she was working part time. Work life was central to Harriet's acquisition of accurate knowledge about sexuality. At the time of her interview, she worked as a typist for a "concern that publishes sex books and biology." Her job dispelled her belief that "men had permanent erection."[75] She evidently had no formal sex education, but being a tomboy perhaps allowed her to ease into what she came to know. The easygoing manner in which boys discussed sexuality put her at some advantage when it came to assimilating intimate knowledge.

Unlike many tomboys, Harriet became an enthusiastic participant in the adolescent sexual culture of the 1920s and early 1930s and was a bit of a flapper. She had no memory of her first date, but getting ready for them was exciting. "[D]ates always made me feel grown up," she said. "Wanted to wear lip stick, rouge and high heels." Her "first affair" occurred when she was fourteen, in 1927 or 1928, and she went with this boy for quite some time. At about the same time as her first date, she "Had a grand time" at a Christmas party thrown by a girl friend, at which she flirted with a fellow who was singing "My Blue Heaven" (a chart-breaking hit in 1928). "I asked boy if he was particularly blue—wearing a blue tie," she remembered. "I was particularly fond of this boy and at this party had one of my best times with him." She added that she had kept a party hat as a souvenir until the week before her interview. He continued to occupy her thoughts until she was about seventeen: "When I knew I was going to a party I'd picture

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[74] Peiss, Cheap Amusements, 40-41; Chinn, Inventing Modern Adolescence, ch. 2.
[75] Interview transcript, Case 82N.

this boy kissing me in kissing games, putting his arm around my waist. Always this same boy." Sexual touching excited her. As she explained about the man she was seeing at the time of her interview, "We've done quite a bit of necking. … Necked to the extent that his hands have wandered over my body." She also discovered masturbation while taking a bath after a date. Although she felt guilty about it, she continued to touch herself fairly often.[76] Harriet, in other words, was no stranger to the parties, dancing, and heterosexual experimentation that supposedly typified life for young people in the Jazz Age. Unlike other tomboys, she did not struggle to transform herself at adolescence but rather seems to have taken to her own confident style of femininity.

What, then, to make of Harriet's erotic interests in women, of which she spoke without much evident shame? To a great extent, they were bound up in chum relationships. Before she was twelve (1925-26), she had only one chum, with whom she seems to have bonded at age ten. They remained friends twelve years later, when Harriet spoke to Landis. It is unlikely that this was the tomboy who told Harriet what "fuck" meant. Instead, her new friend helped her find her way through adolescence and perhaps ponder whether her exuberant erotic desires for other girls made her a lesbian. The male body had never interested Harriet much (perhaps because she had learned about it as a tomboy), but, she admitted, "I love to see a girl in the nude." She and her chum were openly affectionate, apparently since they first met. "I kiss her and I pinch her," Harriet said. When she was sixteen, the girls began spending the night together, although how often is unclear. At this same age, Harriet began pushing her thoughts about other girls, especially her chum, in new directions: "For a while I thought I was a lesbian—16 or 17 yrs.—be very affectionate." Observing her displays, her peers made insinuations.

[76] Ibid.

"Brought to my attention," Harriet said. "Girls would say, 'You're always kissing someone.' Always felt that this one girl was like part of myself. … Seemed natural to me." In general, she did not enjoy receiving embraces and kisses from other women as an adult: "Not unless I know her very well. Otherwise repulsive."[77] Her chum was the exception to this rule.

But Harriet's ruminations about lesbianism continued just as long as her relationship with her chum. At least one portrayal of an erotic friendship between women revived her curiosity and self-scrutiny. She discussed seeing Lillian Hellman's play The Children's Hour (1934), which had opened on Broadway a year before her interview and was still running. This, too, "Made me wonder if I was." Jumbled notations in her transcript seem to indicate that she was sixteen or seventeen when she went to the theater, but the play did not open until she was twenty-one.[78] Harriet's questioning of her sexuality actually paralleled the plot of the play. Its events center on two boarding school teachers accused of "unnatural" kissing by a spiteful student and her grandmother, the patron of the school. Although Hellman makes it clear that the teachers do not engage in "overt" activity, the allegation ruins the women's reputations, eventually forcing them to close the institution. It also occasions some soul-searching by one teacher, who confesses to the other in the final scene that she has had lesbian fantasies about her: "I lie in bed night after night praying that it isn't true. But I know about it now. It's there. I don't know how. I don't know why. But I did love you. I do love you. … I never felt that way about anybody but you. … It's funny. It's all mixed up. There's something in you and

[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

you don't do anything about it because you don't know it's there."[79] This scenario, enacted live, allowed Harriet's questions about her sexuality to recur, despite the happiness she took in being with young men. It is possible that she went to see it because she already knew it was about lesbianism and wondered if it would tell her anything about herself.

The plot of The Children's Hour was only a small shard of cultural expression that reflected American vernacular psychological discourse of the Depression. Interestingly, Harriet's interpretation of the play was at odds with some critics', and it is reasonable to assume that other playgoers had the same response. In the final scene, the lesbian character simultaneously professes her love for her colleague and racks her soul for the truth she has been loath to discern, much less articulate aloud. Referring to the student whose accusation occasioned the scandal, she tells her beloved, "Suddenly a little girl gets bored and tells a lie—and there, that night, you see if for the first time, and you say it yourself, did she see it, did she sense it—? … She found the lie with the ounce of truth. … I swear I didn't know it, I swear I didn't mean it[.]"[80] The character's suffering and tragic death a few minutes later rang hollow to at least one influential reviewer, who found dramatic significance in the story of a witch hunt but was put off by the lesbian character's confession, which confused the issue for him. Brooks Atkinson, the august theater critic of the New York Times, wrote that Hellman demonstrated "how circumstances arouse public opinion against [the teachers] and brand them as social exiles. Life can do that and does it carelessly every day. Having made that point with a pitilessness that leaves all of us stunned by the fury of what we have witnessed, the

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[79] Lillian Hellman, The Children's Hour, Acting Ed. (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1953), 66.
[80] Ibid., 66-67.

craftsman in Miss Hellman then begins to tie up loose ends in the story. … After having been swept out of the theatre by the universality of the theme it is humiliating to have to come back into the theatre while the odds and ends of the workshop are being tidied up."[81] The character's confession, the nature of which could only be hinted at in print, annoyed Atkinson, who would have preferred a story of the persecution of innocents, not the live portrayal of a homosexual character.

Despite Hellman's authorial murder—the inevitable offstage suicide of the lesbian—the character struck Harriet (and others, no doubt) as true-to-life and sympathetic enough to warrant examining her own feelings. Just as Frances Rummell discovered her "true nature" by reading her father's sexological text in the 1920s, Harriet wondered if she saw some unspeakable part of herself vividly enacted in the mid-1930s. This was not the first time she had heard of lesbianism, for even earlier, of course, she wondered if something was wrong with her affectionate relationship with her chum, especially when other friends pointed it out. In reflecting on her response to the play and communicating it to Landis, Harriet participated in a culture of vernacular psychology centered on sexual expression. It may be that the 1930s realism of The Children's Hour marked a break from the celebration of sexuality characteristic of the 1920s. But Harriet did not necessarily perceive such a difference. What seems to have mattered was that the play showed that unnatural desires might hide inside an ordinary woman who only realized their existence when circumstances forced her to. Harriet "participated" in the

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[81] Brooks Atkinson, "Children's Hour," New York Times, December 2, 1934, X1. Despite Atkinson's disappointment with the play, it was a huge success and did not attract efforts at censorship that had closed a 1928 production of The Captive, which also dealt with a tortured lesbian.

play's implicit psychology just as much as she did in Landis's explicit probing of her thoughts and feelings.

In the end, however, Harriet waved off the possibility that she had overwhelming homosexual desires with an ambiguous statement: "Then I found out I liked men better."[82] Although she did not explain the means by which she "found out" this truth, she left open the possibility that she still might be able to find satisfaction with a woman: she "liked men better," but she still liked women. Landis was equally keen to give her the benefit of the doubt. As she wrote, "Basically, there seems to be a great deal of emotion and affection waiting to be expressed which will express itself to any likeable human being, be that person a man or a woman."[83] On the other hand, Harriet's awakening into the implications of pleasurable affections with women was occasioned by her relationship with her chum and her simultaneous initiation into adolescent sexual culture—the dates and mixed parties she loved as a teenager. Being a tomboy put her at ease with knowledge about sexuality at a young age (a response that was not necessarily typical of other boyish girls). As she matured, this casualness, coupled with the blossoming of a chum relationship, seems to have allowed her to project herself into a number of sexual possibilities, not all of which were considered normal.

Myra

"Myra," too, considered the possibility that she might be a lesbian because of the deep pleasure she took in a friendship with another woman. Like Harriet, she was swept up in the world of dating as an adolescent, but she never weakened her ties with girls and

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[82] Interview transcript, Case 82N.
[83] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 82N, n.d. [1935].

women. Nineteen years old when she spoke with Agnes Landis, Myra had been dating since she was twelve or thirteen (about 1930) and had done her fair share of premarital sexual experimentation, though she stopped short of intercourse. Altogether she had dated about five boys. "No intimacies with some, with others necking," she said. "… I don't know what's commonly accepted as right or wrong. Wrong to have intercourse, put hand on your body."[84] "Have had boys touch my breasts, no more," she added later. "Have felt strong desire to go on. Usually stop it by asking for a cigarette. I don't know how the boys have felt."[85] The conflicts she felt about sexual expression indicate that changing mores could create confusion in young people, not simply a headlong desire to abandon the ways of their parents. Petting excited Myra, but she had devised a strategy for calming herself, one that would allow her to save face as a liberated young woman—lighting a cigarette. Evidently, her partners were considerate enough not to press her into sexual acts that made her feel uncomfortable or contradicted her own morals.

Myra's tomboyism did not preclude a relatively smooth transition to adolescent femininity, but that did not mean her boyishness was any less pronounced when she was a child. With three daughters already in the family, her father overoptimistically sent out birth announcements that she was a boy before she was born. As Myra recalled, "Father always kidded about not having son," indicating either that her father was teased by his friends or, more likely, that he "kidded" Myra herself for not being a boy. "I heard so much about it I tried not to disappoint my father," taking up a challenge to please him as best she could. She played exclusively with boys until she was about eleven (1928 or so) because she naturally "preferred them," explaining that she wanted to be a boy very badly

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[84] By "put hand on your body," Myra almost certainly was referring to petting, not masturbation. She did not mention feeling guilty or shameful when asked about masturbation.
[85] Interview transcript, Case 71N, November 4, 1935, folder 6, series III D, box 2, CL.

as a child. Like other tomboys, she did not "think about" differences between herself and her boy pals, but other little girls sometimes annoyed her. "Occasionally squeamish girls I think are pretty terrible," she noted, shifting to the present tense, indicating that these feelings had not disappeared. As she spoke, she briefly mused about social and political inequalities, explaining that she sometimes had doubts about whether the differences she saw between women and men had a significant impact on women's position: "Used to think boys had a better chance in the world—not so sure I think that any more." She was single and employed as a bookkeeper when she gave her interview, in 1935, and occasionally daydreamed about what it would be like to be domestic, to have her own home and a family.[86] This, apparently, was a laudable ambition for a boyish girl but not necessarily the only acceptable one. Being a tomboy did not preclude womanly domesticity, but neither did it erase doubts about gender inequalities.

Myra's cultural milieu as the daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants in Washington Heights might have made it easier to accommodate this shift. She listed her religion as "Reformed [sic]," but noted parenthetically, "Parents originally orthodox [sic]." This suggests that at some point the entire family switched denominations, not just Myra. Although Reform Judaism had been present in the United States since the early nineteenth century, the movement gained considerable traction in North America in the 1900s, in part because of its advocacy of the modernization of Jewish law and customs to accord with whatever diasporic environment Jews happened to find themselves in. Unlike their Orthodox counterparts, a number of Reform rabbis in the 1920s did not believe the Jews were a "people in exile" who must strictly maintain the Halachic laws of God to be ready to return to the Holy Land and rebuild the Temple. Instead, this anti-Zionist

[86] Ibid.

thinking interpreted dispersal as a fact, not a problem; it was up to Jews to serve as moral exemplars wherever they were, abiding by secular laws while maintaining religious practice and cultural traditions.[87] Myra's 1920s childhood witnessed the rapid formation of the Jewish community of upper Manhattan, and her memories testify to the impact of Americanization on Jews and on boyish girls from big cities. Her history also underlines the possibility that for second-generation Jewish girls, having chums and allowing oneself to think about homosexuality could be a part of the assimilation process.

Although most of the Jewish tomboy women whom Landis interviewed identified as Orthodox, it is possible that Reform Judaism made it easier for girls to exercise boyish proclivities. Even in the 1920s, the movement de-emphasized the traditional separation of the sexes in worship, custom, and everyday activities. Magazines and newspapers such as the Yiddish-language Daily Forward and the English American Jewess offered mothers copious advice on childrearing, but not enough has been written about the actual historical practices of parenting among American Reform Jews in the 1920s to venture many conclusions about the impact of religious values on Myra's upbringing. But modernizing Jewish intellectuals in the United States encouraged such changes as physical education for girls as far back as the 1890s. Back of this, of course, were eugenic and religious concerns about fit motherhood, just as in Gentile expertise, but Jewish girls took to sports just as happily as other girls.[88] Myra, in fact, played along the cliffs of upper Manhattan, possibly in Inwood Park, known as the last piece of "virgin

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[87] Michael A. Meyer, Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 286-289. Anti-Zionism was challenged in the 1930s for obvious reasons.
[88] Klapper, Jewish Girls Coming of Age in America, 202-206.

land" in the city. It is easy to imagine her and her boy pals issuing dares to each other as they played in these wilds.

Myra's friends were not all Jewish, suggesting she attended mixed public schools. Like Harriet, she provided extensive information about a Christmas party a friend of hers held. At age fourteen, Myra waited with another friend at the girl's house until she came back from midnight mass, indicating that the girl was probably Irish Catholic. In this large Washington Heights apartment, the excitement was palpable. "Piano, tree and all sorts of Christmas decorations," Myra remembered. "Liked the carefree spirit, fun, everybody being especially nice." She believed it was the first time she had ever spent the night at a friend's house, and the fact that it was Christmas made the experience even more exotic: "first Christmas I every [sic] knew anything about. I was pretty lucky, being a Jewish girl, to get such a nice Christmas." The cheerful winter holiday made such an impression that she still thought of it every time she walked past the building. "I always believed that I enjoyed it so much that if I ever have anything to say about it, my children will celebrate Xmas," she said.[89] In other words, she might have been open to dating and even marrying a man who was not Jewish. Her story also indicates that her Catholic friend's parents accepted Myra as their daughter's friend and that Myra's parents, in turn, did not object to her sampling Christian traditions—another hint that the family had already become Reform by the time Myra was fourteen.

In this light, Myra's desire to be a boy, to fulfill her father's hopes, takes on a slightly different cast. Unlike her Orthodox counterparts, her wishes might have seemed more plausible—not that she could become a boy if she tried hard enough, but that as a girl she was born with the same potential to achieve the ambitions a Jewish father might

[89] Interview transcript, Case 71N.

place on a son. As she approached adolescence, her daydreams involved chivalric deeds inspired by books that seem to have been mass-market tales for boys, not the girls' curriculum approved by teachers and librarians. Between the ages of ten and twelve (from about 1927 to 1929), she did not ruminate on pleasurable events that had already occurred but instead imagined things she wanted to happen: "liked to think of things that scared me—read mystery stories, and what not." She saw herself playing the part of male protagonists of the books she ravenously consumed: "Around 12 yrs. wanted to do something great and heroic like pulling people out of fires—make sacrifices."[90] Still wanting to be a boy, Myra identified with heroes who might strengthen her place as her father's favorite. As she said, "I got more attention than any of us girls. Took me places when he took no one else."[91]

Myra seems to have turned to boyish fantasies around the same time when she no longer played with boy pals "exclusively" and when she menstruated, at age eleven. She had been playing outside and noticed her pants were "soiled" when she came in. Her mother was vague about what was happening; one of Myra's girl friends filled in the details. Now that her body was unequivocally female, she seems to have wanted to enliven her imaginative life with tales of burly sleuths and daring escapades, the better to keep the boyish part of her alive even as she drew away from her pals. But female companionship along with dating and sexuality became more important to her around this age. Prior to 1930 or so, her sexual experiences, both pleasurable and alarming, came in the company of little girls. "Once about 6 yrs. I was playing [masturbating] mutually with

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid. As a sexually curious nineteen-year-old, Myra was still reading cheap novels, but her preferences had changed. Asked if she ever engaged in sexual fantasies, she replied, "Oh, sure. … Pretty much depended on the book I was reading. Like to identify myself with the heroine."

another girl," Myra said. "Her mother came in and caught us. We were scolded and much frightened. … Frightened for a long time afterwards. Probably one reason why I never felt free to ask questions of older people. They might tell me I was bad." This feeling probably affected her response to a man's attempt to molest her and a friend a few years later, when she was eight or nine (1925 or 1926). "Some man approached my girl friend and me and tried to get us to play with his sex organ," she remembered. "We were sitting in the park on a cliff. He came along with a funny paper. Asked us if we knew what red-skinned bananas were. Would we like to see one with the red spot in the center. Then he exposed himself and asked us to touch it. I came home prepared to tell mother—she had guests. But later I never could tell her." Apparently, the other girl did not tell her mother either. Myra thereafter avoided many conversations about sexuality, although she did not extinguish her curiosity. "Generally went with older people, tried to push the conversation in direction of sex and listen," she said. "Missed no opportunities, also read a lot." On the other hand, she also said, "Never liked to admit my ignorance, so didn't ask questions. Never discussed these things much with girls. One girl I knew was so blunt I couldn't stand to listen to her."[92]

Like other tomboys, Myra seems to have liked to go with pals in groups but preferred to have one close friend. "Always had one 'best friend'," she told Landis. "Generally prefer one girl to a group." This arrangement persisted throughout her childhood and her adolescent years. With her childhood companions, she said she did not spend the night "but visited a lot." (The Christmas sleepover that brought her such happiness when she was fourteen was the first time she had spent the night with a friend; it may be that this was the only time Myra did this.) At age nineteen, Myra sometimes

[92] Ibid.

wished she "had more girl friends," but one young woman brought her pleasant feelings. Her attitude toward affection from other women was ambivalent. "Depends on the person," she said. "I like it in my best girl friend. I never used to be much on affection, am glad I'm now beginning to loosen up a bit." It occurred to Myra that the affection she shared with her chum might have unwanted implications. During a subsequent line of questions, Landis noted that she became "Very emotional[.]" "This girl I go with now," Myra began, "people get into the habit of seeing us together and we take offense at other people's slurring remarks, 'Which of you is the lesbian?' At first we thought it kidding, now annoyed." It was "Not natural for them to make these remarks," she continued, placing the blame on others for interpreting their affections as indications of homosexuality.[93]

In response, Landis hedged on the matter, departing from her usual distance to offer a scientific explanation, incorporating shades of Otto Weininger. In her summary, Landis wrote that Myra "seems to take some comfort in the remarks made to her during the interview that there is something of the man in every woman as well as something of a woman in every man, and that it is only a matter of distorted balance in the extreme which can really be viewed as homosexuality." Yet Myra was "much more intensely emotional" during the discussion of others' remarks about her affections than in any other portion of the interview. She took these teasing comments seriously enough to wonder about the way she felt toward her best friend. The fact that she had begun to take erotic pleasure in the company of her best friend around age sixteen (about 1933) indicates that some young women and men of the time were aware of the implications of perversion behind same-sex affection. Landis attempted to explain it away, at least to Myra. In her

[93] Ibid.

own notes, however, Landis wrote, "Her relations with girl friends are slightly confusing. … There is not sufficient evidence at hand on which to base definite conclusions [about homosexuality] in her case."[94] During the interview, in other words, Landis offered comfort but kept her own suppositions to herself.

Myra's intense chum relationship therefore occasioned questioning about the nature of her feelings, both from others and from herself. The fact that others could not guess which woman was a lesbian leads to questions about the two women's gender expression. Landis did not describe Myra's appearance or comportment, as she did in some cases, but had Myra looked masculine, Landis probably would have noted it. Within the controlled framework of the Landis interviews, Myra's tomboy history and her deep wish to be a boy when she was young flow into her present conundrum, the question she could not answer no matter how hard she tried. Landis assured her she was normal, that every woman was part male, and this relieved her unease about her own gender expression and how it related to her affections.

Myra stood at the historical crossroads where romantic friendship met sexuality. Had she been born fifty years earlier, her affection toward her chum would not have been out of place, even if she was unmarried. But in the 1930s, it was impossible to escape insinuations that these feelings were but a surface expression of repressed sexual desire. Instead of seeing Myra's confusion as tragic, however, it is more helpful to note that romantic friendship between women persisted even as psychological and sexological discourse opened opportunities to interpret one's affections and desires as sexual. Myra's memories of gender nonconformity no doubt contributed to this confusion, but Landis offered her a plausible resolution rooted in science. Having an intense chum relationship

[94] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 71N, n.d. [1935].

as an adult was not necessarily a sign of homosexuality, but both Landis and Myra had doubts.

Harriet and Myra both confronted thoughts about their "true" sexual nature that arose from affectionate relationships with girl friends. Born only three years apart in the same city, it is perhaps no surprise that similar doubts afflicted them. They came of age as dating and sexuality preoccupied adolescent urbanites and as the second generation Americanized. Moreover, they partook of the culture of vernacular psychology in turning their gaze inward to discover their true nature, which at root had to be sexual: instead of analyzing their behavior and looking to external indications of their health, they looked inside. Neither Harriet nor Myra believed that anything they did was particularly homosexual, but they thought about their feelings and wondered if something inside them, some inchoate longing that perhaps they were unaware of, made them lesbians. Harriet said she cast these feelings aside, but Myra had a more difficult time thinking about them; it took the words of a scientist to reassure her that it was normal for a woman to behave, think, or desire like a man sometimes.

Tomboy Lore and Lesbian Lore

Tomboy memories, love for chums, and the hunch that the two put together might equal lesbianism were intertwined in these women's words, as they would be for many who followed them. By the end of the twentieth century, many women who identified as lesbians would readily trace tomboy girlhood to adult homosexuality. As the editors of the 1995 anthology Tomboys! Tales of Dyke Derring-do put it, "… tomboyhood is much more than a phase for many lesbians. As lesbians, we may look back on our childhood

tomboy years with nostalgia, but we don't look back at them as if those years spent playing in the dirt were themselves dirty, or transitory, or merely cute. … Though we were defined as tomboys by what we did, for many of us what we did turned out to be who we were and who we became, the behavior an expression of identity."[95] For some ordinary women as far back as the 1920s, this logic would have rung true. As a forty-five-year-old woman in a 1929 study of women's sexuality remarked about her loves, "They have always been the sweethearts of my boy-self."[96] Thus, the fusion of what may be considered tomboy lore and lesbian lore began to occur at least as far back as the interwar years. Even though Harriet and Myra did not identify as lesbians, their ponderings show that the stories women told themselves about childhood gender nonconformity and adult homosexual desire might not be separated so easily after the 1920s or so.

This synthesis was present in popular cultural expressions of vernacular psychology surrounding tomboys and lesbians, including The Children's Hour. Another link was made in a scandalous bestseller of 1929: the sixteen-year-old novelist Carman Barnes's Schoolgirl.[97] An exposé of sexual maladjustment in a southern boarding school, it was a permutation of the venerable "school story," but intended for adults, not young girls. Barnes, a young woman from Tennessee, had come through the harrowing erotic initiations of a single-sex environment herself. As she explained in her autobiographical foreword, soon after she enrolled at the school, "things began to happen, things that I

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[95] Lynne Yamaguchi and Karen Barber, Introduction, in Yamaguchi and Barber, eds., Tomboys! Tales of Dyke Derring-do (Los Angeles: Alyson Publications, 1995), 13.
[96] Katharine Bement Davis, Factors in the Sex Life of Twenty-two Hundred Women (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1972), 288.
[97] Carman Barnes, Schoolgirl (New York: Horace Liveright, 1929). References to this novel appear in text.

neither knew of nor understood. The 'petting,' quite usual in these cases, distressed me for days until gradually I grew accustomed to the idea and I began to be sorry for these girls who were shut up in school with no way to have the good times with boys which they were used to" (vii). Her fictional protagonist, the boy-crazy flapper Naomi, is similarly shocked when another student explains the ins and outs of crushes on other girls. "'Just remember. … Everybody has a crush sooner or later when they go off to school. You'll probably have one too. I had one last year … oh, not a desperate one with petting and all, but just sort of a stage-struck, tongue-tied friendship, admiring a girl from a distance and all. I got over it as soon as I knew her rather well'" (52-53).

Despite the warning, Naomi finds herself pulled between twin desires: for a boy she meets in town and for her roommate, the tomboyish Janet. Janet has a boyfriend—and has even lost her virginity—but she is still the object of homoerotic desire. One night the two girls curl up in bed together, and mysterious feelings wash over Naomi. She "felt a swift thrill slipping like quicksilver over her body close to Janet's restless one[.] … Frantically she drew Janet's yielding form nearer her own, felt the rise and fall of Janet's firm, rounded bosom …, and her lips met Janet's in wild longing. Soft, soft lips! Naomi was awed by their tenderness. … Naomi's timid fingers caressed Janet's white throat, and the dear, intimate curves of her breast" (209-210). But Naomi's beau in town finally calls, arousing her from her ongoing torment. "The delight of dancing with a boy! Naomi remembered the male-less dances [at school]… Janet was dwindling into faint insignificance beside the splendid magnificence and virility of Dave. Naomi had to keep her hands pressed close to her thighs to keep from fingering him, his rough tweed coat sleeves, his tie" (223-224). The novel ends ambiguously, with Naomi returning home for

winter vacation, breathlessly anticipating dancing with the boys she will see at parties, yet awaiting the delights of being back among the girls at boarding school: "The way she would run up and hug and kiss with the other girls, and exclaim over the wonderful Christmas she had had" (240). Her fascination with Janet had had an impact after all, one that would not be easily dispelled.

But Schoolgirl's lurid lesbian sex scene, while depicting a perverted passion, is ultimately explicable to readers. The forced separation between the girls and their boyfriends pushes pubertal desire over the edge, the lack of appropriate outlets driving the students to direct their instincts toward the only corporal warmth available—each other—as they fill a sexual void with fantasy. It is the cloistered environment of the school, Barnes asserts, that is responsible for warping the girls' erotic growth, their touches figured as genital sexuality instead of the moral progress that traditionally drove crush relationships in school stories. The problem with schoolgirl eroticism, according to Schoolgirl, is that it is too easily confused with heterosexual desire. There are, in fact, good crushes on girls (affectionate) and bad crushes on girls (homosexual), and a fresh-faced, hot-blooded girl like Naomi, untutored in telling the difference, can only act on her natural instincts, to scandalous effect. The presence of male figures—especially boyfriends—can make a girl snap to her senses; their absence can drive her into the arms of her roommate.

Of course, the tomboy Janet was the object of Naomi's advances, not the "aggressor." In somewhat later thinking, this situation would reverse. Schoolgirl's acknowledgement of potential perversion and "homosexual tendencies" in normal people exemplified a wrinkle in vernacular psychology, echoed in the histories of Harriet and

Myra. This theory, in fact, likely went some way toward permitting the publication of the novel in the first place. Its lesbian sex scene is by far more indulgent and explicit than the fleeting one in Radclyffe Hall's The Well of Loneliness (banned in Britain the same year Schoolgirl saw publication), but it involves two normal girls, though one is a tomboy. The main character in The Well of Loneliness, on the other hand, is a freakishly mannish woman, a tortured, self-described invert who explains her homosexual desires as stemming from a congenital desire to be a man. Schoolgirl's argument, that anyone might be homosexual given the right (or wrong) circumstances, offered normal readers a path into homosexual fantasy—not just a voyeuristic glimpse of lesbian sex but also the fantasy of being homosexual—that The Well of Loneliness guarded against. Thus, by the late 1920s it would have been difficult for the young novelist Carman Barnes to depict the homoerotic desires of a tomboy schoolgirl if she wished to advance the idea that homosexuality could be temporary and laid to environmental misdirection. Naomi, not Janet, must be the character who initiates sexual touching.

A few years later, a group of young, middle-class parents, probably in their mid-twenties to early thirties, shared concerns that the daughters they would one day pack off to Vassar and Smith would be seduced by wolfish tomboys. Brought together by the Child Study Association of America (CSAA), these New Yorkers discussed the intimate topics of masturbation and homosexuality in children, matters that were almost certainly taboo when they were growing up, but by the early months of 1931 were supposed to be faced directly by every well-informed, forward-thinking, modern mother and father. The CSAA leader who facilitated the discussions that winter consistently advocated providing frank information to girls and boys but vacillated about what should be said and when;

some members of the group undoubtedly emerged as perplexed about the border between an innocent crush and dangerous homosexual tendencies as when they arrived. A crush had been a crush when the group members were growing up—unusual and even inviting ridicule, but probably nothing darkened by the shadow of abnormality, now lengthening as perverts themselves came forward and converged in the realms of scientific case histories, modern literature, and voguish urban quarters periodically swept by police. Facing the future, where their progeny would ultimately dwell, they pored over novels, sociological studies, and advice books that promised a complex but comprehensible guide to the eroticism of youth. The weekly reading they tackled between January 16 and March 31 included a plea for tolerance by a British Catholic invert calling himself An Anomaly; Katherine Bement Davis's pioneering study Factors in the Sex Life of 2200 Women; and case studies of father-obsessed tomboys tottering toward lesbianism in the popular psychologist Phyllis Blanchard's New Girls for Old.[98]

Opening the discussion, the leader: "What is your understanding of homosexuality?" A pause, perhaps. "It takes many forms, from very simple crushes in the early stages to actual homosexual practices," one member ventured. A crush: both one of "many forms" of the same thing and one of the "early stages" of some progression—one grain in a handful as well as the starting point of a line. As the conversation ranged over several meetings, a consensus emerged that crushes on girls were a form of sexual expression that in normal cases remained in the universe of conscious erotic fantasy and was outgrown, while at other times was the pupal stage of "gross homosexuality." A few

[98] Child Study Association of America, Chapter 379 [New York City], Study Group Minutes, January 16, January 23, January 30, February 6, 1931, Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota (hereafter SWHA), Child Study Association of America records (hereafter CSAA), box 27, folder 280; CSAA, Chapter 379, Study Group Minutes, March 31, 1931, SWHA, CSAA, box 29, folder 298.

intertwined factors marked the border: age, touching, and family life. Having a chum was harmless when there was no exploration of bodies and when the girl had a healthy relationship with her parents, but a yearning adolescent who had an affectionate relationship with another girl could be an incipient homosexual, especially when her family rejected her.[99]

Gender expression told, too. Now that a growing girl had so many life options, she could embrace the frills and ornamentation that an older generation of women's liberationists had rejected; confident that being feminine would not hold her back, she did not have to turn to boyishness or mannishness to show that she deserved a place in the wider world. The older a tomboy grew while remaining boyish, the more she edged toward the wizened New Women who were still seen wearing formerly fashionable tailored garments. Time had bypassed political masculinity in women, and the group of concerned parents who talked over their daughters' tomboyishness and chum relationships in 1931 also implicitly discussed history.

Some sensed that a reorientation of eroticism had happened within their own lifetimes. They knew now what their mothers did not: the revealed meaning of enflamed physical affection between girls and between women. The odd girls who figured in the group's memories of ivied campuses rattled the mature detachment the CSAA leader urged they maintain with the knowledge that perversion could happen to people they knew. A Vassar alumna, class of 1923, spoke of "such a case of homosexuality." "There was a girl who was extremely masculine, extremely brilliant and athletic," she said. "She was very well liked during the freshman and sophomore years and took part in

[99] CSAA, Chapter 379, Study Group Minutes, January 16, 1931, 1.

theatricals. Around the end of the sophomore year she began going with an extremely feminine girl and by the end of her junior year she was ignored completely."[100]

This masculine young woman experienced a sudden pivot in the sympathy of her classmates, a local event undoubtedly driven by insulated school gossip, but also likely a microcosmic expression of a mass society gasping for breath amid postwar moral panic. Probably born shortly after the turn of the century, she matriculated in about 1919 or 1920 and began to be ostracized in 1921 or 1922. Her relationship probably would not have raised an eyebrow had she been born twenty years earlier. Only at the moment that it became possible to name the phenomenon of "going with" another girl as sexual would shunning of this sort have come to exist. The male roles in school theatricals this young woman almost certainly took would have sanctioned her individual pleasure in her tomboy looks and behavior, not to mention extending a license to act out certain erotic desires (if she had them) through the impersonation of a man. But it also would have been pleasurable to the community: considering her popularity at the outset, she must have been handsome enough to fall for. Once she was named as unnatural, however, her performances probably would have become a little too real, an expression of her inner nature instead of an effective and amusing artifice, shocking evidence of a pervert among them, a pervert the women at Vassar were accustomed to thinking of as one of their own.

Tomboys and masculine women continued to turn up in the CSAA group's conversations. When they weren't glandular mysteries, they were historical curiosities, vintage remnants of political campaigns for sex equality. In a session held at the end of March, the leader spoke for some time about these beings, likely imparting a sense of the past that the roomful of young parents would have remembered only dimly. "In the time

[100] Ibid., 2.

of the feminist movement," she said, "many women felt they just had to stress the outward appearance of masculinity and many parents delighted in having their girls be tomboys and felt that girls should be brought up just like boys and went to extremes in that direction." The excesses of that time ranged from fashion to the inculcation of youth; the selfish desires of "parents" (feminist mothers, she almost certainly meant) bent the gender expression of daughters to fit their ideology. The problem was not simply the sudden appearance of hordes of girls playing hockey, it was in the new ways they seemed to think and feel. Adults' role in the development of children's gendered inner lives was unmistakable. Feminists' tomboy daughters could have been girlish had they been accepted as they were, just as "the curls on Little Lord Fauntleroy" had helped turn young boys "toward the difficulties of adjustment." Thankfully, the leader explained, "we are not so driven to do that because woman, to some degree, has found her place and can find her place and still be feminine."[101]

Unfortunate remnants of feminist extremes, however, still walked the earth. "The other day I was having lunch and a woman of about seventy years walked in in the most severe masculine appearing attire, carrying a cane," said the leader. "It was a rather unpleasant picture. Especially in old age it seems particularly striking." The elder woman's public masculinity disrupted a pleasant luncheon with insinuations of abnormal sexuality. In essence, she was flaunting it. "When we see the flapper do it it is different," said the leader, attempting to distinguish fashionable androgyny from passé mannishness, despite both being surface indications of libido. "[T]his old woman had clearly played the masculine role. What drove her to it, we don't know."[102] The traces of the active,

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[101] CSAA, Chapter 379, Study Group Minutes, March 31, 1931, 5.
[102] Ibid.

"masculine role" the leader thought she must have played in sex were all the more offensive for being expressed by an old, disabled body that now had no right to the pleasures reserved for the young. The apparent resilience of the woman's abnormal erotic personhood hinted to the group that boyish girls' chum relationships ought sometimes to be arrested by some sort of intervention. Growing up, and discovering the pleasures of touching and being touched by another, did not take place outside history. Eroticism itself was subject to its throes.

The problem for parents in 1931, the leader tried to explain, was that their young people now knew about homosexuality, and where there was knowledge, there was a danger of thinking it was legitimate. "I think the word homosexuality was unknown to most people twenty-five years ago," she said. "Where it was known it certainly wasn't mentioned and now it [has] become a sort of family word, as you might say. We have an enormous amount of literature about it, plays based on it and I think it was only last year that there were large headlines in the Harlem newspaper giving a very vivid description of a dance of homosexuals." The parents in the room had grown up in an age when chum relationships were innocent, but they now presided over a generation for whom carnality was seemingly ubiquitous. It took some effort to reconcile their sheltered past with the truth they had come to know, because their daughters' eroticism refused neat categorization. The words the experts offered often provided little real guidance. "Most of us still do not know very much about [homosexuality] but we become very much alarmed about it because our children in high school develop crushes," the leader acknowledged. "Suddenly we feel that they are headed straight for homosexuality. To know what is the dividing line and where there is a possible indication of difficulty,

means having a great deal of insight and understanding of your particular child, in the first place."[103]

Soon the conversation alighted again on tomboy daughters, or at least young girls who wanted to be boys. One member mentioned her daughter, a two-and-a-half-year-old who was consistently mistaken for a boy and had come to call herself a boy. Other members added their own stories. One had a daughter who, at the age of three, went to a play school with boys: "she came home talking about her penis and it was very hard for her to get used to the idea that she did not have a penis." "I knew a girl over six who … tried to urinate like a boy and see how far she could project it," said the leader. "She may have sensed the pleasure boys get sometimes in trying to cover a wide area. Why fuss about it except to show no particular interest? Children do that because everything is interesting to a child. A child tries anything."[104]

The study group members, then, tried to extend enlightened attitudes toward tomboys, but they could not extinguish the idea that there was something wrong, both with these girls and with their own parenting abilities. Unknowingly, the attendees were participating in the formation of lesbian lore, incorporating observations of tomboy daughters and worries about their futures. Interestingly, none of the members recalled being tomboys; they simply worried about what gender nonconformity meant when their daughters expressed it. The discussion of girls' fantasies of having boy bodies echoed in the words of the tomboy women interviewed by Agnes Landis a handful of years later. But where the Landis women, born between 1900 and 1920, saw nothing wrong with wanting to be a boy and childhood beliefs that their girl bodies were no different from

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[103] Ibid., 4.
[104] Ibid., 7-9.

boys', the study group members sensed their daughters were expressing something pathological. The parents' worries followed psychoanalytic lines, or at least a psychological reasoning that tomboyism was the result mainly of parental influence. One woman recounted experiences with her tomboy daughter, who "had quite a time getting used to the idea that she was a girl … it was very hard for her to get used to the idea that she did not have a penis." She continued, "It was connected in her mind with the suspicion she had of my wanting a boy. I talked it over with her and told her that a woman could be very important and could have an office and did not have to do house work if she did not want to. She interrupted me and said, 'But you wanted a boy, didn't you?' It was an accusation against me and I told her that I did want a boy at one time but that I wanted her now." The leader responded in explicitly psychoanalytic terms: "Where the little child has an opportunity to see the opposite sex, what would be more striking than to find that one had a penis and one didn't? A girl would think something had happened to her or that she had lost something."[105] Psychological explanations of tomboyism were becoming more common. The meandering discussion repeatedly connected tomboyism with lesbianism, even though the precise causes went undefined.

Thus, one may see the years around the beginning of the Depression as a transitional point in American tomboy lore. As Carman Barnes's Schoolgirl and the Child Study Association meeting in New York indicate, it was not simply a matter of adult lesbian agency in making the connection between gender-nonconforming girlhood and mature homosexuality. The connection between tomboyism and lesbianism, so readily made by the late twentieth century, was not sui generis a matter of lesbians claiming tomboyism as the locus of their queer past in the 1920s and 1930s. Instead, a confluence

[105] Ibid., 8.

of lay, academic, and expert thinking and experience effected the mixture. Concerned parents, aware of the visibility of homosexuals, looked for answers about tomboy daughters' behavior from experts, just as experts depended on the participation of ordinary people to fill their books and advice columns with case studies. Gay men and lesbians like Frances Rummell published their life stories, hoping to gain sympathy by demonstrating both their humanity and their secret torment. Tomboyism was eventually claimed by modern lesbians, in other words, but this process was encouraged by non-queer authorities.

Tomboys' chum relationships, therefore, became problematic by the 1930s, especially when they occurred in adolescence or later. They set Harriet and Myra to wondering whether they might be lesbians. Harriet's questions were abetted by images of homosexuality she consumed in popular culture. Myra's were set in motion by people she knew. But both women connected tomboyism, chum relationships, and the possibilities of lesbianism, however obliquely. Where they seemed reticent, Landis connected the dots in her post-interview notes.

This is not to say that tomboys were always discouraged from having chums after the 1930s. Rather, a boyish girl's intense interest in a dear friend became suspect if she remained a tomboy during puberty, especially if she lived outside a single-sex environment where crushes prevailed (such as boarding school or summer camp), as most working-class girls like Harriet and Myra did. Because of the increased visibility of adolescent sexual culture, physical affection between an adolescent tomboy and her chum stood to be the subject of whispered conversations or the open ridicule that Myra endured from her peers. As the interpretation that these relationships were perverted became more

available to ordinary people—as the study group meeting minutes show, the transmission of Freudian ideas to the conversations of middle-class parents could be swift indeed—it no doubt became easier for lesbians to see themselves within this logic.

Chapter 4 | Crushes

Even the trailblazing sexologist Havelock Ellis was perplexed by girls' crushes: sudden, intense infatuations with older girls or women teachers, long observed in boarding schools, convents, prisons, and other institutional settings. In Sexual Inversion (1897), he concluded that crushes existed "on the borderland between friendship and sexual passion" but were not inherently pathological.[1] As he reported in the 1915 edition of the book, observers had remarked upon the phenomenon in Italy, Argentina, Britain, and the United States. In single-sex settings, Ellis argued, crushes—also known as raves, mashes, and smashes—were a form of "temporary homosexuality." Still, they frustrated analysis: was their platonic eroticism really homosexual attraction that simply could not be acknowledged? "While there is an unquestionable sexual element in the [crush] relationship, this cannot be regarded as an absolute expression of real congenital perversion of the sex-instinct," he admitted. "The frequency of the phenomena, as well as

[1] Havelock Ellis, Sexual Inversion (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1915), 218.

the fact that, on leaving college to enter social life, the girl usually ceases to feel these emotions, are sufficient to show the absence of congenital abnormality."[2]

Moreover, according to those who experienced them, the very nature of the feelings that stirred crushes was different from sexual passion. It could be love directed at a higher being. One of Ellis's informants, a teacher in a girls' school, believed that in some cases crushes were sublimated sexual desire, but she characterized others as a yearning: "there are many cases where the feeling seems to be more spiritual [than sexual], a sort of uplifting of the whole soul with an intense desire to lead a very good life—the feeling being one of reverence more than anything else for the loved one, with no desire to become too intimate and no desire for physical contact."[3] Ellis also cited the American psychologist E. G. Lancaster's 1897 article, "The Psychology and Pedagogy of Adolescence," which turned up forty-nine cases of same-sex love (among men but more frequently among women) out of 827 responses to a survey. This "love of the same sex," Lancaster wrote sympathetically, was "not mere friendship"; it was "strong, real and passionate." "Many of the answers [to the survey questions] … are so beautiful that if they could be printed in full no comment would be necessary," he continued.[4] A number of female respondents wrote of love for teachers or older girls. "I fell deeply in love with a teacher at 17," wrote a woman born in the 1870s. "I adored her and could not tell her that I liked her. I choked if I tried to."[5] Significantly, Lancaster believed adolescence was the time of a moral awakening and religious conversions, as did his Clark University

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[2] Ibid., 374.
[3] Ibid., 377.
[4] E. G. Lancaster, "The Psychology and Pedagogy of Adolescence," Pedagogical Seminary 5 (1897/1898): 88.
[5] Ibid.

colleague G. Stanley Hall.[6] Same-sex love, according to Lancaster's informants, was a matter of longing for a superior being, perhaps paralleling the desire for a higher power that supposedly awakened among youth at this age. As another Clark-trained psychologist reasoned, "The activity of the organs, which connect the individual with the race, is accompanied by powers and instincts which affect [the adolescent's] mental life in its various aspects and mark the beginning of a new life intellectually, morally, and emotionally."[7]

This erotic desire may rightly be called aspirational love. The writings of Ellis and Lancaster demonstrate that it was common enough in the nineteenth century and was therefore never the sole property of tomboys. But in the early twentieth century, aspirational love underwent a slow decline in social approval, transformed and finally rendered queer, in part by the inward turn and adolescent sexual culture. Psychology and sexuality supplanted religious perfection as the interpretive devices behind adolescent aspirational love, so girls with crushes, especially on teachers, increasingly seemed backward. As New Women assumed a greater social presence—for example, by establishing institutions and clubs for girls—they provided visible symbols of power within children's lives. They stood out not only as moral leaders but also as women whose strength, competence, and sometimes appearance edged their gender expression away from traditional femininity. Contemporaries might not have stereotyped them as repugnantly mannish, but in their charismatic masculine trespasses they usually figured as objects of tomboys' aspirational love. This passion constituted an important part of boyish girls' affective lives.

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[6] See Hall, Adolescence, vol. 2, ch. 14.
[7] Arthur H. Daniels, "The New Life: A Study in Regeneration," Ph.D. thesis, Clark University (reprinted from the American Journal of Psychology 6:1 [1893]), 26.

But by the 1930s, tomboys' crushes reflected cultural, scientific, and even personal quandaries about the role of eroticism in typical child development. Despite their formidable ancestry, and although they were as real as they had ever been, there were now times when same-sex crushes had to be proved innocent. While the published study resulting from the Landis interviews concluded that crushes on older girls or women "occurred so frequently and were so much a part of normal development that they could not be considered the differentiating factor between those who were homoerotic in adult life and those who were not[,]" this fought a growing consensus that crushes could be signs of morbid longings.[8] It became difficult for parents, educators, and scientists to assess a crush. George W. Henry, a colleague of Carney Landis later known for collecting the life stories of New York City homosexuals,[9] found a correlation between juvenile crushes and adult lesbianism in an article published in 1934, in which he also noted the prevalence of "[p]assivity and the tendency to be unusually affectionate toward the mother."[10] For Henry, the object of a crush was a clear mother substitute; it could not exist without reference to another erotic relationship. A crush was false, erroneous, a shape behind a veil.

What contextual elements precipitated this shift, and what did girls themselves think about it? Tomboys felt the decline of aspirational love more intensely than did their feminine peers because crushes came to be interpreted psychologically: as a form of sublimated sexuality, and abnormal sexuality at that. If girls in the early twentieth century

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[8] Landis et al., Sex in Development, 53.
[9] See Henry, Sex Variants. For analyses of Henry's career, see Terry, An American Obsession, chs. 6 and 7; Henry L. Minton, Departing from Deviance: A History of Homosexual Rights and Emancipatory Science in America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
[10] George W. Henry, "Psychogenic and Constitutional Factors in Homosexuality," Psychiatric Quarterly 8 (1934): 243-264, esp. 247-248.

did not always have the language of psychoanalysis at hand, the way many of them came to shun crushes reflected its reasoning. With more and more unchaperoned heterosocial possibilities at their disposal and with religion playing a less formal role in many of their educations, girls frowned on teacher crushes by the 1940s. It became harder to rave about one's same-sex love of an older, often masculine woman to other girls. The 1920s and 1930s represented a period of overlap in erotic feelings toward women mentors and boy peers. As Susan Cahn has found, a girl could talk about both sorts of obsession simultaneously and not be considered abnormal, particularly if she was both an athlete with a crush on a physical education teacher and an enthusiastic participant in adolescent sexual culture, with intense crushes on boys, too.[11] But soon enough, the only acceptable object of a crush was a male peer. The following sections analyze the cultural factors that accompanied these changes.

Aspirational Love and Sublimation

At the turn of the twentieth century, aspirational love was an ideal proffered mainly to the young, particularly maturing men. Psychologists' theories that adolescent eroticism could naturally be turned toward heaven marked a scientific absorption of some nineteenth-century reformers' beliefs that sexuality was a force for creativity and spiritual goodness,[12] though authorities such as Hall held that men's premarital continence was imperative, so as to prevent the dissipation of civilization. To American psychologists and other scientists, masturbation was usually still "self-abuse," but religion was an effective and natural corollary of sexual desire that could be harnessed for good. In his

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[11] Cahn, Coming on Strong, 171.
[12] See William Leach, True Love and Perfect Union: The Feminist Reform of Sex and Society (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1980).

chapter on boys' sexual development in Adolescence, Hall argued that religious expression, if correctly presented to young men, was the best way to turn their attention away from their "organs." "The superiority of Christianity," he wrote, "is that its cornerstone is love, and that it meets the needs of this most critical period of life as nothing else does. … Sex is a great psychic power which should be utilized for religion, which would be an inconceivably different thing without it, and one of the chief functions of the latter in the world is to normalize the former."[13] American experts' musings on the relationship between pubertal sexual development and religious awakening in young people were so common that the relative lack of attention historians have paid them is surprising.[14] Well into the 1920s, popular books about adolescence contained lengthy discussions of young people's religious expression in addition to chapters on their budding interest in sexuality.[15]

But the theory that adolescent sexuality occasioned a moral awakening was slowly undermined almost from the start. In part, it suffered from the crudeness of its own explanatory power, which in some hands focused on sudden conversions. Hall's Adolescence was far from innovative in presenting this theory. By the time it appeared, in 1904, it was something of a fashion to study conversions, yoking their characteristic crisis and rebirth to the storm and stress of adolescent sexual feeling.[16] William James denounced these theories in The Varieties of Religious Experience (1902): "Perhaps the

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[13] Hall, Adolescence, vol. 1, 464.
[14] For an exception, see Christopher G. White, Unsettled Minds: Psychology and the American Search for Spiritual Assurance, 1830-1940 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
[15] See, for example, Mudge, Varieties of Adolescent Experience, 95-134; Winifred Richmond, The Adolescent Girl: A Book for Parents and Teachers (New York: Macmillan, 1928), 58-60.
[16] The most often cited work concerning this correlation was Edwin Diller Starbuck, The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Study of the Growth of Religious Consciousness (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900). Starbuck, however, did not attribute the cause of conversion to adolescent sexual desire; he only noted its coexistence.

commonest expression of this assumption that spiritual value is undone if lowly origin be asserted is seen in those comments which unsentimental people so often pass on their more sentimental acquaintances. … A more fully developed example of the same kind of reasoning is the fashion, quite common nowadays among certain writers, of criticizing the religious emotions by showing a connection between them and the sexual life."[17] James's sarcastic distinction between "unsentimental people" and "their more sentimental acquaintances" lampooned the superciliousness of self-conscious moderns. James cannot be called a sentimentalist, but he recognized that being able to talk "rationally" about sex might not be altogether liberating; it might rather be a hallmark of a reductive, clinical gaze.

James's critique of his contemporaries' connection between religious feeling and youthful sexual development struggled to make headway against a current that gathered strength from several tributaries. The impulse to see religion as a false effect of adolescent storm and stress was further compounded by the growing lay and academic fascination with the multiple strands of psychology that infused American intellectual life in the early twentieth century, including but not limited to psychoanalysis. The theory persisted that sexual energy and desire could be directed into productive endeavors—including religion, art, and altruism—but the conviction that this was essentially a good thing wavered.

Instead, the ideas of sexual sublimation and repression grew in influence. Today, these are most widely associated with Freud, and the bridge between old and new concerns can be seen in his early work. His theories about sexual expression and repression were partly the result of trying to work through a longstanding social problem:

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[17] James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, 9.

"modern nervousness." Briefly, nervousness, as it was articulated in the late nineteenth century, was a symptom of too much civilization: "a lack of nerve-force," according to its first American observer, the physician George Miller Beard.[18] Neurasthenia, a type of psychological prostration, morbid introspection, or lassitude, was the most common manifestation of this condition. As Jackson Lears has put it, neurasthenics "were unified … by a common effect: a paralysis of the will. Tortured by indecision and doubt, the neurasthenic seemed a pathetic descendant of the iron-willed Americans who had cleared forests, drained swamps, and subdued a continent."[19] Beard argued that neurasthenia was peculiarly American, but the word had first been used in Germany. By the early twentieth century, physicians and psychologists found the disease in much of the West and its imperial domains.[20] As a neurologist, Freud treated many such cases and ultimately proposed that neurasthenic suffering could be laid to sexual repression.

In "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness" (1908), Freud began by offering a brief for sublimation, or the direction of libido toward positive but nonsexual aims, such as religious feeling and artistic achievement. He acknowledged ideas that connected sexual feeling with the emergence of selflessness, arguing that "family feeling, with its erotic roots" had enabled humans to curb or renounce the aggressive instincts, enabling religion to flourish and civilization to progress.[21] Sexual instincts in particular put "an extraordinary amount of energy at the disposal of 'cultural'

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[18] George Miller Beard, American Nervousness, Its Causes and Consequences: A Supplement to Nervous Exhaustion (Neurasthenia) (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1881), 5.
[19] Lears, No Place of Grace, 50.
[20] See the essays in Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Roy Porter, eds., Cultures of Neurasthenia from Beard to the First World War (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2001).
[21] Sigmund Freud, "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness," trans. E. B. Herford and E. Colburn Mayne, in Sexuality and the Psychology of Love, ed. Philip Reiff (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 15.

activities," possibly because their impulses toward the expression of pleasure were easily transferred to other aims.[22] This was sublimation, and Freud was not the first to describe it.[23] But he went on to distinguish sublimation from repression, truly a radical innovation in Western thought on sexuality. Sexual sublimation, although it produced much that was good, had a negative edge: too much of it could cause disease. In treating hysteria, neurologists of the late nineteenth century had believed that a lack of direct sexual gratification (ideally in marital relations) had pathological consequences,[24] but it was possible to remain healthy and celibate if sexual desires could be directed toward other sources of release, including altruism and the arts.

Repression was different because "outlets" for sublimation were growing fewer. The problem was that in modern times—where uncertainty and speed seemed the only constants—most people could not effect the transformation required to sublimate the sexual instinct. Social life was changing too quickly. As Freud had it, "frustration of this variable sexual need is avenged by manifestations which, on account of their injurious effect on functional activity and of their subjectively painful character, we must regard as illness."[25] This inability to sublimate was repression, and it was the fundamental cause of "modern nervousness." Freud was presenting a new analysis of a well-known social, spiritual, even political problem. By his reasoning, morality had to be decoupled from sexuality to ensure health, especially that of middle-class and elite sufferers of hysteria and neurasthenia. Moreover, as his followers and popularizers asserted, the expression of

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[22] Ibid.
[23] See, for example, William Bevan Lewis's Text-book of Mental Diseases: With Reference to the Pathological Aspects of Insanity (London: Charles Griffin and Co., 1899), 387.
[24] Rachel P. Maines, The Technology of Orgasm: "Hysteria," the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).
[25] Freud, "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness," 15-16.

erotic pleasure through aspirations to a higher plane of nonsexual love had to be admitted for what it was: mere sublimation of the sexual instinct at best, but more likely repression of the instincts. As one physician of 1920 put it, "sublimation in its completest form can only be partial. … [T]he unwedded artist or altruist, when the glamour of his calling is gone and age is advancing, is almost sure to become a pitiable neurotic if the will to sublimate is stronger than nature, or a social outcast if nature long denied asserts herself."[26]

To many moderns, morality no longer seemed the boon companion of sexual awakening. It was the force of repression, the incubator of nervousness; morality enshrouded reality. Additionally, morality often became equated with premarital chastity and continence, not necessarily concern for others. It may be that by "family feeling, with its erotic roots" Freud meant no more than the love of parents for their own offspring and vice versa, but Americans of the early twentieth century would have been able to draw on a long tradition of social engagement when they read it. In other words, the idea that a spirit of awakening typified adolescence had a long life in popular thought, but by the 1920s its connection to "the organs" had diminished. Awakenings were to be sexual, not religious.

This logic helped turn several well-established forms of erotic behavior, thought, and fantasy into suspect phenomena, as did the scientific studies of sexuality that began to appear in the late nineteenth century. Various strands of homoeroticism probably suffered the most. As early as the 1890s, one of the best-established forms of female homoeroticism—a girl's crush on an older girl, especially at school or college—was

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[26] Walter Franklin Robie, Sex and Life: What the Experienced Should Teach and What the Inexperienced Should Learn (Boston: Gorham Press, 1920), 245.

making parents, educators, scientific observers, and even girls themselves uneasy; after World War I suspicions would accelerate.[27] This uneasiness was truer for girls' crushes on teachers than for other girls their own age.[28] Some crushes, girls and educators knew, were "morbid"—characterized by unspeakable, inward-looking obsessions—but there was no real consensus about how to tell what was unhealthy and outgrowable, and what should be done about it. This lack of certainty would never truly disappear. As religiously or morally inflected eroticism became interpreted as sublimation, then repression, crushes on superior beings had nowhere to turn. Erotic passion must be sexual in truth, so crushes on girls and women were surely obliquely sexual as well. Crushes were still common enough, but it became far more difficult to justify them as the yearning for a more perfect spiritual being.

Marion Taylor

Before World War I, tomboys with crushes on teachers or older girls might have suspected there was something wrong with their feelings, but they could still reach for the explanation that their love was an aspiration toward a higher plane that had nothing to do with sexual desire. Yet girls were rapidly acquiring knowledge of sexual perversion as well as heterosexual sex; many of the Landis women remembered reading older siblings' medical books or sexological sources to find the truth.[29] Knowledge spread unevenly,

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[27] Horowitz, Alma Mater, 166-167; Cahn, Coming on Strong, 171-172; Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers, 48-54.

[28] Sherrie Inness's analysis of novels of college life intended for girls published between 1895 and 1915 shows that (at least in fiction) students roundly disapproved of teacher crushes. Sherrie Inness, "Mashes, Smashes, Crushes, and Raves: Woman-to-Woman Relationships in Popular Women's College Fiction, 1895-1915," NWSA Journal 6:1 (Spring 1994), 58.

[29] See, for example, Case 1N (m) and Case 49, both of whom were aware of The Well of Loneliness; and Case 22N (m), who found out about sex by reading Havelock Ellis and medical

however, both schoolyard rumor and parents' intentional misinformation holding their own amid intermittent calls for sex education. This unevenness could make for confusion. Even if girls had crushes on teachers and boy peers simultaneously, there were times when a tomboy's having a teacher crush accompanied bewilderment at her girl peers' giggling fascination with dating. Crushes on older girls remained in popular "school stories," but their portrayal seems to have been growing old-fashioned. Nonetheless, aspirational love, with a longstanding heritage and foundational role in theorizing adolescent sexuality, was still conceivable. If stretching erotic life toward a higher plane of desire didn't make sense to all of a tomboy's peers, it made sense to her. But the discrepancy sometimes caused a great deal of pain.

One tomboy who left detailed descriptions of a teacher crush was Dorothy Sherman (Pencharz), born in 1902. For reasons that are unclear, her childhood diaries came into the possession of Harvard psychologist Gordon W. Allport in the late 1930s. Allport had them transcribed and assigned Dorothy the pseudonym Marion Taylor, perhaps because he intended to publish them or use them as teaching material when she was still alive.[30] Growing up in Glendale, California, after her parents divorced, Marion harbored a conviction that she was masculine, at least in mentality, which seems to have hardened as she grew up. In the 1950s, Allport had her take a personality test, and she scored curiously high in masculine characteristics.[31]

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books. Case 15 went to nursing school and left her medical books around the house so her younger brother could find them and learn about sex for himself.

[30] Information from Finding Aid to the Marion Taylor Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Cambridge, MA (hereafter Taylor Papers).

[31] The personality test is preserved in folder 24, Taylor Papers.

As she entered adolescence, Marion's most emotionally (and, it seems, physically) fulfilling relationship was an exemplary tomboy crush on a natural-science teacher whom Allport called Miss Green. In her diaries, Marion's desire roved desperately over an ancient terrain of erotic expression, its sinkholes and summits charted by those who, like Allport, would draw borders around them, the better to map the geography of heart, mind, and body, to color in the void, to present it in professional case studies. Through her diary Marion drew her own map, analyzing with keen self-awareness and naked honesty her estrangement from peers, family, and gender role, and her vibrant attraction to Miss Green. Animating the love Marion lavished on her teacher were the eroticism of age difference expressed in intellectual inspiration and recognition; the fantasies that sought after instantiation in gifts and mementoes made sacred by the touch of the beloved; the mutually harbored not-enough femininity that could only be masculine, despised in a woman yet lending her authority and expertise; the queer, shuddering arousal that came when the silent wish for kisses and caresses came true; the denial of that arousal facilitated by proclaiming an old-fashioned desire for spiritual union—all amounting to the grace of a prayer offered and answered.

Marion began keeping a diary in 1912, when she was ten. After she was betrayed by her closest friends at age thirteen, she kept two. In this she was not unlike middle-class girls of the late nineteenth century, who began supplementing "public" diaries (meant for consumption by parents and peers) with secret ones, in which they detailed confidences they could not speak to others.[32] So often did Marion rave to the girls (and to her diary) about Miss Green that one day they ridiculed her to her face. Two days later, after discovering and reading the diary for themselves, they told Miss Green about her love. "It

[32] Hunter, "Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family," 255-263.

fairly stunned me," Marion wrote on March 22, 1915. "Ruth told me later that they wanted her advise on the subject. … She [Miss Green] said that it would soon wear off, ect. [sic] Well—there's where she's mistaken! My love, adoration, and reverance and respect of her will never 'wear off.' Never! I shall always, always adore her. How I would like to shake those girls."[33]

Within the next few weeks, Marion read Mary Constance Du Bois's 1908 novel The Lass of the Silver Sword, which gave her the idea for her second diary. In the book a homely girl, new to a boarding school, falls for the outgoing captain of the basketball team, a tomboyish senior named Carol. "All unnoticed, Jean stood behind Carol and lovingly squeezed the heavy plait in which the champion had braided her curly chestnut hair," Marion read within the first few pages. "Before she could have the satisfaction of winding around her finger the tempting ringlet in which the plait ended, its owner broke away."[34] Jean anonymously leaves flowers on Carol's desk and writes her love odes in her diary. Then her mates steal her diary and show it to Carol—just as had happened to Marion! Despite the character's humiliation, Marion thought a secret diary would make a good companion. "I was reading a book at the library, The Lass of the Silver Sword, and it gave me the idea of this book (the special secret diary), only this book shall not be discovered," Marion wrote in her new journal. "Jean, the heroine of that book had an older girl, Carol, and I have Miss Green, a teacher at Intermediate School," she explained.[35] Marion called her "special secret diary" Ego Amor, the two Latin nouns for "I" and "love." "I must have somebody to confide in," she wrote. "The girls … laugh and

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[33] Marion Taylor, transcribed diary entry, March 22, 1915, folder 4, Taylor Papers. Misspellings in this and subsequent quotations in original.
[34] Mary Constance Du Bois, The Lass of the Silver Sword (New York: Century, 1917), 6.
[35] Marion Taylor, transcribed Ego Amor diary entry, about April 9, 1915, folder 4, Taylor Papers.

sneer at me and it is sacred and it shall not be laughed or sneered at. … I respect and revere Miss Green and I do not adore or love her in a silly way. Of all things I desire most, is her good opinion of me. Nothing could hurt me more than if she had a bad opinion of me. Ego Amor Miss Veridis."[36]

At age thirteen, Marion learned the hard way that in the eyes of her peers, teacher crushes were a little too queer to be conducted in the open, expressed directly to the object, or even admitted to the self. As she secreted her desire into Latin, the language of science and the sacred, she denied that her yearnings were sexual ("I respect and revere Miss Green and I do not adore or love her in a silly way"). But she must have been doubly stricken that her teacher seemed to minimize her feelings, saying "that it would soon wear off, ect." Her avowal in Ego Amor that her love existed on a higher plane ("it is sacred and it shall not be laughed or sneered at") shows that she was trying to explain her feelings to herself in a way that still had some cultural legitimacy—at the very least, she had read about such love in The Lass of the Silver Sword. But that explanation was being undercut at the same time, not only by scientists, parents, and educators, but by girls themselves. Marion's humiliation was one way her friends could discipline her desires and even hold her up as a warning to others.

Far from dispelling her crush, the sudden isolation and alienation from her peers seem to have intensified it and challenged her to maintain a superficial equipoise as she came to realize how much she longed for Miss Green to hold her and kiss her. As she continued to write in Ego Amor that spring of 1915, she allowed herself to reveal a deepening craving for tender touch and understanding. Perhaps now that the secret was out, she let herself feel and describe things she would not have before. She wrote with

[36] Ibid.

longing and daydreamy humor of Miss Green's features, which she saw as occupying a higher plane of beauty. "Saw M.G. and her A.N.," she wrote. "M.G. stands for Miss Green and A.N. stands for aristocratic nose. M.G.A.N. = Miss Green's aristocratic nose. She has a lovely nose! I envy it!"[37] On the first of May, Marion left a basket of roses and candy on Miss Green's desk. The teacher repaid her with kindness: "This noon she came and sat down beside me and laid her cheek against mine … and I got as red as a beet or so the girls said I did. But I liked it! Oh yes! No one ever did such a thing to me before! My Mother is the only one who even ever kissed me (and Dad). … Oh Dear! Oh Dear! Why can't I act natural!"[38] The ability to "act natural" around a beloved, of course, was the goal of any young person in the throes of erotic anxiety, especially when she was being observed by her peers. Marion might not have articulated her desires as sexual, but they paralleled the way young people of the day were talking about heterosexual flirting.

At the beginning of the next school year, Marion enumerated new rules for herself, vowing to tamp down her desires for "M.G." at the same time as she set out to be popular among her peers (especially boys). Her distant exaltation of her teacher seeped through her words at the same time as she scolded herself for having these feelings:

> 2. Remember M.G. is only a human being, so don't worship her too much. Do not talk about M.G. You know it antagonises the girls … and don't make up for not talking abought her by talking abought M.H. (Miss Howe).
>
> Don't think about M.G. any more than you can help. Remember you mean nothing to her though she may mean the world to you. And she will go out of your life forever when you leave this school. The more you think of her the harder it is going to make it for you when you leave.
>
> 3. Don't be self-conscious. Act natural.
>
> …
>
> 5. Smile! Smile! Look animated and pleasant. You're an awful lemon when you don't.
>
> …

[37] Marion Taylor, transcribed diary entry, April 6, 1915, folder 4, Taylor Papers.
[38] Marion Taylor, transcribed Ego Amor diary entry, May 1, 1915, folder 4, Taylor Papers.

> 12. Cultivate a charm. Make your conversation interesting. Become a good conversationalist. To be a perfect lady, to be charming, interesting, delightful, be as like your M.G. as possible and you will succeed![39]

Marion seems to have sensed that her feelings for Miss Green existed in the interstices of approved realms of modern human eroticism. The teacher's affection actually felt better than what Marion received from her parents, and it was a flame that burned in the place where a normal girl would have had sexual desire for a boy. The day after Miss Green pressed her cheek against Marion's in full view of the other girls, she gave Marion another memorable embrace. It felt like a blessing from above: "she came up and sat down beside me and put her arms around me and whispered to me abought that basket as if it was quite wonderful … and put her face up against mine and was so dear and loving to me that I felt like crying. How I love her! … I get loved so very little that a little affection like that means a great deal to me, and especially when its from her. God Bless her and make her as happy as she's made me!"[40] Marion's religiously inflected desire for her teacher incorporated sacred space and relics: she consecrated a shrine to Miss Green and kept a test she had graded pinned into her clothes, close to her heart.[41]

Marion <u>was</u> interested in learning about sex, but she sought information from a source she saw as truthful yet untainted by crassness: her Miss Green. Like G. Stanley Hall and other psychologists of only a decade earlier, Marion saw sex as a way to unite human erotic desire with a plane of higher purpose. She was especially uncomfortable with her peers' immature fascination with sexuality, expressing outrage when some "vulgar, silly" girls snickered after Miss Green taught the class about "the wonderful

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[39] Marion Taylor, transcribed diary entry, September 13, 1915, folder 4, Taylor Papers.
[40] Marion Taylor, transcribed Ego Amor diary entry, May 2, 1915, folder 4, Taylor Papers.
[41] Marion Taylor, transcribed Ego Amor diary entry, April 13, 1915, folder 4, Taylor Papers.

nature story" in early 1916. This was no doubt some form of sex education, but Marion could not even describe it in such base terms. It burned her to hear her classmates make fun of the information they were getting from the woman she so admired. Hearing the lesson was surely an intimate moment for the girl, and her peers were trammeling it. "It is a beautiful story and it is they that make it wicked in the way they talk of it," she wrote. "They had better learn it from a good noble woman like she, than from bad companions in an ugly, vile way!"[42]

As she entered her teenage years, Marion found herself increasingly estranged from the femininity of her peers and her family, her no-nonsense approach to life deemed abnormal when everyone else began primping and whispering about boys. "I am not fitted for marriage because I am dignified and unaffectionate, and not soft and giggly like the ones that are fit for marriage," she wrote, refusing to recognize that she was plenty affectionate—toward her teacher.[43] Increasingly, Marion's mother and sister, "Caroline," teased her for her lack of femininity: "I say snappy things to Caroline all the time and mother says I'm getting to be an awful (lemon) old maid. She says I'd be just the same to my husband. No dought."[44] Marion's mother cruelly disparaged her lack of interest in boys more and more, but Marion remained true to who she thought she was. "I'm awfully puzzled about so many things," she wrote in 1916, when she was fourteen. "Men seem so selfish and conceited … and I can't see anything nice about them. Mother … says it's not natural, normal or like a girl but I can't help it. … She thinks I'm a freak of nature."[45] Marion took her mother's message to heart but maintained her conviction that there was

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[42] Marion Taylor, transcribed school diary entry, January 7, 1916, folder 7, Taylor Papers.
[43] Marion Taylor, transcribed diary entry, April 22, 1915, folder 4, Taylor Papers.
[44] Marion Taylor, transcribed diary entry, August 25, 1915, folder 4, Taylor Papers.
[45] Marion Taylor transcribed diary entry, October 29, 1916, folder 8, Taylor Papers.

nothing wrong with her, just the girls and boys around her. "I've been wishing so that I had a boy friend…," she wrote when she was fifteen. "But there's not any boy like I'd want I fear but still if there's odd girls there must be odd boys. … If I had to be at all unnatural I don't want a boy friend."[46]

Looking over her diaries decades later, Dorothy Sherman Pencharz had no recollection of her crush on "Miss Green"—she thought it silly. The longing that had consumed her (and confused her) through 1915 and 1916 endured for a little while after she left her science class: the teacher was a guest at her house at least once (when she turned fourteen), and Marion composed imaginary letters to herself from Miss Green through the summer of 1917. Marion became increasingly preoccupied with boys, however, even though she remained aloof from them and suffered under the double standard that said that a boy had to approach her, not the other way around. If she had other crushes on teachers, she did not write about them. But it is possible that her natural-science teacher did inspire her path in life: Dorothy Sherman received a master's degree and became a professor of psychology and biology at Marin Junior College in California. She married relatively late (in 1933) and continued to teach at Marin until the late 1950s, when she retired.[47] Her diaries provide a look into the heart of an adolescent tomboy's simultaneous alienation from her peers and intense desire for their approval; her growing distance from her mother and longing for her affection; her penetrating criticism of the gendered behavior behind heterosexual expression and her wish to satisfy its demands on her own terms; and, of course, her love for and loyalty to a teacher who alone seemed to like her for who she was. The feelings that powered these relationships sometimes

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[46] Marion Taylor, transcribed diary entry, May 6, 1917, folder 8, Taylor Papers.
[47] Information from Finding Aid, Taylor Papers.

overlapped with one another and at other times illustrated the emotional polarities of a girl who identified more and more with what was only available to her as masculinity. When she did daydream about having a boyfriend, she wrote, "I guess I'm feminine after all."[48]

From Aspirational Love to Homosexuality

In their time, tomboy crushes like Marion Taylor's were not completely transgressive for their same-sex, intergenerational eroticism: the tradition of expressing desire as a spiritual aspiration was too well established. On the other hand, Marion's friends found ready sport in a girl gone loopy for an older woman instead of a boy. Marion, too, tried to deny that there was anything to her feelings but an innocent desire for something better than herself. The most she would allow herself to admit was a longing for parental affection. It is likely that her friends interpreted her raving about her teacher as libidinous, even if they did not have that word at their disposal. They could see that Marion liked her teacher but not boys. They probably could tell that Marion was angry when, through their laughs, they connected Miss Green's "nature story" to their feelings of attraction to boys. Her friends very well could have interpreted Marion's actions as denying or misdirecting her erotic expression.

Marion's crush occurred in 1915-1917, during a period of acute transition from one theory of eroticism to another, and this is surely one reason her story is so poignant. Many traditions and new theories combined, overlapped, and contradicted one another during this historical shift. Psychoanalytic ideas of sexual repression and its now-questionable cousin, sublimation, were taking hold in academic and vernacular culture.

[48] Marion Taylor, transcribed diary entry, May 6, 1917, folder 8, Taylor Papers.

Additionally, well-funded advocacy for social hygiene sought to provide explicit information for young people in order to teach them how to cultivate their changing bodies and budding sexuality in order to express them healthfully in marriage.[49] These movements had much in common, but one aspect that united them was the conception of sexual instincts or energy (which Freud called libido) as a force that had to be channeled into a kind of circuitry to be released at advantageous times. Heterosexual pleasure for its own sake was increasingly approved as healthy, but many heralds of liberation saw it as something that needed to be regulated, sometimes (as with social hygiene) even rationalized.[50] Libido was as combustible as a locomotive engine under too much steam pressure. When it built up (as it did at puberty), it sought an outlet.

Increasingly, professionals, parents, and girls themselves saw adolescent teacher-crushes as manifestations of sexual desire bursting through an outlet that was at best inappropriate and at worst perverted. Despite the views of Havelock Ellis and others, after the First World War there was a more aggressive movement to stamp out girls' crushes, or at least help direct them to more acceptable outlets. This was a global crusade often led by women who had been exposed to psychoanalytic thinking. It is worthwhile to consider the movement's British origins before turning to the United States. Single-sex education was much more prevalent in England, so it may be that girls' crushes were even more acknowledged there as a part of young people's institutional life. But during the war, with so many men at the front, all levels of society had been necessarily segregated by sex. To help ensure victory, working-class women crowded into munitions

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[49] Moran, Teaching Sex, ch. 1.
[50] D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 203-208.

factories, which supposedly masculinized them.[51] War was not only psychologically traumatizing, it made gender inversion necessary. Victory came at an incalculable price, not only in lives lost, bodies maimed, and treasure depleted, but also in the challenges to a set of gender relations that seemed (at least in retrospect) relatively stable.

Even before Armistice, the visibility of inverted gender roles and sex segregation, along with the acknowledgement of sexual urges at adolescence, made crushes seem suspect, especially when one of the parties was boyish or mannish. One of the most influential representations of school crushes as perverted was the 1917 novel Regiment of Women, by "Clemence Dane" (a pseudonym for the lesbian author Winifred Ashton). The book depicted a vampiric teacher who conjures up a crush in a naïve, motherless student, to tragic results. In the words of Martha Vicinus, the author offered a "conservative solution to the problem of lesbianism. … Dane recommended expulsion from society of the power-hungry, sexually frustrated spinster who preyed upon innocent younger women."[52] Not only was the teacher "sexually frustrated," she, not the student, was the instigator of the crush. Crushes in this formulation were not a form of eroticism generated by girls themselves; they originated with repressed women perverts who had a sadistic hunger for power. Not only was this a new representational development, it was presented in a book for adults, not girls. Perversion, after all, was not a fit subject for children.

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[51] Janet Watson, "The Paradox of Working Heroines: Conflict over the Changing Social Order in Wartime Britain, 1914-1918," in Douglas Mackaman and Michael Mays, eds., World War I and the Cultures of Modernity (Oxford, MS: The University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 81-103; Angela Woollacott, On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 209-216.

[52] Martha Vicinus, Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 172. Emphasis in original.

Regiment of Women was not a runaway bestseller in the United States, but it did make a significant impact among American women physicians and psychologists, as can be seen in the published proceedings of the International Conference of Medical Women, convened in New York City in September 1919. Amid an audience composed of professionals from around the world, the London gynecologist Constance Long discussed the novel at length. Although her address was titled "A Psycho-Analytic Study of the Basis of Character," she devoted much time to current theories of homosexuality, especially girls' crushes. Turning to the book, she began by situating the story within the context of the Great War:

> The European war has had the effect of separating men and women into masses of their own sex. … Women have been obliged willy-nilly to do men's work in engine yards, in munition factories, on the land—in every field, in fact, of industrial and professional life. Something so-called male in a woman's psychology has been called for, and we have seen there is a latent sex-element which enables her to respond. In fact, the regulation tasks of the sexes have been completely mixed [reversed], for in many camps and hospitals the women's work has been done exclusively by men.[53]

Thus, the rash of books about homosexuality that were lately being published was "a sign of the times for those who can read portents."[54] "Morbid" same-sex eroticism was loosed in society—and increasing.

Homosexual love, Long explained in informal remarks after her talk, could be the product of the misdirection of unconscious sexual desire. "There is a natural tendency … to love others of one's own sex," she told the assembly.

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[53] Constance Long, "A Psycho-Analytic Study of the Basis of Character," in Proceedings of the International Conference of Women Physicians, v. 4 (New York: The Womans Press, 1920), 77-78.
[54] Ibid., 77.

> But the development of the emotional life involves differentiation; that is, a separating and valuation of the contents; and there may come a time when the sex element in friendship intrudes into consciousness. We often express this problem by keeping the sex element unconscious, but it is there and it actuates conduct. Certain very serious effects of the unconscious sex element may occur in the friendships. In the book I quoted earlier, namely, "The Regiment of Women," the sex content of the relationship was unconscious, but it was a disastrous factor nonetheless. So great was its effect that the young girl of thirteen, who was in love with her teacher, committed suicide. … Now, there had been no hint of homosexual practices, but the relationship was completely morbid. We are forced to see that in keeping the actual sex element unconscious we do not do away with its effect.[55]

If girls' crushes had previously occasioned anxiety in the doctors who were present, Long's speech might have intensified them, spurring them to realize that the crushes they had always seen as disruptive but basically innocent were pathological. Attendees from as far away as France and India brought to the conference their experiences with and understandings of girls' crushes and homosexuality, which varied from culture to culture. But one additional difference presented itself—that of a generational shift in the understanding of crushes. Most significantly, there was now no distinction between intergenerational aspirational love and homosexual desire. "Dr. Jackson" of Pasadena (in all likelihood the pioneering psychoanalyst Josephine Jackson, born in 1865)[56] described scenes from her life and practice that touched on the subject. Jackson was a single woman who had adopted an eight-month-old girl. Raised apart from boys and men, her daughter began to get mad crushes on other girls around age fifteen. This continued after she went off to Stanford University, where she developed a passion

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[55] Constance Long, remarks made after "A Psycho-Analytic Study of the Basis of Character," 86-87.

[56] Josephine Jackson of Pasadena is listed in many directories of American psychiatrists. Jackson is best known for treating Buff Chandler, wife of the Los Angeles Times mogul Otis Chandler. See David Halberstam, The Powers That Be (New York: Knopf, 1975), 271-272; Dennis McDougal, Privileged Son: Otis Chandler and the Rise and Fall of the L.A. Times Dynasty (New York: Perseus, 2001), 135.

for one particular girl. The doctor approached her daughter, explaining that she was "not abnormal but simply passing through that age of homosexuality[.]" Jackson said that her daughter replied, "'Why, you have so-and-so,' my best friend, a woman. I said: 'Yes, but don't you see I am an old maid?'"[57] "I wanted that daughter of mine," she continued, "to see that to be an old maid is not a thing desirable, that it is not the end and aim of a woman's life; and that to care too much for these girl friends of hers, to show them all of the devotion that would normally express itself in other directions might inhibit the preferable development."[58]

Two generations of female same-sex devotion were present, but the medical woman dismissed them both as pathological, or at least immature. Jackson's affection for her "best friend, a woman" had prevented her from developing normally. She had no wish for her daughter to grow up the same way. Like many women of her time, the doctor was able to devote herself in some fashion to a "best friend," but what had once been a cultural possibility she now had to see as "not a thing desirable," especially before a professional audience. Apparently after being exposed to psychoanalytic theories of sexuality, she understood herself in a different way: "We all have a prurient curiosity. That is the reason I am a doctor—a sublimated direction of this curiosity, the sex curiosity."[59]

Clearly, the teacher crush and the morbid same-sex crush on a peer were merging. The platonic eroticism of aspirational love was impossible, or simply sexual passion in disguise. Constance Long linked a historically emergent female masculinity with

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[57] "Dr. Jackson," remarks from the floor after address by Constance Long, "A Psycho-Analytic Study of the Basis of Character," 83.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.

perversion and, through an analysis of Regiment of Women, denied that crushes were innocent. In fact, if an intergenerational crush emerged in a virginal ingénue, it must have been summoned up by a nefarious, predatory teacher. Teacher crushes, in brief, were homosexual, morbid in their obsessiveness and false sublimation.

If Jackson embodied the overlap of old and new understandings of same-sex crushes present in 1919, young psychologists like Phyllis Blanchard emphasized the sexual nature of the crush during the next decade. Blanchard seems to have been present at Constance Long's address, for she referred to the conference and discussed Regiment of Women in her first book, The Adolescent Girl (1920).[60] Although she studied under G. Stanley Hall at Clark University, Blanchard was part of a new wave of theorists of adolescence. Sounding the ambivalent tone about crushes that would prevail for the next generation, Blanchard wrote that they were "One of the commonest perversions of the libido among adolescent girls[.] … In extremely pathological cases, this tendency may involve gross physical manifestations; but generally it is a very high and noble sentiment, and is to be censored only as it prevents an ultimate transference of the love-life to its more natural object."[61] Blanchard, in other words, recognized that there could be a direct relationship between crushes and genital sexuality, but it was possible that crushes were still a nonsexual, aspirational form of love achieved through transference.

The historical and political contexts of crushes also shaped her thinking. Like others, Blanchard observed that feminist indignation at "the masculine double moral standard" bent girls away from marriage.[62] Nonetheless, she exemplified newer lines of

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[60] Phyllis Blanchard, The Adolescent Girl: A Study from the Psychoanalytic Viewpoint (New York: Moffat, Yard, 1920), 169-173.
[61] Ibid., 169-170.
[62] Ibid., 170.

thought: the libido needed an outlet, and some outlets were preferable to others. "With the denial of an outlet for [the girl's] sexual impulses in marriage … comes the tendency to substitute unconventional heterosexual relationships or to find a love object in members of the same sex," she wrote.[63] The erotic energy of an adolescent girl deprived of contact with boys found an outlet in the fancy of an older woman, while the woman's took the form of a love of power such as that depicted in Regiment of Women. The teacher in the novel, wrote Blanchard, "loves to see others writhe under her scorn, and to feel the intoxicating sense of power that accrues from the knowledge that a single word can make or mar the happiness of her followers."[64] She concluded that parents and teachers could prevent crushes from being channeled into homosexuality by shaping the circuitry of eroticism: "Every adolescent girl possesses the same capacities for transformation of the sexual instinct into substantive channels, a power limited only be the degree of eroticism which is inherent in her organic structure and function. It depends only upon her nervous equipment, and most of all upon the long series of external stimuli to which she has been subjected as to what form these vicaria shall take, and whether the conversion [of libidinous energy] shall be to a higher [marital] or lower [homosexual] level."[65]

On the relationship between eroticism and religion, Blanchard's opinions were qualified. For Hall, religion was part of the "new life," a spiritual rebirth that emerged at adolescence along with sexual impulses. He also believed that young men and women alike experienced this rebirth. But for Blanchard—who was religious despite her

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[63] Ibid., 171.
[64] Ibid., 172.
[65] Ibid., 175.

education in the uncompromising world of modern secular thought[66]—religion was a way to sublimate the libido and was present more in girls than boys; it was practically useful inasmuch as it distracted a girl from having sex: "The adolescent girl, with her innate need of religious emotion as a sublimation of her erotic life, with her native tendency to conversion and consecration to some high and mystical ideal, is the one to whom, in all its inspiring scope and breadth of vision, this new religion should be given, first of all."[67]

The Adolescent Girl appeared in 1920. But by the end of the decade, Blanchard was coloring her theories of girls' adolescent sexual development in shades of family dysfunction and unstable environment instead of presenting it as a purely mechanical matter of pathways of energy. This allowed her to reformulate what a previous generation had seen as unproblematically diffuse eroticism, interpreting it anew through psychoanalysis and other sources. Just as Freud had argued in the Three Essays, Blanchard believed that homosexuality was a normal stage of development, but erotic progress might be arrested if a girl's family relations departed from the norm or if she was deprived of a healthy environment. This idea freed Blanchard to allow for temporary homosexuality under certain circumstances, which probably reassured many parents of adolescent daughters. As she and a young coauthor explained in a book of 1930 intended for a popular audience, "Wherever a group of one sex is isolated from members of the opposite sex over any prolonged period of time, homosexual attachments are always to be observed. This is true of men in the army during war time, in prisons, in mining camps, and in boys' schools. It is equally true of girls in boarding schools and colleges for women, and of girls and women in penal institutions. If we are scientifically honest in our

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[66] Phyllis Blanchard, "The Long Journey," in Elaine Showalter, ed., These Modern Women: Autobiographical Essays from the Twenties (New York: The Feminist Press, 1989), 105-109.
[67] Blanchard, The Adolescent Girl, 235-236.

thinking, we must admit that latent possibilities for the development of homosexual tendencies lie hidden within all of us."[68]

By 1930, Blanchard apparently also had lost most of her sympathy for aspirational eroticism and viewed religion as a source of backwardness and repression, not sublimation. Though homosexuality was as old as the Greeks, she argued, "with the advent of a Christian ethics, which condemned sex in every form other than that sanctified by churchly ceremonies and devoted to the procreation of the race, homosexuality, along with masturbation, the sex play of children, and all the other recreational sex activities, was condemned as wicked and sinful."[69] Yet, she continued, "There are signs that we are emerging from this era of religious darkness … Modern scientific psychology and psychiatry, regarding homosexuality as a problem for investigation along with all the other phenomena of human behavior, have marshalled data which … should operate to modify public opinion considerably."[70] This note of hope rested on the belief that libido could be channeled through appropriate outlets in genital sexuality, not sublimated artistic achievement. Even homosexuality, once thought to be a matter of a willful choice of sin, could be laid to influences beyond the control of the individual, especially family upbringing and environment.

The progression from Hall to Long to Blanchard demonstrates how thinking about crushes came to deemphasize the connection between spiritual striving and eroticism, just as it lumped crushes on mentors with homosexuality. Religious and moral awakening was usually no longer an erotic process that ran parallel to the sudden growth of the body (or perhaps was even rooted in it) but a phenomenon that happened to coincide with

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[68] Phyllis Blanchard and Carlyn Manasses, New Girls for Old (New York: Macaulay, 1937), 103.
[69] Ibid., 98.
[70] Ibid.

adolescent angst and strife with parents. Adolescent religious devotion might seem sincere, but it was really repression. As Blanchard told it, girls could grow up normally without ever experiencing such an awakening. Secularization and what Foucault called the repressive hypothesis helped make the same-sex crush less explicable as a platonic desire for a more perfect spiritual being.

Lou

Born in 1911, the Landis interviewee "Lou" was nearly a decade younger than Marion Taylor. Lou also nurtured a crush on an older woman and was humiliated at its discovery. But the consequences led her to a much more intense consideration of herself and the way she fit into her social world, for they occurred in a changed context. Not only was there something wrong with Lou, the camp director upon whom she showered her affections faced severe approbation, just as the fictional teacher in Regiment of Women did. Lou's tomboyishness added to the condemnation she faced and the painful self-reflection it engendered.

As a girl, Lou was heir to the declining tradition of aspirational love, associating religion with human reproduction. She and her younger brother gleaned knowledge from their father, a worldly, forward-thinking Jewish high school principal who believed in sex education, and their mother, a "prude" who had been educated in a convent despite being Jewish. Perhaps the silences and paradoxes of religious creation stories inspired the siblings' questions as they grew up. Yet Lou and her family were secular; she had "no orthodix [sic] training," according to her interview. When she was very small, her parents began answering her questions with rudimentary stories about how God created the

world, the animal kingdom, and man and woman. By the time Lou was six, however, her parents had told her where life comes from though a "birds and bees" story. It was 1917 or 1918. "All so vivid with birds, flowers and animals," she remembered. She did not have much information about human reproduction until she was eight: "Father drew pictures and it was all very clear." But, Lou said, these lessons had proceeded from the context of religious discussions: "Our quest for information earlier always about God."[71] Her religious mother and progressive father were dual influences on her growing understanding of sexuality. The years spanning her birth (1911) and interview with Agnes Landis (1937) overlapped with a longer decline of one cultural strand of thought on human growth, puberty, and erotic feeling and the emergence of another. That is, through the work of psychologists, educators, and young people themselves, aspirational love came to be considered false—just another name for sublimated or repressed genital sexuality.

Although there was no one theoretical rupture that decoupled spiritual striving from sexual impulses in young people—even the influence of psychoanalysis did not chase discussions of religion from advice books on adolescence, especially for girls[72]—the cultural decline of aspirational love for young people made tomboys' crushes difficult to diagnose, even for themselves. They still hungered for the attention and affection of older girls and teachers, perhaps as much as they ever had, but by the 1930s they knew that such longings usually had to remain hidden. As Lou's case shows, tomboys with teacher crushes, especially on masculine women, walked the line between innocence and perversion.

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[71] Interview transcript, Case 27N (m), January 14, 1937, folder 3, series III B, box 1, CL.
[72] See, for example, Hollingworth, The Psychology of the Adolescent, ch. 6; Mudge, Varieties of Adolescent Experience, chs. 8-10.

Lou's crush emerged at age fifteen (1926-1927), the same age when she first went out with a boy. But the differences in her erotic experience were striking: her relationship with the boy, she knew, was a socially important exercise—others had to witness her dating in order for her to be normal—but if it was pleasurable, it left little impact. "Not really a date—a party," she told Landis. "Meant nothing to me. Just like going with a girl, boys no different." Life for young New Yorkers like her should have been awhirl with dating and petting, at least if stereotypes of the period are to be believed. Indeed, she felt obligated to like boys sexually: it was what girls her age did. But increasingly she saw herself as different, perhaps even uglier than her mother's quips always made her feel. An "ugly duckling" since childhood, she "never felt about boys as other girls did," she said. Though she always remembered her father's lessons about sex, she still had no idea that intercourse could be pleasurable. She laid this to the fact that she was "always a tomboy," which meant that "boys meant nothing different to me than girls." She waited, confused, for some mysterious desire for boys that she knew was supposed to wash over her at puberty, never making the connection between sexual arousal and being in the company of a boy. Not till she was twenty-two did Lou kiss a man, a fellow whom she married about two years later.[73]

But her adolescent years were far from devoid of erotic feeling. The same year she accompanied a boy to a party for the first time, she also developed a crush on a teacher. Whoever the boy was, he evidently made little impression, but her teacher was a warm presence and continued to be her friend at the time she gave her interview, ten years later. "My teacher crush had violet eyes which I associated with water," she remembered, struck by a sense of beauty that could only be expressed in a nature

[73] Interview transcript, Case 27N (m).

metaphor—a sense of enveloping vastness but still somehow quirky. Her feelings, she said, were "very intense." Asked what she thought of when she daydreamed "about a lover," Lou replied that her thoughts concerned "Only this one teacher I had a crush on. Figured in my scheme of events—I'd go to museums and concerts with them." Later, when Landis asked specifically whether she had fantasies about the teacher, Lou ambiguously replied, "I imagine so." She was well aware of the implications of having a teacher crush. She shrank from associating it with homosexuality, which in her opinion was an "Unfortunate state of affairs." When women attempted to embrace her, it put her off: "I rather resent it. Feel that such attachments should be discouraged. Don't like to be hugged. … Not even in adolescence did I like hugs."[74] Her implication, of course, was that young women typically did like hugs, perhaps especially from the teachers and superiors for whom they had erotic feelings.

Sometime after her first date and her teacher crush, a dramatic experience when she was a camp counselor confused and frightened her. This was a different woman from the first teacher; it was the camp director, with whom Lou formed a warm relationship when she was about eighteen. The older woman was afflicted with frequent, crippling migraines, and one day Lou came to her aid, soothing her, removing her shoes, laying her on her bed, staying by her side until she recovered. Someone saw them together and notified the camp's board of directors, who asked Lou not to return to camp "because she was an unwholesome influence," as Landis summarized. Lou did not understand this euphemism; the board members then apparently acknowledged the director's lesbianism. According to Lou, the director "had studied with Freud … hated men. … Learned later she was a lesbian and I under her influence." When the director learned of the board's

[74] Ibid.

decision to bar Lou, she refused to return to the camp too—but this only increased the girl's confusion: "made me feel there was something wrong with me."[75] Lou spoke openly of her feelings of affection for women in superior positions, but her words point to a difference between a fifteen-year-old's crush on a teacher in the mid-1920s and a close relationship with an acknowledged lesbian just a few years later. Although Lou did not describe the camp director's gender expression, it may be inferred that she was quite masculine.

As a tomboy who was still uncomfortable within adolescent sexual culture, Lou realized quite suddenly that she might grow up to be a mannish woman and therefore a lesbian. After all, the camp's board of directors pointed it out quite directly. One wonders what Lou's parents thought when they learned she was expelled from camp, what her progressive father might have told her about homosexuality. In any case, her feeling that "there was something wrong" led her to do her own research. Because she "didn't go out with boys as other girls did," she "Read everything on homosexuality after that, that settled the matter. Afraid of boys."[76] Lou immersed herself in contemporary psychoanalytic thinking about female homosexuality, which, by the early 1930s, had much to say about girls' crushes, painting them as sublimated libidinous desires. In short, they were no longer the erotic-but-innocent longing for spiritual perfection that Havelock Ellis discussed in 1897. Freud's 1920 essay "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman" presented an analysis of an eighteen-year-old's crush on a woman ten years her senior, but he never allowed for a type of eroticism similar to aspirational love. In the first place, the young woman's love object was a "lady 'in

[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

society','" who the parents felt "was nothing but a cocotte"—hardly a model of spiritual perfection. Moreover, Freud traced the girl's craving for her beloved's sexual attention to the eroticism of the bourgeois family; the girl's crush was a "mother-substitute" who satisfied her unconscious desire to seek revenge on her father for impregnating her mother when the girl was pubescent. "After her disappointment," Freud wrote, "… this girl had entirely repudiated her wish to have a child, the love of a man, and womanhood altogether. … She changed into a man, and took her mother in place of her father as her love-object." Though not the least bit boyish at eighteen, the girl had "suffered from childhood from a strongly marked 'masculinity complex.' A spirited girl, always ready to fight, she developed a pronounced envy of the penis, and the thoughts derived from this envy still continued to fill her mind."[77]

If Lou read this case study, she might have seen some of her own feelings reproduced on the page. In the first place, she resembled Freud's patient in the resentment of boys' superiority she had felt as a child. Freud wrote that his analysand "was in fact a feminist; she felt it to be unjust that girls should not enjoy the same freedom as boys, and rebelled against the lot of woman in general."[78] Lou, looking back at her childhood through the lens of psychological thinking, remembered that she wanted to be a boy. "All dates back to an experience at 6 yrs.," she said. "Climbing trees in park, once slapped a boy and he didn't slap back, brother's friend did. I felt insulted I couldn't play by the same rules as boys." She then claimed that she had renounced these feelings—"After deciding to get married I gave it up"—knowing, perhaps, that to do less would put her in a pathological category. As she said a few moments later, "a woman can do everything a

[77] Sigmund Freud, "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," in Rieff, ed., Sexuality and the Psychology of Love, 123, 134.
[78] Ibid., 146.

man can if she's capable, most women aren't." Lou also might have recognized herself in Freud's patient's antipathy to dating. Finally, at age sixteen Lou turned away from an alliance with her father, which she had maintained since childhood.[79] This was around the same age when she met the camp director and perhaps began to consider the possibility that her crushes made her homosexual. As Lou remembered it, her adolescent reckoning with inner life led straight to introspection about sexual expression.

Additional readings that might have come to Lou's attention include Helene Deutsch's psychoanalytic work on women and homosexuality, which gave due attention to crushes on older women but always as a developmental phase of lesbianism. Presenting a number of case studies, "On Female Homosexuality" (1932) concluded that one of the primary expressions of lesbianism was an open imitation of the child-mother bond, with a younger partner doting on an authoritative older woman. The ideas in this essay, perhaps presented in a textbook, might have influenced Lou's belief that she was "Afraid of boys." Deutsch reasoned that sexual desire for other women sprang from penis envy. Although the lesbians she treated were not masculine in appearance, she believed their frustration at not having a penis led them to flee from normal feminine sexual passivity. "Let us get the situation clearly in mind," Deutsch wrote. [T]he child is no longer narcissistically stimulated by the wish for a penis which she recognizes cannot be fulfilled; she feels rejected by her father …; she is left with libido which has little opportunity for sublimation. What will she do? She will do what all living creatures do in situations of danger. She will flee for refuge to the shelter where she once enjoyed protection and peace, to her mother." Moreover, Deutsch issued a note of caution: "The tomboyish period during the girl's puberty is widespread and normal. The girl derives

[79] Interview transcript, Case 27N (m).

from it the best energies for sublimations and for the formation of her personality[.] … Of course, we are aware of the great dangers which this period of activity conceals with respect to the 'masculinity complex' and its neurotic consequences. If it is true that the final change of object takes place during puberty, then this shift to activity must add dangers for the heterosexual attitude, and the masculine tendencies of puberty will also contribute their share to homosexuality."[80]

In her interview, Lou did not have to insist that she was not a lesbian; Agnes Landis filled in the blanks for her. She personally liked Lou, describing her as "a very vital, intense, vivacious person";[81] their interaction was therefore a collaboration in creating a life history free from the taint of lesbianism. This was quite a feat, considering the frequency with which Lou was presumed to be a "homo." Not only was there the emotionally scarring episode with the camp director, uncomfortable insinuations linking her boyishness to possible lesbianism continued to dog Lou into her college years. Several professors and administrators told her she was "unwholesome." "Head of Education department approached me in the hall and asked me if I was a homo," she said. To sort out her feelings for herself, or to prove to others that she was not "a homo," she "Wrote a paper on crushes for Abnormal Psychology."[82] Landis provided her own assessment: "She's a sociable person and always enjoyed friendly, jolly contacts with other persons both men and women and whenever they happened to be women certain authorities at [school] interpreted it as [a] lesbian relationship. She was greatly perturbed

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[80] Helene Deutsch, "On Female Homosexuality," in Hendrik Marinus Ruitenbeek, ed., Psychoanalysis and Female Sexuality (New Haven: College and University Press Services, 1966), 122, 129.
[81] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 27N (m), n.d. [1937].
[82] Interview transcript, Case 27N (m).

over all this and could not understand what manner of being she really was." But the solution was psychological: "All of these seemingly homosexual traits could possibly be traced to the fact that through her growing years she was very unattractive physically, had very large breasts, and a tremendous feeling of inferiority about her physical appearance." Lou believed, therefore, that the only way she would be accepted would be to develop "her wit, cleverness and intelligence." Thus, according to Landis, she "never gave the feminine emotional side of her a chance. It seems plausible that hers is a case of delayed awakening because of external conditions and that once awakened [by her husband] she made a very satisfactory adjustment."[83]

It is, in fact, easy to believe that such an awakening really occurred. Lou was quite a bit more forthcoming in her descriptions of sex than other interviewees, fully describing an incident of molestation, pleasurable incestuous experimentation with her brother, and a trip to a hayloft with a girl who showed her how to masturbate by placing her fingers in her vagina and rubbing. Because of her education, Lou was familiar with psychoanalytic concepts, and she had grown up in a family that valued sex education. These factors probably enabled her to be more honest with herself, and with Landis. If she had wanted to protect herself during the interview, she would not have described her inner conflicts about her sexual identity and her longstanding fear of intercourse. This fear was dispelled after a long period of resistance. When she was twenty-three, she had sex with her fiancé. "Parents away, I home alone, fiance came over," she said. "I had no thought of anything. He suggested staying. We went to bed, he tried to warm me up, I terribly scared. No intercourse that night. Then saw him through the summer only at camp—he wanted intercourse there, I afraid. In November it really happened. All family

[83] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 27N (m).

away." She was "afraid of the idea," but it was "Very pleasant, had orgasm the first time. … Wanted more." Lou also spoke of her body's reaction to sex when she discussed birth control: "I'm so well lubricated I need no jelly with pessary." She also described her willingness to experiment with sexual positions other subjects might have thought unorthodox. Both doctoral students, she and her husband were waiting until their financial circumstances improved before they had children.[84]

Even if those around her thought Lou must be a lesbian, her interview demonstrates that she experienced both the eroticism of teacher crushes and sexual desire for a man. This combination makes her a queer subject, if not a homosexual one. The point is that by the 1930s teacher crushes were abnormal and implicitly homosexual, while sexual desires for men were normal and explicitly heterosexual. Each was a distinct form of pleasure, and neither disappeared when their social valuations shifted. The inquiries and events that moved and confused Lou between her birth in 1911 and when she gave her interview, in 1937, occurred in the context of acute change in understandings of eroticism and sexuality. The meaning of crushes became suspicious as eroticism between women became suspect,[85] but it may be that this new form of knowledge enabled some young women to interpret teacher crushes as an indicator of their own lesbianism. Even if erotic opportunities declined as aspirational love was no longer considered a normal part of adolescence, the ability to find a lesbian identity within one's history probably increased. Lou, with a sophisticated understanding of contemporary psychology at her disposal, understood crushes in a way that Marion Taylor did not. Though Lou did not think she had ever been a lesbian, she would have

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[84] Interview transcript, Case 27N (m).
[85] See Vicinus, "Distance and Desire: English Boarding School Friendships, 1870-1920."

had the ability to see herself that way through the changed understanding of teacher crushes. Marion's cultural milieu provided her with some convincing explanations of her feelings—through the school stories she read—but in a sense she was living at a moment when explanations were changing, while Lou grew up at a time and in a place where they had changed. Marion spoke of her crush on Miss Green as a longing for a superior being; Lou saw hers as possibly perverted. Both, however, accomplished an inward turn to explain to themselves why they did not fit in to adolescent sexual culture.

Chapter 5 | Bodies

What happens when a human being discovers, or is told, or is physically forced to recognize that her social place, her familial relations, and the body she is used to will change—must change? And furthermore, that these changes, over which she has no control, are for the best? And even more, that what might feel like a toll to cross into a land of shades and shame, or at best a nuisance, is really a golden ticket to a world of pleasure so blissful that it must be kept secret from the uninitiated? What if she sees others skip merrily into this world, leaving her behind, worried she might never catch up? Or what if she is told nothing of these changes, this new world, but wakes one morning to find her sheets stained with blood?

It was not necessarily as traumatic as this. For many early twentieth-century girls, puberty was a welcome process, an enticing promise of adult privileges. But tomboys had a special relationship to it. While for many girls, puberty (especially menstruation) was part of a linear progression from childhood to womanhood, for tomboys it represented both a segment of their lives and supposedly—ideally—a transformation, or at least a

purposeful bending of the line in another direction. As the body becomes womanly, so too must the tomboy inside it.

Some men of science in the early twentieth century rhapsodized about "periodicity," as G. Stanley Hall did in 1904:

> During the first few days [the girl] is introverted to strange sensations which ideally are not painful, but deliciously and ecstatically charming. … She feels her womanhood and glories in it like a goddess. … In the earliest stirrings of the adolescent ferment, she has first dreamed of some ideal of manhood and is altruistic, and only later comes the conception of selfhood. … So far from ever having wished herself a male, she exults in her womanhood as something superior, and feels it worthy of love, reverence, protection, care, and service.[1]

To Hall, menstruation was an unblemished facet of womanhood, requiring special care and retiring modesty but in no way shameful. It not only marked a change in the physical body, it also was supposed to direct a girl toward dependent feminine womanhood. A normal girl's periodicity cleansed her of a desire to be male. Womanhood, though "something superior," could only be realized by being "introverted"—not an adjective, but the passive form of the verb "to introvert." The young woman was not shy, in other words, but turned inward by force of her body's cyclical changes. The romantic brooding that entwined male adolescence did not characterize girls' growth. Young men's inward turn tapped desires to change the world, or at least shape their destinies; young women's introversion led them toward self-love and self-care.

But what of boyish girls? In the early twentieth century, tomboys' responses to puberty varied. Some felt completely alienated from their maturing bodies; others were more annoyed than angry; still others felt grand and accomplished. In this they were not necessarily different from other girls. Nonetheless, there were more social demands

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[1] Hall, Adolescence 1:493.

placed on tomboys when they reached puberty. The stakes for them were simply higher than for their unselfconsciously feminine counterparts. In tomboy lore, what might be called "the change"—pubertal transformation coupled with affective gender realignment—is sometimes unexpected, confusing, or traumatic.[2] In the symbolic lives of tomboys, the change is not only an imperative move toward gender conformity for the benefit of family and community, it is also a way to reinterpret the body for oneself, to make the familiar uncanny, and finally familiar again.[3]

Historical changes urged along this corporal and affective realignment. As Joan Jacobs Brumberg writes, "Every girl suffers some kind of adolescent angst about her body; it is the historical moment that defines how she reacts to her changing flesh."[4] Many tomboys who grew up in the 1910s and 1920s felt pressure to transform themselves as their bodies began to change, to make their own expression of gender and the way they thought of themselves as girls match the transformations in their bodies. The problem they faced, however, was not that they had to change—this demand was present at least as far back as Tocqueville's time[5]—it was that by the 1920s there was a distinct lack of consensus about the future of women's roles in American social, culture, political, and working life. How would girls born during a gender revolution turn out once the dust had

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[2] As Michelle Ann Abate notes, Norma Klein's protagonist in Tomboy (1978) understands menstruation as wholly incompatible with tomboyism. "'How could you be a tomboy at all if you could have a baby?'" the character wonders. Quoted in Abate, Tomboys, xix.

[3] The trope of the tomboy is particularly important in modern lore about queer girlhood. For example, the introduction to the 1995 anthology Tomboys! Tales of Dyke Derring-Do discusses the connection between tomboyism and (adult) lesbianism: "Though we were defined as tomboys by what we did, for many of us what we did turned out to be who we were and who we became, the behavior an expression of identity." Yamaguchi and Barber, "Introduction," in Tomboys!, 13.

[4] Joan Jacobs Brumberg, The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls (New York: Random House, 1997), xviii (emphasis in original).

[5] Tocqueville observed that young women were raised to be independent, but once they married they readily submitted to the will of their husbands. See Tocqueville, Democracy in America, 686-689, 698.

settled—if indeed it did settle? More to the point, what social and political positions would boyish girls (who resembled vanguard New Women well enough) occupy once they came of age?

In fact, something happened to render these questions moot by the 1930s. In a word, the relationships among gender, sexual expression, and the body became matters of fierce introspection for young women (and men) who sensed that somehow they did not fit in—whether this had to do with a lack of interest in heterosexuality, an inability to get a date, social exclusion, or a host of other factors. Though plenty of misfit girls (and boys) had trouble "adjusting" to this new regime, tomboys' particular articulation of their inner conflicts provide an almost existential statement of adolescent confusion about gender, sexuality, and the body, which might be extended to others.

Tomboys who had trouble conforming to adolescent sexual culture often had to hide their frustration. Pretending nothing was wrong drew these girls inward as they tried to understand what was wrong. Many times, tomboys sensed or consciously realized that they had to sunder the affinity for boys and boyishness that nurtured them through childhood in order to become "real" girls. This meant reckoning with sexed bodies that were usually growing breasts, becoming wider in the hips, menstruating, and feeling erogenous urges more intensely than in childhood. These new, pubescent bodies acted of their own accord. They also effectively restricted tomboy play, whether because a wider pelvis made it harder to run as fast as a boy or because a girl's "monthlies" quarantined some of her active pleasures. To many tomboys, it felt uncomfortable to try to become acceptably feminine; it seemed to undercut who they thought they were inside. Yet their bodies seemed to demand some sort of personal transformation. Therefore, as adolescent

sexual culture required gender conformity for a girl to be eligible for dating and heterosocial pleasures, pubescent tomboys sometimes turned inward in bewilderment, their new bodies providing occasions for introspection. In their bodies and in their affective lives, tomboys felt history changing.

The following pages propose a life story of "the change" as a cultural and social phenomenon that tomboys experienced with particular intensity. Case studies demonstrate both the change in individual tomboys and the ways their histories can map onto larger social and cultural developments. There is a "before, during, and after" quality to the discussion—before the change, during the change, and after the change.

Before: in the first decades of the twentieth century, it was possible for tomboys to possess a corporal sense that having a girl's body did not necessarily make one a girl; instead, it might make one a tomboy. Tomboys often had what may be called "affinity" for the body of a boy. Often knowing full well that bodies were sexed and that girl and boy anatomies were distinct, they chose to ignore differences. The transformations of puberty, emphasizing qualitative and empirical differences between girl and boy bodies, could challenge tomboys' sense of affinity. Affinity could and did flourish among tomboys precisely because it was hard for children to come by "scientific" information about their bodies (through sex education curricula, for example).

During: in both symbolic resonance and bodily consequence, menstruation sundered affinity more than any other pubertal change. It made it impossible to cling to similarities; doing so might make a girl affectively pathological. Menstruation also linked girls to reproduction and to sexual expression. Fright or resentment at its appearance could hint that a girl was unable to appreciate her femininity and might not find a way

toward heterosexual fulfillment. Tomboys stood in grave danger if they could not follow a path through three stages: recognizing that their bodies were only female, welcoming their ability to reproduce, and channeling this ability into a desire for men as sexual partners.

After: tomboys who stumbled along this road might engage in "therapeutic sexuality" to adjust to the demands of society. Therapeutic sexuality was purposeful engagement in heterosexual contact in order to get over one's fear of men, ambivalence about erogenous touching, anxiety about possibly being homosexual, or any other self-perceived block in the way of achieving normal sexual pleasure. It was a product of the inward turn in its location of both problem and solution in the depths of the psyche.

By the 1930s, it seemed to many—women as well as men—that everything had been accomplished in terms of upending the social order of "Victorian" gender relations: feminism had worked in the sense that women's rights as individuals—to education, for instance, or political participation—were established.[6] In terms of the body, however, the signal "right" that women had gained was arguably the pursuit of an enjoyable sex life within marriage.[7] Initiation into adolescent sexual culture was difficult for many tomboys, for it meant rethinking their relationships with boys and other girls. It also, however, meant rethinking their relationships with themselves, including their bodies.

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[6] Of course, this was only a perception. In actuality, a backlash emerged during the exigencies of the Depression, especially targeting women workers in the professions. Employment opportunities in the professions expanded, but men were hired more often than women. Moreover, a modern revision of ideal family life, placing more emphasis on parents' scientific role in child development, demanded an increased level of attentiveness from both parents, but the burden mainly fell to mothers (as did the blame when children failed to adjust). Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism, ch. 7; Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 120-125.

[7] Elaine Tyler May analyzes women's sexual pleasure within the paradigm of monogamous gender "containment" in postwar America in Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era, revised ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1999), ch. 5.

For tomboys, growing into the female sexual body was another kind of tradeoff: a final recognition that the tomboy body and the woman's body were not the same. Many tomboys faced down disappointment, whether they sexually desired boys, girls, both, or neither. Though as boyish girls they could be objects of a sexual gaze in popular culture,[8] maturing tomboys had a difficult time being heterosexual subjects and sex objects as long as they remained masculine. Adolescent tomboys who were attracted to other girls usually knew these desires were forbidden, while others suffered for feeling abnormal because they harbored no interest in genital sexuality in a culture obsessed with self-regard for its own liberation.

Affinity

Some of the Landis subjects' words suggest new ways of thinking about gender, especially ideas about sex difference—the biological and anatomical "facts" that classify most people as female or male at birth.[9] The interviews show that being a tomboy made it cognitively possible to blur differences not just of gender but of sex, at least in the early twentieth century. These tomboys expounded something that may be called "affinity": a delight in similarity without forgetting difference. This love for an area of play between self and other, where one sex can include two and two can become one, was probably

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[8] Carolyn Steedman examines the erotic appeal of androgynous girl performers in Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 8-9. See also Kincaid, Erotic Innocence.

[9] The number of historical studies that argue that sex is a social construction is far too extensive to cite fully, but a handful of foundational texts include Gisela Bock, "Women's History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate," Gender and History 1:1 (Spring 1989): 7-30; Alice Dorumat Dreger, Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Ann Fausto-Sterling, Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality (New York: Basic Books, 2000); and Thomas Laqueur, Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

most easily expressed by tomboys because, in the social world of children, they could be accepted by boys as equals—some were girls whose behavior and even appearance could not be distinguished from boys'. Several interviews suggest that tomboys could recognize the gross facts of sex and gender difference without granting them much accord. They might know they were different from boys, including the fact that boys had penises and they did not; they simply did not care. Why should they? They could do everything boys could. If anything, many tomboys saw themselves as more different from other girls than from boys. Lou, whose story features in the previous chapter, said she often got annoyed because "all girls were sissies."[10]

But adolescence not only involved a reorientation of personal relations with boy pals, it also meant that tomboys had to learn to see their bodies in a new way. Tomboys' responses to menstruation and other pubertal changes varied. Some achieved the transformation without much thought, while others would not or could not make the adjustment. Changes in the body resolutely differentiated girls from boys and in some sense gave almost every adolescent girl something in common. This required a shift in how tomboys perceived sexed bodies: they had to discard their sense of affinity and reject the tomboy body in favor of an unproblematic girl body. There was now no denying that they were girls first and had to accept the gendered demands of adolescence.

More research may show that affinity especially flourished in the early decades of the twentieth century. The welter of competing voices that talked sex to children spoke from all levels of power, and children, for their part, shaped reformers' belief that "correct" information was necessary to stamp out schoolyard gossip. The latter was easier said than done. Some parents could be reticent and evasive; others could be frank.

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[10] Interview transcript, Case 61N.

Debates among hygiene reformers about implementing age-appropriate curricula advanced tentatively.[11] Authors in the eugenics movement often advocated better and more accurate information for adolescents.[12] Children themselves spread rumors, puzzled over innuendo, and scrawled dirty words on the pavement. Science circulated samizdat, as older sisters and brothers passed along what they knew. The Catholic tomboy "Mary" was angry that her parents had kept her in the dark for so long. Answering her questions about bodies and sexuality? "Just did not do it," she said. "Embarrassing to them and [they] did not believe they should be discussed. [I] Sometimes worried about my younger brother; left my medical books around so he could get to them if he wanted to."[13]

The Landis interviews reflect a push-pull relationship between frankness, accuracy, and the facts on one hand and the body mysterious on the other. Both could inform pleasurable experiences, as some adolescent girls felt relieved to find out what their bodies were doing, while others (particularly tomboys) preferred to distance themselves from information they sensed would be disillusioning. While only a handful of the Landis subjects had no explanation of sex differences whatsoever, an overwhelming number were subject to what Sex in Development called "Fantastic explanations by adults; inadequate information from playmates; childish gossip; dirty stories; [and] inadequate factual information[.]"[14] Carney Landis (the first author of Sex

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[11] Though they focused on personal "purity," programs for high school students in the 1910s were far more controversial than the anti-VD lessons promoted by hygiene reformers. An uproar killed a short-lived experimental curriculum in Chicago established in 1913. Moran, Teaching Sex, 24-54.

[12] Michael A. Rembis, "'Explaining Sexual Life to Your Daughter': Gender and Eugenic Education in the United States during the 1930s," in Susan Currell and Christina Cogdell, eds., Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), 91-119.

[13] Interview transcript, Case 15, January 8, 1935, folder 2, series III C, box 1, CL.

[14] Landis et al., Sex in Development, 276.

in Development and Agnes's husband) was annoyed by the ineffectiveness of accurate discourse between American parents and children. The jumble of competing sources the Landis interviewees mentioned testify to cultural conflicts about sex education: the professionals' prescriptions, parents' judgments about what was best for their children, and young people's search for satisfying explanations wherever they might emerge. If this dynamic feels quite current to contemporary observers, it has roots stretching back to ongoing attempts at intervention initiated by scientists, physicians, psychologists, and educators a century ago.

Of course, it is difficult to discuss historically situated ways of knowing about sexed bodies without reference to Freud, especially his theory of penis envy. This he developed during the early 1920s and mapped out definitively in "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes" (1925). In his scenario, very small girls and boys at play notice the anatomical differences between them. The girls are instantly shocked by the fact of absence, which eventually metastasizes into penis envy. But the boys have a different, more complex reaction: "when a little boy first catches sight of a girl's genital region, he begins by showing irresolution and lack of interest; he sees nothing or disowns what he has seen, he softens it down or looks about for expedients for bringing it into line with his expectations."[15] It is only later that the boy develops castration anxiety; for a brief moment, at least, difference does not matter to him.

The point is not to lend unthinking credibility to Freud's theory. Rather, what Freud thought he knew about little boys could also be observed in girls of the time,

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[15] Sigmund Freud, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes," trans. James Strachey, in Sigmund Freud, Sexuality and the Psychology of Love, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Touchstone, 1977), 177. Strachey's translation first appeared in 1927.

perhaps especially in tomboys, and for a much longer period. Such stories are common enough among the Landis interviews. One tomboy woman remembered, "When [I was] very tiny, a little boy showed me his body and asked to see mine. I asked about penis, he said I'd have one when I grew up."[16] Who is to say that girls who were accustomed to playing with boys most of the time did not prolong their understanding—or deliberate misunderstanding—of sex differences to hold on to these theories? In the absence of convincing explanations about their physical differences, girls and boys devised their own. Children's knowledge of physical differences led to a garden of ideas about how they might be similar. For tomboys, as the next cases show, the early twentieth century might have been a golden age of affinity. Competing yet incomplete forms of knowledge allowed its elaboration.

Dottie

Some tomboys' affinity arose mostly from experiential knowledge instead of formal sources. Consider the case of "Dottie." Born in 1908 in New York City, she was the daughter of middle-class, native-born Episcopalians. As a young girl, she received no information from her parents or in school about the differences between boys and girls. She described her mother, who became a Christian Scientist in the 1920s, as "so puritanical I could think of her as nothing but a virgin." But Dottie was more than informed about girl and boy bodies—she was fascinated. While war raged in Europe, she and a neighbor boy "played soldiers … one wounded and one the Doctor. Then wounded one was explored and bandaged. I usually the wounded one. Our mothers found out, we were punished. I egged him on, then tattled to mother and he [was] punished again." She

[16] Interview transcript, Case 3 (m).

was unwilling to limit her explorations to her pal. Before she was ten (about 1918), she persuaded her younger brother to join her in romping about the house in the nude while their parents were out; she was disappointed when he put his clothes back on first. She also enjoyed having her other brother, about four years her senior, "caress" her body as he told her stories at night ("we called it tickling"). She said she "Asked what his penis was," although it is hard to believe she did not already know.[17]

Her loss of affinity and its attendant affective pleasures came slowly, between the ages of eleven and fourteen (about 1919-1922). Dottie had no need to explain the social significance of sexual differences to herself until she edged close to puberty, when she became aware of the meanings that adhered to a young woman's body. When she was eleven, her family moved. In her new neighborhood, she played with boys less often, perhaps finding that they shunned the "new girl," even at her most hoydenish. Growing apart from boys might have generated within her a wish-theory that would allow her to get her old life back, to maintain the sense of affinity that had allowed her to explore boys' bodies while seeing herself as a not-quite-girl. When she was eleven, the year of her family's move, it dawned on her that the "sexes swapped—boys became girls and girls boys at around 15 yrs."[18] She did not tell Landis what logic led her to this conclusion or when she relinquished it, but it evidently accompanied an inchoate knowledge that she soon would be expected to conform to gender ideals. Before her interview, she had never told anyone of this supposition.

When she first menstruated, at age thirteen, Dottie struggled to reconceive her relationship to the boys' bodies she had explored; she thought they were just "different on

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[17] Interview transcript, Case 39N (m), February 26, 1937, folder 4, series III B, box 1, CL.
[18] Ibid.

the outside." Back when she was about seven (1915), she had heard from a friend and an older cousin that "around 14 yrs. we would bleed." Yet when she asked her mother about it, Dottie said, she "got the impression that she denied it." At menarche, she was at first nonchalant: "Just saw my bloomers bloody—thought nothing of it. Mother found it and told me to wear something and that it would come each month and I wasn't to go swimming. I was annoyed—a swimming race that morning." Still, she was subject to some of the dubious information that prevailed in medical and popular discourse, particularly that menstruation had a precise analogue in the animal kingdom: "told it was like our female dog and she had puppies. Can't remember figuring it out."[19] It was not until the 1930s that scientists discovered the purpose of menstruation in humans, decoupling it from rut in other mammals.[20] (Even so, the Landis questionnaire for married women asked them at what time of the month they felt the greatest urge to have sex.)

Menstruation meant that Dottie had to discard her erotic fascination with boys' bodies. Landis noted, "Once when she was wearing a napkin and her brother offered to tell her a story [i.e., touch her body] in bed she had a very difficult time explaining to him that she couldn't do it anymore. She had no idea why she had these feelings."[21] Dottie certainly always knew she had a girl's body, but she managed to skirt the implications of sexual difference until she was a teenager. Still wearing boys' clothes at age fourteen (about 1922), she finally became aware of a desire to be a boy—a first conscious

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[19] Ibid. For a summary of early twentieth-century popular and medical confusion about the purpose of menstruation, see Lara Freidenfelds, The Modern Period: Menstruation in Twentieth-Century America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), ch. 1.
[20] Laqueur, Making Sex, 9.
[21] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 39N (m), n.d. [1937].

acknowledgement, perhaps, that the physical characteristics that made her a girl did have social consequences.[22]

Dottie's honest explication of her childhood and adolescent perceptions of gender struck Agnes Landis as an indication of sexual pathology. Dottie's explorations of boys' bodies were erotic, comradely, playful; the stuff of a preadolescent freedom. But in the 1930s, when she was a woman reminiscing about her past, affinity seems to have become a symbol of an unenlightened era. It clearly disturbed Landis. "During childhood she was definitely a tomboy," she wrote, adding that Dottie's idea of swapping sexes and intense wish to be a boy left her with "a number of scars." As a woman, she wished to make her husband stay home and do the housework, which Landis interpreted as a neurotic wish to dominate men, all traceable to her tomboyish belief in affinity. In essence, Dottie still wished the sexes could swap. She had no desire for "equal freedom," Landis reasoned, she wanted "to have her husband experience having to stay home with the children while she exercised freedom. There seems to be a desire to punish the husband here for her jealousy."[23]

In most cases, Landis did not confer negative judgments on women who wanted to be boys when they were girls. But in cases like Dottie's, difficulties could arise when childhood gender nonconformity included bizarre ideas of interchangeable sexes accompanying an adult sex life that was not "mature" or "well-adjusted." These terms appear frequently in the Landis data but are not clearly defined in the published work. Generally, mature sexual adjustment in women seems to have meant the ability to take pleasure in genital sexual expression, particularly having a vaginal orgasm during coital

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[22] Interview transcript, Case 39N (m).
[23] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 39N (m).

sex. The study argued that extensive premarital social and sexual contact with men was the most reliable harbinger of favorable marital adjustment:

> On the basis of our findings, the attitudes and emotional attachments to boys before marriage were very closely related to later adjustment, and the adequacy or inadequacy of marriage adjustment was frequently a continuation of patterns of behavior apparent before marriage. ... Those women who had had more contact with men before marriage, as shown by the number of men they had gone out with and the extent of physical intimacy, tended to have better sexual adjustment.[24]

In other words, there was a correct set of feelings about boys during adolescence and young womanhood, and it had little to do with palhood. Instead, these correct feelings were social: they emerged from specific behavior, which meant extensive dating and some undefined degree of "physical intimacy." Premarital sex was not a causal factor in marital adjustment; rather, it signaled "attitudes and reaction patterns" that contributed to adjustment.[25]

Therefore, the troubled marriage of a former tomboy like Dottie could be laid to the unconventional ideas she had about sexed bodies as a girl. In the late 1930s, as enthusiasm for all things psychological intensified and shifted in both elite and popular discourse—particularly theories about how feminine gender identity and erotic desires emerged from childhood conflicts about sex differences[26]—it was logical to connect a woman's fraught married life to tomboyish "misconceptions" about the body.

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[24] Landis et al., Sex in Development, 99, 101.
[25] Ibid., 101.
[26] For an analysis of psychoanalytic debates in the 1930s about women and penis envy, see Mari Jo Buhle, Feminism and Its Discontents: A Century of Struggle with Psychoanalysis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), ch. 3.

Esther

Affinity did not require the innocence of ignorance; nor, in fact, were young girls affinity's sole constituents. But affinity in an adult woman could be an expression of pathological childishness, as the history of the psychiatric patient "Esther" shows. Her parents hid very little from her. They were Orthodox Jews and recent migrants from Poland. Esther's father ran a small grocery and candy shop in New York City.[27] At the time of her interview, Esther was twenty-seven and unmarried, diagnosed with dementia praecox, hebephrenic type, meaning that she was given to inappropriate giggling and childish behavior in addition to hallucinations. Unlike Dottie, whose belief that her body had something in common with boys' manifested in childhood, Esther developed such notions for herself in later adolescence, as her body underwent mysterious changes.

Her domestic world, probably in one of the city's immigrant districts, was far from the "puritanical" household in which Dottie grew up. In many of the Landis interviews, women from what were likely crowded, impoverished neighborhoods knew much at a young age. Esther overheard conversations about prostitutes, who might have been part of the life of her street. She, like Dottie, knew about sex differences, but she got her information from her friends and her mother. At age five or six—the same age when Dottie was playing soldiers—Esther had a vague idea about where babies come from, and by seven or eight, she knew about gross sexual distinctions between girls and boys, as well as the way babies were made. "There was sexual intercourse to start babies and we must menstruate first. Got it from a conversation I overheard [between] mother and her friends," she remembered. "… Asked mother and she said, 'You have plenty of time to learn yet'. When I learned outside [from other children] she started to explain and asked

[27] Interview transcript, Case 61, April 10, 1936, folder 7, series III C, box 1, CL.

me to come to her with questions." Perhaps referring with pride to her Jewish heritage, Esther explained that within her family this was natural: "I come from very learned people and I ask questions."[28]

Though Esther described herself as a tomboy, her early adolescence told of a mixture of boyish and girlish traits. At age thirteen (about 1921), when she menstruated for the first time, she felt "grown up." Yet she remained boyish. She remembered her first date, which also happened at age thirteen: "Played hand ball with him. Went to school with him, movies on Saturdays—in groups." Being able to be a young lady and a tomboy seems to have overshadowed the experience of having a boyfriend. Asked how this "affair" affected her, she replied, "Don't know. Was grown-up, getting attention. Made me feel good. He was nice to play ball with."[29] True to the 1920s culture of whirlwind dating described by Beth Bailey, Esther reported that there had been "Several others[.] … Must be a gross or more. 7 quite steady ones. Others once or twice."[30] Yet contrary to stereotypes of flaming youth, she did not have sex. She necked but refused to pet; she and her dates were "Just ordinary friends—just kisses (don't mean anything). Embracing to waist only." She seems to have had an opportunity to have intercourse, but she "Drew back and was afraid." Esther strove to give Landis the impression that the events that made her feel grown up included a transition to femininity: "At 13-14 yrs. [s]tarted wearing pretty dresses, felt so grand, want everyone to admire me and yet not be envious. I love clothes."[31]

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Bailey, From Front Porch to Back Seat, 16-24; interview transcript, Case 61.
[31] Interview transcript, Case 61.

But Landis had her doubts, writing, "She is definitely the tomboy type, and when questioned about boy friends, she becomes very giggly[.] … It later becomes apparent that in her early teens her relations with boys were almost entirely of the tomboy variety. While they might occasionally take her to the movies, most of their contacts together were playing handball and other sports."[32] To Landis, heterosexual eroticism could not include the corporal thrills of athletic competition, and her reference to Esther's symptoms indicates that she did not quite believe her.

In any case, Esther might have been rejected from adolescent sexual culture—or perhaps she rejected it because it could not accommodate her boyishness. Around 1925, when she was seventeen, something happened to sever her from the world of her peers. After a period of intense longing for a boyfriend, she said, her desire "seemed to fade away completely." About six years before her interview, when she was twenty-two or so, Esther was probably working as a shop girl (her occupation when she became a psychiatric patient). According to her Psychiatric Summary—a report stapled to the abnormal women's interviews, apparently culled from their hospital charts—she then experienced "increased growth of hair on face. … Change in personality about the time hair growth set in, when patient became preoccupied and self-absorbed."[33] Landis, too, noted her "excessive hair growth," perhaps a sign that Esther was unappealing to her.[34] It is not difficult to imagine that a young, probably dark-haired, Jewish woman raised in the United States would become "preoccupied" at the appearance of facial hair. By 1929,

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[32] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 61, n.d. [1936].
[33] Psychiatric Summary, Case 61, n.d. [1936].
[34] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 61, n.d. [1936].

American women were spending an estimated $700 million on beauty products,[35] and Esther was proud of the way she presented herself. "I can't wear cheap things," she said, "it hurts too much."[36]

The "change in personality" that accompanied (but was not necessarily caused by) Esther's growth of hair included a new affinity for male bodies and minds. It is at this point in reconstructing Esther's life that difficulties arise, for important information absent from her own words emerges in her Psychiatric Summary. Although Esther's interview is occasionally difficult to understand, it is only from her doctors' words that we learn about her feelings for boys' and men's bodies. She had hallucinations of "voices and visions," which her doctors ambiguously wrote were "sexual in nature"; a "voice has told her she is going to marry her father." Esther herself, according to the Psychiatric Summary, made such a connection. "In disturbed state," read the report, she "has thought herself part male and part female and that every human being has both male and female actions. Thought she had male hands and that excessive hair might be considered male."[37]

Do we take the psychologists at their word when they correlate Esther's "excessive" facial hair with the onset of her illness? Moreover, do we trust that her sense of ambisexuality was a part of a "disturbed state"—a hallucination? By the 1930s, theories that all humans were "part male and part female" were not uncommon, even in popular discourse. European sexologists' and psychoanalysts' postulates of universal

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[35] Kathy Peiss, quoting Robert Lynd, in Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1998), 97.
[36] Interview transcript, Case 61.
[37] Psychiatric Summary, Case 61.

bisexuality had made their way to American shores.[38] The idea was present in the Landis study: according to the published volume, Agnes Landis explained lesbianism to the subjects by "pointing out that both maleness and femaleness are present in every individual and that the balance between them varies in different individuals."[39] Even an ambitious attempt to quantify masculinity and femininity—in part the effort of Lewis M. Terman, the psychologist who designed the most widely used IQ test of the time[40]—found that gender expression had to be distributed across a spectrum.[41] Esther had left high school after a year, but the idea that no one was entirely female or male, that sex existed along a spectrum, could not have been foreign to her, even before her admission to the hospital. Even if we consider Esther's visions simply the ravings of a madwoman, her case shows that it was possible for women, even as adults, to discern both female and male traits in their bodies, hearts, and minds.

Esther's tangled recollections and hallucinations demonstrate that a sense of interchangeable or overlapping sexed bodies could be troubling when observed in an adult. Similarly, Dottie's sense of affinity as a child led Landis to conclude that there was something wrong with her as a grown woman. Adjustment entailed acknowledging that female and male bodies were categorically distinct, perhaps because affinity flummoxed the experts. As Landis wrote of Esther, "All told, she is a curious mixture of traits. In many ways she is definitely masculine in appearance … but in other ways she is quite feminine. … Psychologically it is difficult to say whether she suggests a more masculine or more feminine type. It might be correct to say that she is intermediate between the

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[38] Meyerowitz, How Sex Changed, 28-29.
[39] Landis et al., Sex in Development, 51.
[40] Paul Davis Chapman, Schools as Sorters: Lewis M. Terman, Applied Psychology, and the Intelligence Testing Movement (New York: New York University Press, 1990).
[41] Terman and Miles, Sex and Personality.

two."[42] New intellectual frameworks undoubtedly reinforced Landis's assessment. To recall the argument of Sex in Development, misleading or incorrect information in childhood disrupted normal adjustment. Therefore, if the Landis study reflects sexual and psychological science of the time, expertise was in the midst of a clash with vernacular forms of knowledge, including childhood theories of affinity.

What did this mean for tomboys who came of age in the 1920s and 1930s? In part, gender-appropriate feelings about the body became more important than girls' behavioral conformity, at least in adult conversations about the subject. As a child, a tomboy could be a tomboy as long as she realized that her body made her a girl, no more, no less. Simply behaving boyishly was relatively inconsequential as long as a young girl knew what she really was. This is why puberty was so important. It entailed a final alignment with corporal reality and an acceptance of social fact—that is, being a woman made one different. And to some, like Dottie, this meant inequality.

Nonetheless, Dottie, Esther, and other women like them were tomboys who took sex differences for granted. Their sense of affinity with boys and boyishness made them both girls and not-girls. We can learn from these women and other subjects like them. Questioning the existence of gender differences often emphasizes rather than negates the sexual binary. It seems that one way forward is to find intellectual opportunities to "play" like tomboys—to acknowledge difference where it exists but simultaneously to indulge in similarities, parallels, and convergences.

Menarche and the Tomboy Body

As taboos against discussion of the intimate body eased, slowly and unevenly, many adults insisted that pubescent girls learn what having a female body meant. As the

[42] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 61.

physician and popular author William Josephus Robinson emphasized in 1917, "The first function with which the girl will be confronted, which will impress upon her that she is a creature of sex, that she is decidedly different from the boy, is menstruation."[43] The stories of Dottie and Esther show that Robinson was only partly correct, at least as far as tomboys were concerned. They always knew they were "creatures of sex"—that is, that they were born girls—but being "decidedly different from the boy" was often new to them when they reached puberty.

The Landis report concluded that there was "no evidence" that menstruation "was of any particular psychological significance of itself. In fact, the minor role which this event played in the psychosexual development of our subjects was rather surprising."[44] Yet quite a few tomboys had distinctly negative experiences. They are not necessarily representative, but they find echoes in the lore of girls' gender nonconformity. By the 1920s, some authorities believed that tomboys were likely to react with horror, fear, or self-hatred to "becoming a woman," indicating pathological masculinity and perhaps lesbianism. Menstruation was a test of a girl's femininity and, in a certain number of cases, her sexuality. "Homosexual women first menstruate at an advanced age in a large number of cases, many not till seventeen," observed prominent psychiatrist L. Pierce Clark in 1914. "… The idea of menstruation is repugnant to them and they may show great embarrassment when asked if they are unwell, behaving like prudes." In other

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[43] William Josephus Robinson, Sex Knowledge for Women and Girls: What Every Girl and Woman Should Know (New York: The Critic and Guide Company, 1917), 44 (emphasis in original).
[44] Landis et al., Sex in Development, 56.

words, discomfort with the fact of menstruation signaled sexual abnormality. Clark also believed that a girl's boyishness hinted that she would become homosexual.[45]

Born around the same time Clark was writing, "Frankie" and "Bobbie" are two of the most boyish subjects in this study—a subjective judgment, to be sure, but one that will become clear as their stories unfold. Both were sorely shocked at menarche. The severity of their reactions warrants a retelling of their stories. Frankie and Bobbie epitomize struggles to reckon with "the change"—the sudden social demands to renounce the tomboy bodies they had known. This denial had to be made in order to ensure their successful adjustment to the pleasures of heterosexuality. As both cases show, affective dissonance at menstruation—that is, an inability or refusal to accept the implications of having a female body—was directly associated with homosexuality and problematic heterosexuality.

Frankie

In psychological circles, an adolescent tomboy's deprecation of her menstruating body was sometimes taken for granted; some thought tomboy conflicts over the body led straight to neurosis. Alfred Adler was therefore surprised when one of his "masculine protest" neurotics, a confirmed tomboy, had no problems with menstruation. As he wrote, "I expected to find difficulty in menstruation, which is often experienced in girls who have a grudge against their feminine nature, but this was not the case with her."[46] In other words, the mannish or boyish woman with menstrual "problems"—such as cramps,

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[45] L. Pierce Clark, "A Critical Digest of Some of the Newer Work upon Homosexuality in Men and Women," State Hospital Bulletin (New York) 6 (1914): 334.
[46] Alfred Adler, "Lack of Social Feeling, and Masculine Protest," in Problems of Neurosis: A Book of Case Histories, ed. Philippe Mairet (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), 43.

"excessive" bleeding, or an irregular cycle—was a clinical type by the 1930s. Indeed, Frankie was terrified when it happened to her. Landis did not link her horror at menstruation explicitly to her boyishness, but she did think that Frankie's tomboyism "contribut[ed] most unfavorably to [her] sexual maladjustment" as an adult,[47] just as she did with Dottie. Significantly, Landis also described Frankie's tomboyism as an "attitude or personality, which has persisted from early childhood on." Being a tomboy was thus a psychological state, not a set of behaviors.

Frankie was unique among the Landis subjects, her words about her body's history coming across especially vividly. A slight, athletic tomboy, standing under five feet as an adult, she spoke to Agnes Landis in 1936. Born in 1912, she was working as a stenographer or secretary, but between the ages of three and sixteen she had been a professional dancer, likely a vaudevillian. She began as an acrobat, but when she was eight, in about 1920, she switched to "adagio"—a certifiable "craze" in the waning days of vaudeville. Adagio combined the difficult lifts and extensions of classical ballet with frenetic aerial maneuvers: one or more men lifted a girl, bent her body in an arc, whipped her in circles, sometimes like a jump rope, and lobbed her across the stage into the arms of another man. With each pass, she tucked and twisted in ever more complicated aerial maneuvers before bursting into an elegant dive.[48]

As a tool of performance, Frankie's body existed in a social world partially constituted by other bodies. Her control of her physical existence in space must have been exquisite, and though her tomboy body was surely covered in bruises from being

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[47] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, n.d. [1936], Case 2N (m).
[48] The "adagio craze" is mentioned in Joe Laurie, Vaudeville from Honky-Tonks to the Palace (New York: Henry Holt, 1953), 46. See also "Adagio Act," Vaudeville Old and New: An Encyclopedia of Variety Performers in America 1, ed. Frank Cullen, Florence Hackman, and Donald MacNeilly (New York: Routledge, 2007), 8.

partnered, she would have had to trust the older boys or men with whom she danced to catch her safely, to touch her in a way that prevented injury—to protect her, in a sense, at least in performance. Her acrobatic training most likely involved physical punishment from a master artiste, but speaking to Landis, she did not report any kind of intolerable abuse at the hands of her parents or her boy pals. Her profession proved she and her body were tough. Perhaps this is why Frankie only sometimes wanted to be a boy—she really had no need. "Fell in with boys so completely I never thought of myself as different," she said. Despite coming from a respectable Jewish family, she seems to have been the one who goaded other children in her Bronx neighborhood into misbehaving. "Mothers used to yell at me," she remembered. "Boys thought of me as a boy and one of them." Although she did play with girls at times, she did not think of them in the same way as she did her pals, especially when she reached adolescence. "Girls had fellows, I could see them only as pals to play baseball with."[49]

Her tomboy body was another story. Frankie consistently fled knowledge that she sensed would confirm that she was different from boys. Her mother probably knew this when she gave birth to the first of Frankie's younger brothers. "Mother told me it would fall off and he'd be like me," Frankie said. She was eleven at the time and mortified by her ignorance of sexual matters, but she never trusted her mother enough to ask her questions. Instead, she would go to her father (a dentist) or her uncle (a doctor); more likely, she would change the subject, pretend she knew already, or walk away when conversation turned to sex. She "Couldn't understand jokes about prostitutes," which

[49] Interview transcript, Case 2N (m).

surely came up with some frequency among her fellow performers. "I so busy with dancing, I never bothered with these things."[50]

She woke one morning when she was fifteen (about 1927) to find blood between her legs. "Scared," she said. "Thought I'd cut myself, would bleed to death. Yelled for mother. I was all excited. [Mother] Said I was a woman now. Couldn't talk to mother." Embarrassed, she sought out her uncle, who took her to his office and showed her models of a woman's and a man's body. The only people she trusted to tell her about her new body were men because she wanted to avoid the feeling of being associated with the intimate knowledge held in common by women. When her mother offered to tell her something that sounded like information about sexuality, she remembered, "it was so unpleasant I said I knew and would really find out by asking dad or uncle. Didn't want mother to be connected with it. My uncle, M.D., gave me the most adequate information."[51]

Several changes in Frankie's life around the time she menstruated indicate a new relationship to her body. She met the man she would eventually marry, a musician, although they did not begin dating until five years later. The year after her first menses (about 1928), she retired from the stage, perhaps because her body was heavier and developing away from the boyish figure she had, making it harder to perform her aerial feats. Additionally, the decline of vaudeville with the emergence of talking pictures in the mid-1920s made bookings dry up for most performers. Although she remained involved in the profession for the rest of her teens—she reported sexual activity at a summer camp with an effeminate young man in the "theatrical line" at age eighteen—she had left the

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Interview transcript, Case 2N (m). See Freidenfelds, The Modern Period, for evidence that girls wanted scientific knowledge about menstruation instead of their mothers' explanations.

life of the body she had known since she was three.[52] It was time now to relate to men not as fellow acrobatic performers whose bodies worked together but as potential sexual partners. Here she had trouble.

Frankie did not have her first real date until she was eighteen (in about 1930) and said she was never without boyfriends afterward, but she preferred to see them as pals. She loved the feeling of having a young man's arm around her—she reasoned that it compensated for the lack of affection she got from her family—but she never liked being kissed. Even with her husband, who had been her "ideal" since they first met, intercourse had no appeal. "I just take no interest—sometimes a bit angry," she said. "It's distasteful to me. … If we have any disagreement it's always on this and nothing else." Landis asked how frequently she had sex. "Once a week is average. It's too often for me." She dropped hints that she had to use physical force to fend off her husband's aggressive advances: "His urgent requests become disgusting to me—wants it every night. … I get angry and scrap with him."[53] For Frankie, almost all genital sexual touching with men had been unpleasant, even revolting. Landis noted that she compared having sex "to being forced to eat several Thanksgiving dinners on the same day." "Her relationship with her husband," Landis continued, "… is that of a pal relationship rather than a sexual relationship, since their whole bond consists of the fact that they have similar tastes in almost everything except sexual matters."[54]

A pubescent tomboy who felt a loss of control over her own body—its purpose, its presentation, and its relationship to the self—was at risk of growing into a life of sexual maladjustment, as Landis put it. Frankie knew she had not made the change

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[52] Interview transcript, Case 2N (m).
[53] Interview transcript, Case 2N (m).
[54] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, n.d. [1936], Case 2N (m).

properly and thus never learned that sexual touching between adult men and women could be normal and pleasurable. Thus, she looked to representatives of science for an intervention in her unhappy marriage, unsure whether the problem was with her or her husband—particularly his desire to have sex once or twice a week, which was "too often" for Frankie. "Wish you could write him a note and tell him it isn't right," she told Landis, just before confessing, "I believe I'm not right inside. Want to see a doctor about it."[55] Frankie herself connected sexual maladjustment to a body she feared was abnormal. Her concern was well founded, but not because of any objective, transhistorical correlation between having a normal body and experiencing sexual pleasure. Rather, her befuddlement was of a piece with contemporary scientific problems, which studies like Sex in Development aimed to resolve. Frankie's interview encapsulated its inconclusiveness. Her life story told of an affective relationship with the body quite at odds with medical observation: the gynecologist who examined her reported, "This girl except for her short stature is one of the best physical specimens we have examined" in "body … and development of genitalia[.]"[56] Perhaps this contradiction ensured that Frankie's fascinating interview did not find a place as a case study in any of the chapters of Sex in Development.

Agnes Landis was surprised that Frankie was not a lesbian: "It is not likely that any homosexual trends are present, though from the history one might well expect them."[57] Asked what she would do if a woman put her arms around her, Frankie replied, "I think I'd take a knife and knife her."[58] In Frankie, Landis encountered complex

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[55] Interview transcript, Case 2N (m).
[56] Physician's Report, Case 2N (m).
[57] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 2N (m).
[58] Interview transcript, Case 2N (m).

heterosexual maladjustment where she expected to find simple same-sex attraction, indicating that she was highly influenced by theories about lesbians' reaction to menstruation and their subsequent rejection of heterosexuality. Frankie, too, wondered whether bodily abnormality and heterosexual maladjustment were related.

Bobbie

It is true, however, that there were some lesbian tomboys who also had dissonant relationships with their pubescent bodies, and some looked for information, answers, and comfort about body issues within the prevailing psychological and scientific logic of the time. To reemphasize, lesbian tomboys did not necessarily react with shock and horror at menstruation. But because the linkage between psychology, the pubescent body, and adult sexuality was so well established by the 1920s, it became possible for lesbian tomboys to look back at adolescence and see this painful confrontation as normal for them.

This encounter came hard to Bobbie. She was not one of the Landis subjects; she was a "student" at the El Retiro School for Girls, a progressive institution for delinquents near Los Angeles. Compared to the sketchy Landis interviews, archival information about her is quite extensive: typed minutes of a 1926 meeting in which school staff discussed her case; a handwritten letter to a romantic friend, another student; a two-letter exchange with Miriam Van Waters, founder of El Retiro; and the composition "Our Troubles," which opens Chapter 2 of this study.

Bobbie probably crops up in these five documents—quite a number for one student—because she was one of the institution's problems. The meeting minutes

demonstrate her outsize presence in the school. According to Alma Holzschuh, director of El Retiro, Bobbie was "very boyish in manner, appearance and actions and on every possible occasion [would] dress up as a boy," wearing "a middy or sport shirt." "'Unwholesome' seems to be the word most used in conversation about her," she continued. In other words, the staff believed Bobbie was a lesbian, using a common euphemism to describe her same-sex eroticism.[59] Holzschuh described Bobbie's habitual disruptions of the school's social world: "Girls get bad crushes on her and the girls seem to feel that these crushes are the result of her mannish appearance." The director recounted rumors of one affair as well as some "soulful glances" Bobbie cast at another girl in the dining room for all to see. It wasn't as if the staff hadn't tried to intervene. As Holzschuh reported, "in talking to her at length one day she was told various ways of stopping it and gave the impression that she didn't want to stop it."[60] It wasn't simply her boyish appearance; it was the way she animated the essence of adolescent masculinity by flirting outrageously with other girls.

In the El Retiro committee's analysis, Bobbie was impelled through childhood by negative environmental and familial influences, which perhaps had something to do with her insalubrious psychological makeup, sexual expression, and relationship to her body. Raised by a "nervous" mother, she endured the death of her beloved father from typhoid fever when she was seven. Her mother soon sent her to live on her grandparents' small farm while she and her two other daughters lived in Michigan. Members of Bobbie's family told El Retiro caseworkers that the girl pilfered money from her doting

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[59] Jill R. Ehnenn, Women's Literary Collaboration, Queerness, and Late-Victorian Culture (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 49.
[60] Report from staff meeting [subject's name withheld], December 8, 1926, n.p., folder 161, box 14, series IV, MVW.

grandparents, who looked the other way or dismissed it. Her grandmother said Bobbie was a "very affectionate child. Demonstrative with grandfather and he with her." A confirmed "tom-boy," she "Wanted to be a boy. Wore overalls often. Ran wild." When Bobbie was about thirteen, her younger sister died of diphtheria, and her mother took her and her older, feminine sister to California. There, according to her grandmother, Bobbie slept in the living room while her mother and sister shared the only bedroom in the "Plain, modern, cramped" apartment.[61]

Bobbie's exile from the domestic space of maternal warmth must have added to the feelings of ostracism that surely resulted from the turbulence of her young life. By age thirteen, her mother said, Bobbie was "Rough, no manners, spoilt, rebellious, untidy about clothes." Asked to wash dishes, she would hide them under the sink. She showed little interest in the clothes her mother made, preferring to don an "Old sweater over [her] best Sunday dress." Her isolation showed in school, too. Though she made a good impression on a few of her teachers in California, one reported that she "dressed in queer lumber jacket." Another said she had "No influence with other children. Laughed at. Clothes conspicuously 'queer.' Lonely. Boyish. Tough." She was sent to El Retiro after being entrapped by a private detective, who persuaded his niece to have Bobbie procure "dope" for her.[62]

Puberty had started for Bobbie the summer before she was sent to El Retiro, when she shot up "more than a foot," but menstruation proved more difficult to assimilate. Her mother had given her a book about adolescence, which Bobbie said she supplemented with her own reading in library books. This, however, could have been one of the many

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[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.

instances in which she disguised the truth, for, according to the report, she was "Frightened by menstruation." She "Refused to put hands in water. Refused to wash dishes or clothes."[63] It is impossible to know what she was reading, what she might have learned in school, or what she heard from the few friends she had. In fact, the summer when she first menstruated was but a moment in a long scientific debate about the causes and meaning of menstruation, not to mention disagreements about what a girl should do while it was happening.[64] Offering advice to young women and men, a best-selling eugenics treatise of 1919 counseled, "During 'the monthly periods' violent exercise is injurious; iced drinks and acid beverages are improper; and bathing in the sea, and bathing the feet in cold water, and cold baths are dangerous; indeed, at such times as these, no risks should be run, and no experiments, for the moment, should be permitted, otherwise serious consequences, in all probability, will ensue."[65] Another volume differed in specifics yet retained the warning against the cold and damp:

> If a girl is normal, she should be able to continue during her period her usual work, but should avoid any unusual strain or fatigue. Wet feet or chilling should be guarded against. Exercise is desirable, but should be somewhat moderated. … Menstruation should be painless, but since we are such imperfect specimens of our race, especially under modern city conditions, it often is not.[66]

No matter where she got her information, Bobbie believed some of this advice. Both medical and popular taboos against bathing and swimming centered on the belief that these activities would stop the menstrual flow and harm the organism, and a great deal of folk wisdom connected the menstruating body with pollution.[67] The El Retiro

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[63] Ibid.
[64] Freidenfelds, The Modern Period, ch. 1.
[65] B. G. Jefferis and J. L. Nichols, Searchlights on Health: The Science of Eugenics (Naperville, IL: J. L. Nichols and Co., 1920), 352.
[66] Ralph Earl Blount, The Origin of Life (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1913), 17.
[67] Freidenfelds, The Modern Period, 27.

minutes do not mention the reaction of Bobbie's mother, but giving a girl a book and saying nothing more might, in some cases, be similar to saying nothing at all. Or it may be that Bobbie, like Frankie, wanted to avoid knowledge about her own body and how it would change, pretending to have more information than she really did. Bobbie's actions reflected experts' advice and folk customs, perhaps intensified by feelings of alienation from her body. According to the El Retiro report, she experienced "No unusual pain symptoms" but "Stayed in bed first few days for several of first months." Her mother, the committee learned, thought Bobbie "babied herself."[68] Bobbie had been menstruating for less than a year by the time she was sent to El Retiro.

To the staff of the school, Bobbie's fright was one piece of a body/mind puzzle that manifested in her sexual confusion. A psychologist thought she was bright for her age but "is standing about all she can stand in the way of self-analysis and self-depreciation and realization of her own nature. She is carrying a burden that would drive some people into melancholia or hysteria." On one side were possible biological forces (most prominently her mother's pre- and postnatal "nervousness" and a "suspicion of some form of inferiority" on her father's side). On the other was an array of affective and environmental factors that influenced her gender expression, including the mutual "devotion" of Bobbie and her father, her rivalry with her feminine older sister, the cruelty of her mother, and her sojourn with her grandparents. The result, said the psychologist, was a "mixture of her feminine role with an exaggeration of boyish trends and the homo-

[68] Report from staff meeting [subject's name withheld], December 8, 1926, n.p., folder 161, box 14, series IV, MVW.

sexual trends, which in turn, owing to her sensitiveness to public opinion have led to a certain self-depreciation, which she evidently tries to overcome by her aggressiveness."[69]

Bobbie's situation therefore demanded a delicate touch: staff members must not take any action that would compound her feelings of inferiority, but they still had to address the institutional disruption she created. Van Waters suggested to the committee that Bobbie could be "made happy away from El Retiro without a sense of failure"; she could be "placed in a home where she would have contact with another school group." "It might be a good opportunity to face this homo-sexual tendency once [and] for all," she continued, "because it has not been presented in this way at El Retiro before."[70] Ironically, Van Waters was a closeted lesbian and probably still much of a tomboy,[71] which might account for the relative indulgence and concern she showed her "unwholesome" adolescent charge. Her words, for instance, were more tempered than Holzschuh's. The conference adjourned without resolution; when Bobbie left El Retiro is unknown.

The picture of Bobbie that emerges from these few documents demonstrates that in the 1920s it was possible for queer tomboys to look for the roots of sexual abnormalities in their relationships with their bodies, just as experts did. In fact, it seems that Bobbie took steps to adjust to heterosexuality, which included the bliss of marriage and motherhood. In 1936, almost ten years after the El Retiro committee convened, she wrote to Van Waters, as many former students did. Using her married name, Bobbie shared the news that she was married and recently had a child. Her husband, she wrote,

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[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid..
[71] For an account of Van Waters's childhood and adult tomboyishness, see Estelle B. Freedman, Maternal Justice: Miriam Van Waters and the Female Reform Tradition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), especially the photograph on 110.

"surely is a proud father," adding that he would "spoil" her newborn son "if I gave him the chance!" She went on to describe a tranquil domestic life. "We have the nicest nursery room for him," she wrote, adding that her son "is really a very fortunate child." He had weighed only three pounds at birth; after a lengthy stay in a hospital with her, he was up to six and a half.[72] The gendered body and sexuality meant a great deal to Bobbie, their normality signaling the health of the individual. Her letter, though brief, managed to convey an assurance that she had adjusted in her sexuality and gender role. She apparently wanted Van Waters to know that her intervention was successful.

But she also dropped a hint of another sort. "A dear lady friend of mine has taken a keen interest in him," she wrote, referring to her son. "He won't have to ever want for anything as far as she is concerned. She took care of his hospital charges for 6 weeks after he was born." Who was this friend? Was Bobbie signaling that she still had feelings for women and that she wanted Van Waters to know this? Did she have any sense that Van Waters was a lesbian mother? (She had a fourteen-year-old adopted daughter.)[73] Each woman was a tomboy, and perhaps each sensed the other's queerness. In Bobbie's case, speaking of her husband and child while vaguely gesturing toward a unique friendship might have been a way to claim she was both normal and queer. Writing to Van Waters was a way to draw her closer, to establish parallels between their lives, and to reassure her that lesbian tomboys could be normal heterosexuals too. Bobbie, in other words, seems to have been striving to present herself as well-adjusted by emphasizing the joy she took in her adult female body, as expressed in its reproductive capacity. Her fright at pubertal change and her "soulful glances" at other girls were a thing of the past.

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[72] [Name withheld] to Miriam Van Waters, April 6, 1936, folder 167, box 15, series IV, MVW.
[73] Miriam Van Waters, letter [recipient's name withheld], May 16, 1936, folder 167, box 15, series IV, MVW.

Bobbie wrote her own success story, in all likelihood attempting to shape Van Waters's perceptions of her, her body, and her sexuality in the space of one letter. Frankie, too, sought help sorting out the unsettling relationship between her body and her sexuality. As girls, both had apparently experienced menarche as a traumatic rupture. Of course, it is possible that this was mainly the interpretation of the women who preserved these documents in case files and that Frankie and Bobbie were far less concerned about puberty than the documents might lead one to believe. Nonetheless, Frankie's acrobatic tomboy body was a source of pride; Bobbie's delinquent tomboy body animates the El Retiro documents in unexpected places, suggesting that a strong corporeality suffused her life before, during, and after her institutionalization.

Frankie and Bobbie both hungered for adjustment, and a great deal rode on formulating plausible answers to questions about their bodies' normality. Landis suspected that Frankie knew as much. "Throughout the interview," she noted, "she talks in a very self-satisfied manner, and is so quickly ready with her replies that one at times almost has the feeling that stereotyped answers had been thought out in advance. … Apparently she prefers to have a pat answer ready to taking time for critical deliberation." This, Landis thought, "perhaps more likely indicates a certain kind of superficiality in all her thinking."[74] Or perhaps Frankie was taking pains to perform adjustment, as Bobbie did in her letter.

Frankie gave her interview just two weeks after Bobbie wrote to Miriam Van Waters. They were two tomboys longing to be judged normal in body and gender expression, both eager to adjust sexually, both trying to gain the approval of authority figures. They were, perhaps, as well-versed in Adlerian psychological discourse as their

[74] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 2N (m).

interlocutors, even if they did not possess the same formal education. They knew that bodies mattered and were central to the psychological cosmology of the day. For both of them, puberty was a threshold separating tomboyism from adult normality. In its involvement of the body and its relationship to reproductive sexuality, menarche necessitated introspection in a boyish girl who did not yearn to seek out heterosexual contact. If sexuality is, in part, one of the ways the body can express itself, both Frankie and Bobbie had problems with their bodies, which the women who had power over them believed could be changed by having them look within. Adolescence, therefore, as a stage of human growth, was also a prophesy of adult adjustment; how well a girl handled her changing body foretold much about whether she would grow into normal womanhood. Being tomboys, Frankie and Bobbie each had a strike against her upon reaching adolescence; experiencing trauma at puberty seems to have led to greater confusion about gender, at least as far as their professional diagnosticians were concerned. Although both eventually married, each had had to confront the psychological demands of a changing tomboy body in ways that many other girls did not.

Therapeutic Sexuality

It is significant that Frankie and Bobbie (and Esther and Dottie) came of age in the 1920s: the discourse of liberated versus repressed sexuality played a large role in their adolescent years. As the subjects of this chapter discovered, it was impossible not to have a sexuality, but making sure one had the correct version was sometimes difficult. By at least 1930, adults considered it normal for adolescent girls and women to have sexual

desires.[75] But sexual activity could be a way to change one's very essence: an inner transformation effected by intimate bodily contact. This may be called therapeutic sexuality. It was not strictly necessary for all girls, just the ones who had "problems" channeling sexual desires into appropriate outlets or who waited in vain for some sort of awakening. These were often the girls who could not adjust socially: because they were outcasts, because they were queer, and sometimes because they could not find any trace of a libido to begin with. Kissing, petting, or even having sex despite a lack of desire might lead to a fairy tale cure, an instant adjustment. In certain circumstances, therapeutic sexuality was also supposed to transform a girl's gender expression, to make her more feminine. For adolescent tomboys who felt they were not quite right somehow, therapeutic sexuality was linked to becoming normal.

The idea that all women were sexual was a relatively new formulation, and it helps explain why adjustment was such an urgent social problem to Agnes Landis, Miriam Van Waters, and even many of the girls and women they studied. It was as if truth had been revealed. Sexlessness was no longer a legitimate, even moral path of aspirational love; instead, the pathological repression of sexual desires was a route to ill health or "nervousness." For middle-class women, the achievements of feminism meant that work was now an option; but sexual adjustment—finding a socially and personally acceptable "outlet" to let off libidinal energy—was a requirement. The sexual body was a social, even political entity; the health of the individual, and by extension the health of the social body, was now to be found in sexual adjustment. In a sense, this was liberation. Women had sexuality just as men did; the feminist critique of the sexual double standard

[75] Odem, Delinquent Daughters, 102.

had been assimilated into various strands of professional and academic thought, probably because women like Landis (born in Minnesota in 1899) helped make it so.

It was not only psychologists and penal reformers who believed in therapeutic sexuality. Many ordinary women expressed such theories in their own words. Landis interviewed thirty-two-year-old tomboy "Rachel" in 1936. Her privileged upbringing and unusually comprehensive education—including two years of law school—might account for her knowledge of psychological ideas, as might her stint in a psychiatric hospital. She had had sex with her fiancé in about 1927; although she had mixed feelings about it, she saw that sex had the potential to be helpful. "I regret the fact that I took it so seriously, but I gained a lot," she said. "… Gained from friendship [with him] but wished it hadn't gone so far. Didn't need quite such a strong therapy."[76] A dental hygienist, "Sophie," recognized deep-seated lesbian desires within her and wanted to change them; she looked to sex to accomplish this. She had masturbated as a child, but "As soon as I got a crush on a woman need for masturbation disappeared"—that is, one outlet replaced another. Marriage was instrumental; she had gone through with it "to make an adjustment myself." Sophie described her sex life as "Unsatisfactory" and reasoned that being "economically independent" before (and perhaps during) marriage made it difficult to enjoy sex. She recognized that desire needed an outlet. For her, it came from crushes on teachers and other women. Having sex with a man when she was twenty-four (about 1926) was "Painful" physically, but in the end she thought it was "valuable." "I felt liberated."[77]

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[76] Interview transcript, Case 6 (m), April 6, 1936, folder 1, series III E, box 2, CL.
[77] Interview transcript, Case 3 (m), April 3, 1936, folder 1, series III E, box 2, CL.

Ruth

By the 1930s, therefore, some professionals almost expected tomboys to fail to adjust, or at least have significant trouble doing so. As many of the cases in this study suggest, tomboys who felt estranged from adolescent sexual culture were aware of this danger too. Shifting relationships with boys and girls as well as impasses with their tomboy bodies pointed toward maladjustment, whether manifested in an unhappy marriage, lesbianism, or a lack of interest in sexuality. Tomboys often believed they might alleviate anxiety about their future by purposefully changing what they did. In other words, the inward turn and the pressure to adjust to adolescent sexual culture could produce the determination to behave sexually. Therapeutic sexuality was a way to manage the self, the body, and desire. Although tomboyism was constructed as a psychological state, adolescent sexual behavior mattered a great deal because of its direct link to desire.

"Ruth" was only eighteen when she spoke to Agnes Landis. Another daughter of Orthodox Jewish immigrants from Russia, she "Check[ed] merchandise" in a "dress house." Born in late 1917, she was a confirmed tomboy and noted, "Wanted to be as strong as the boys so I could fight with them." Her mother "lectured" her for tussling with other children when she was nine or ten. By the time she was thirteen, her family lived in a respectable if not entirely comfortable Jewish section of the Bronx; her neighborhood would have been full of recently constructed apartment buildings (a few steps up from the older, cheaply built tenement housing of Manhattan's Lower East Side).[78] Ruth's story is fairly typical in that she had a sense of affinity with the bodies of boys and was slightly uncomfortable at the way her body changed at puberty (though not

[78] "Ruth"'s interview mentions the name of her junior high school; it is still operating in the Fordham neighborhood. Interview transcript, Case 93N, February 17, 1936, folder 8, series III D, box 2, CL.

nearly to the extent of Frankie and Bobbie). Finding that necking and petting were not as pleasant as they were supposed to be, she tried to immerse herself in therapeutic sexuality in order to reckon with her tomboyish lack of adjustment.

Ruth's mother was reluctant to answer her questions about sexed bodies and reproduction, so the girl's knowledge came haltingly. Asking questions about where her baby sister came from led her to draw her own conclusions: "Father told me doctor brought baby in sachel [satchel]. I doubted it. Later mother told me baby grows in mother like an apple on tree and when it's ripe it falls down. Told me how born but not how started. Wondered if putting ring on bride's finger had anything to do with starting babies." She got another hint a few years later. "At age 8 I got hold of a book full of anatomical diagrams," she said. "Mother took it away from me. Then I realized such things must be printed elsewhere."[79]

But if Ruth found other books like this, she remained largely nonplussed or ignorant of gross anatomical differences until she was on the cusp of adolescence. She said she had seen other children explore each other's bodies when she was about four but never did such things herself. It is possible that these children were girls; it was not until she was twelve (about 1930) that she remembered seeing a boy's penis. She and a friend were walking home from school when they took to bullying a peculiar individual: "Couldn't decide whether this child was boy or girl. Friend said, 'Well we'll have to take off its pants and see'. Just struck for first time then there was a difference in sexes." It seems that being a tomboy, combined with fantastic stories about reproduction, helped

[79] Ibid.

Ruth maintain a sense of affinity with the bodies of boys. As a child, the only major difference she found in them was that boys' bodies were stronger.[80]

Unlike many tomboys, Ruth was excited about aspects of becoming a young lady. The most significant memory she had of her adolescent life was her graduation from junior high school at age thirteen (about 1931). Although she thought "Speeches about success" were "dry and a farce—just the usual thing," she and her friends were "All very excited—felt grown-up." She "Wore lipstick and ouge [rouge] for the first time." Around the same age, she finally menstruated. "I was expecting to," she explained, but also acknowledged some anxiety about being normal. "Girls scared me because I didn't get it as soon as they." She grew uncomfortable and impatient by their talk: "Much annoyed about it all." In high school she had a hygiene class in which she learned the most information about sex and reproduction she had had until that point; still, at seventeen (about 1935, just a year before her interview), she did not know precisely how a woman's eggs were fertilized.[81] Her hygiene curriculum probably included plenty of information about venereal disease and the dangers of prostitutes but left her in the dark about how conception occurs. Even in the 1930s, adults who designed sex education programs often thought that giving young people explicit knowledge of coital sex would only encourage them to experiment with it.[82]

Ruth's youth grants her testimony about adolescent sexuality somewhat greater weight, since she was in the midst of these changes herself—or at least she was supposed to be. By the time she spoke to Landis, she was happy to be a young woman, but one thing did not make her feel quite normal. "Sometimes [I] get kissed but never really give

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[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Moran, Teaching Sex, chs. 4 and 5.

my consent or enjoy it," she admitted, indicating that she knew that other girls did want to pet and even found it pleasurable. She had read about birth control but "Couldn't see the point … If you don't want children why sex. Mother told me they did it for pleasure. Still can't see how it can be pleasant." She also said she had never masturbated "because if I touch my body it never gave me pleasure." Her first date, when she was sixteen and a half (spring or summer, 1934), was an experiment with therapeutic sexuality, an attempt to submerge herself in adolescent sexual culture in order to effect an inner change: "Didn't go with him because I liked him, but because I thought it was time I have a date. Wondered if it was as bad as I thought." "Went because other girls gelt [felt] I should," she added later. Ruth, indeed, was fond of boys, but only as pals. "Never seemed to be really in love the way girls are," she said. "Always a tomboy." She had dated a few boys, but "when they start getting too serious I break [it] off. One I liked much, but never an emotional tie—don't like petting. I only like them as friends. Don't want to be talked about and also I have a natural resistance against petting." Her words seem defiant, as if she was anticipating Landis's assessment of her; she did not present herself as a girl who was against premarital sex on moral grounds. Disclaiming all sexual desire, she knew, went against social expectations of girls her age. She did not ask Landis for help fixing this lack of interest or inability to respond to sexual touching, as some subjects did, though she ventured her own hypothesis on their cause.[83]

Ruth's own assessment of her situation illustrates the influence psychological theory had on her. She laid her lack of pleasure to three incidents of molestation that occurred between the ages of eleven and fourteen. One time a man on the street asked her to help him read the names on the building's mailboxes. He lifted her up and showed her

[83] Interview transcript, Case 93N.

his genitals. "I screamed and ran to mother and told her," Ruth said. Around the years when she was molested, she "used to day dream a lot. Wasn't then sociable and odd and queer. Very nervous then."[84] Were these events, she wondered, the kind of trauma that was supposed to lead to sexual difficulties as an adult? As Landis wrote, "She is not quite sure herself why she feels this tremendous resistance to petting … and raises the question whether it may not be tied up with a number of experiences she has had with adult perverts who have exposed themselves to her and attempted to caress and manipulate her organs." The psychologist, however, had doubts. Although Ruth "was greatly frightened by these experiences and has found it extremely difficult to assimilate them in her life … one gets the impression that her natural tomboy bent is perhaps the real background for this inability so far to make an adequate emotional adjustment to boys."[85]

Ruth knew that sexual activity was supposed to be fun, but willing herself into experiencing it did not feel that way—it did not transform her. The pleasure she took in wearing makeup seems not to have changed who she was underneath it all. Although she professed no longing for her days as a boyish girl, she still wanted to relate to boys as pals, not as sweethearts. Sexual touching was anathema in large part because it was so deeply entwined with a shift in gender expression during adolescence. She might enjoy the appearance of being a girl, but she could not be a complete young woman until she learned to see boys sexually, to thrill to their caresses instead of holding back, giving her enthusiastic consent instead of tepid permission to proceed. Additionally, she traced her repulsion to instances of abuse she seems to have resisted, but in futility. Her self-diagnosis was at odds with Landis's; the researcher laid Ruth's troubles to her gender

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[84] Interview transcript, Case 93N.
[85] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, n.d. [1936], Case 93N.

expression: "we are here dealing with the young girl of definitely tomboy type who experienced considerable struggle in social adjustment upon reaching adolescence."[86] By this logic, however, Ruth's lack of adjustment was not only "social," it was psychological, affective (or, as she and Landis put it, "emotional"), and sexual. The logic of therapeutic sexuality posed that gender transformation, sexual pleasure, and the ability to fit in with one's peers (and society at large) were interrelated. Ruth seems to have made diligent efforts in all three areas—going so far as to let boys kiss and touch her without her consent—yet something was still amiss.

The world into which urban young people matured was radically different from what it had been only twenty years earlier. Adults' beliefs about their growth and development now often included some expectation that they would experiment with sexuality, for better or worse. Eleanor Wembridge's widely read essay of the 1920s, "Petting and the Campus," tried to explain: "The wave of popular feeling among the girls is away from the pursuit of independence, which was the goal of yesterday, to the desire for romance and marriage which has been their goal since marriage was invented. Since petting leads to 'dates,' and dates lead to more dates and to real romance, one must pet or be left behind."[87] Other volumes admitted that times had changed (usually for the better) but still tried to steer young women away from the premarital sexual expression in which they would probably indulge. Spinning feminist language away from sexual liberation and toward premarital continence, a 1930s book read, "The girl of yesterday was obliged to accept a double standard of morality which gave men a freedom for sexual irregularity denied to women. She had to pretend to be unaware if her fiancé had sown wild oats

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[86] Ibid.
[87] Wembridge, "Petting and the Campus," 192-193.

because she was so dependent upon marriage. Today she is free—not to imitate man's mistakes—but to be self-supporting and to expect that the man she marries will be as fine and wholesome as he expects her to be."[88] The author's advocacy of careers for young women differed from Wembridge's belief that they no longer were interested in "independence," but both authors assumed that professional aspirations would keep girls away from the natural impulses that motivated licentious pursuits.

Springing up in the 1920s and 1930s, the theory of sexual adjustment made heterosexuality (and sexual pleasure) an achievement rather than a simple, natural outcome of adolescent development. This may be seen as a popularization of Freud's precepts in his Three Essays (1905), in which desire for the "opposite" sex is a journey with more chances to turn off the road than commonly appreciated. "One of the tasks implicit in object-choice," he wrote, "is that it should find its way to the opposite sex. This, as we know, is not accomplished without a certain amount of fumbling."[89] True enough. But as the tomboys discussed here well knew, the fumbling had cultural, social, and psychological dimensions. The turn to adjustment in both elite and popular discourse valued conformity, but it also emphasized a complex, individualistic synthesis of psychology, social relations, and sexuality in combination with the will. This was the essence of therapeutic sexuality: a purposeful immersion in sexual culture in order to make sex pleasurable for oneself—to find an outlet for "natural" impulses, or to will oneself into having these urges in the first place. For tomboys, therapeutic sexuality often had a distinct purpose: it was supposed to make them competent heterosexuals, if not

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[88] Catherine Atkinson Miller, Eighteen: The Art of Being a Woman (New York: Round Table Press, 1933), 146.
[89] Sigmund Freud, "Transformations of Puberty," in Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 95.

completely feminine. This was especially crucial for boyish girls who stumbled through the change or would not change at all. For girls like Dottie, Esther, Frankie, Bobbie, and Ruth, transformations in the body, gender expression, and sexuality were inextricably linked, perhaps in ways they were not for other girls.

The Dress

The contrast between old and new can be seen in a novel by the British children's author Mrs. L. T. Meade. In A Modern Tomboy, published around the turn of the century, an outgoing older girl disciplines a younger tomboy into the ways of femininity. The purpose of her efforts is to force the hoydenish character to change her behavior, but not in a way that entails heterosexual adjustment. Instead, the point is moral uplift through love. The older girl discards the tomboy's red dress, tattered from climbing trees and hunting for frogs and snakes, for a garment of white cambric. She explains, "It was God who made you … and He made you beautiful, and beautiful people have a great gift. … They are sent into the world to make it better." Incensed by her friend's efforts to transform her by making her wear a dress, the tomboy exclaims, "I hope you're not always going to be like this." Her friend replies, "Oh, dear, no! because soon you will do it for its own sake."[90]

Putting on a white dress here is an instance of changing behavior through love, the infusion of erotic yearning into the wayward soul to make it see the benefits of conformism. For Meade, who came of age in the 1870s, the dress symbolized the acceptance of a woman's maternal, moral role in society, as well as an acknowledgment of her purity and suitability for the white dress of marriage. But for tomboys who grew

[90] Mrs. L. T. Meade, A Modern Tomboy (Chicago: M. A. Donohue & Company, n.d.), 156, 155.

up later, the process of puberty was a secular one that meant coming to terms with changes in the body and sexual expression—adjustment to modern femininity, with its trappings of sexual liberation.

Although it should not be taken for granted that boyish girls had a different and more confusing relationship to female bodies and adolescent sexual culture than other young people—to do so might give too much credence to stereotypes—many such stories arise. On the whole, tomboys who came of age in the late 1920s and early 1930s found that sexual permissiveness led to a more rigid set of gender distinctions (similar to white, middle-class housewives of the 1950s, who were encouraged to enjoy sex but within the "appropriate" gender dichotomies of marriage).[91] Maintaining gender differences, especially when it was assumed that adolescent girls and boys would move past holding hands, was a way to impose order on premarital sexual exploration. Young people enforced this rule as rigidly as adults, perhaps even more so. Girls and boys who were markedly studious or social deviants were most often excluded from the competitive rituals of courtship.[92] In Middletown, Robert and Helen Lynd quoted a young woman: "Good looks and clothes don't necessarily get you in [to an exclusive youth club], and being good in your studies doesn't necessarily keep you out unless you're a 'grind.'"[93] Tomboys who wanted to be sexual with boys but did not fully undergo the change sometimes found themselves outside the charmed circle of the adjusted. Those who did not like heterosexual activity might be judged disciplinary problems, like Bobbie, or, like

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[91] May, Homeward Bound, 103.
[92] For descriptions of young people's enforcement of the gendered dimensions of popularity, see Bailey, From Front Porch to Back Seat, ch. 2, esp. 26-27.
[93] Lynd and Lynd, Middletown, 216.

Ruth, be considered "unawakened sexually."[94] Donning the dress was not a simple process for any of these girls, no matter how hard they tried or how long they waited for desire to descend upon them. The dress symbolizes aligning the sexual, the social, and the psychological, but at heart it was a historical problem brought home to tomboys because they were caught in an age in which these factors overlapped and conflicted. After Meade, feminine sexuality became defined by genital arousal and gratification. Yet tomboys experienced it as a corporal, personal, and affective tangle of intimate life, even in its absence, even in its horror. The dress was a combination of social, sexual, and psychological adjustment; the change represented its acceptance, strangely both natural and willed.

[94] Resume of Outstanding Points and General Impression of the Subject, Case 93N.

Conclusion

Historical analysis of the early twentieth century seems to accept the idea of "youth" as uniformly fun-loving, risk-taking, trendsetting, and sexually expressive; all adolescents had admirable, liberationist desires and creative strategies to realize them. There must have been outcasts, of course, but apparently they were exceptional: they do not seem to have driven cultural change, and they are therefore less able to captivate the historical gaze. Their quiet confusion is effaced by their peers' carefree rebellion. "Boyhood for Girls" is about tomboys, but it is also implicitly a study of human beings who did not settle comfortably on the pleasure-estates of this kingdom of youth, who occupied the wastelands beyond its farthest outskirts, whose dissent was officially discouraged, ridiculed, or simply ignored. Discontented, maladjusted, queer, they resided outside the palisades of the normal. In many cases, this was exile. They had lived, many of them, in this land as young girls, but a reckoning around puberty pushed them to change both what they did and who they were in order to remain at home.

Tomboys were not the only ones who encountered this dilemma. Other children grew into abnormality, sensing or consciously realizing that their process of maturation might not be optimal. These could be grinds or wallflowers, inverts or perverts, neurotics

or psychotics; they could be sickly or crippled, frigid or impotent, unattractive or simply shy. “Boyhood for Girls,” therefore, lights the way toward telling the stories of people outside the gates. We know something of certain outsiders, such as homosexuals and criminals. But who will finally write the history of the girl who waited by the phone?

Being different could smart. This feeling, and not simply its behavioral manifestations, ought to concern us. Feelings, too, could be normal or abnormal, or, quite often, they could occupy a queasy state in between. It must have been challenging to wonder whether hints of difference constituted personal abnormality at a time when the definition of normal was essentially coming into being. Did normal mean being average or being unique—conformist or ruggedly individualistic? In this project, the feelings of those outside the system of normality constitute a crucial node of analysis. It is just as important to examine the experiences of those on the outside as the inside. In daily life, what was normal and abnormal influenced and responded to inner states. It is not necessary to construct a unitary psychology for non-normal subjects; rather, paying due attention to the way they articulated their feelings provides torque for a kaleidoscope in which gender, sexuality, and affect created complex patterns as their reflections slid in and out of place.

Moreover, as this study shows, feelings were gendered just as much as social role, occupation, dress, bodily comportment, affectation, and attitude were. Gendered feelings, therefore, could also be normal or abnormal in degree. For example, a woman’s absence of mother love and concern for others, to say nothing of resentment at her lot and envy of men’s power, were not only personal failings but also social problems. What happened within oneself supposedly affected society as a whole, as mass neurosis could augur

civilizational decline. At times girls and women could only wonder whether they had abnormal feelings; within vernacular psychology lay the psychoanalytic postulate that the causes of neuroses might not register in consciousness. People in general might accept that they had foibles but remain uncertain about whether these made them abnormal. Freudianism contributed to gendering feelings in the way that it distinguished women's psychic development from men's: for instance, psychological transitions were imperative for all children, but penis envy was possible only in girls, and girls' resolution of the Oedipal conflict took a different course from boys'. Normal affects, therefore, required acknowledgment of gender difference. Gender and affect were difficult to separate in this historical framework; perhaps they had been for some time and would be in the years to come.

Tomboys born between 1900 and 1920 did not always grow up to be adolescent pariahs, but as they came of age many of them grasped that it would be difficult to sustain the configurations of interpersonal relationships that were unique to their experiences. The feelings they had about their boyish bodies needed to change, too. Children and adults could indeed recognize and name tomboys by observing their behavior, but even more, tomboyism cohered in affective terms. Being a tomboy involved the ability to access particular gendered emotional states exclusive to tomboys. The relationships examined in this project—masculine gender mentorship, palhood, close friendships with girl chums, teacher crushes, and the pleasures of boyish embodiment—further the proposition that "tomboy" was its own gender.[1] The eroticism and feelings particular to tomboys of the early twentieth century were not precisely feminine or masculine or even

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[1] Judith Halberstam, "Oh Bondage Up Yours! Female Masculinity and the Tomboy," in Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, eds., Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 214n35.

boyish; they were tomboyish. And the tomboy's body was not precisely a girl body but a tomboy body. While they lived within the pleasure-realm of the normal as children, tomboys claimed their own ways of feeling about gender and sexual expression. These were often indulged as play. But just as children are pushed to give up their games and fantasies, so tomboys faced pressure to change the playful ways they felt. This entailed an ambiguous perception or direct realization that feelings and desires were gendered. Tomboys confronted such challenges in extremis. Their experiences may epitomize those of innumerable youth who found that becoming young women and men was perplexing because of the gendered nature of the feelings they were supposed to have.

Feelings and relationships, not events, drive this study. It does not strongly assert a revolutionary reconsideration of the ways scholars demarcate important developments between 1900 and the onset of the Second World War. It accepts many traditional historical timelines—for example, the appearance and impact of working-class youth culture around the turn of the century, spreading to the middle class by the 1920s; the explosion of psychoanalytic thinking within vernacular psychology after World War I; the fascination with sexual expression and sexual liberation among self-conscious moderns beginning in the 1910s; and the changes in urban culture forged by European immigrants and their children, both before the restrictive National Origins Act of 1924 and for many years afterward. Nor does this study do much to dispute customary narratives about the power of white, middle-class feminism before the 1920s and its

relative decline after suffrage at the federal level—an interpretation convincingly challenged by contemporary women's historians.[2]

Yet even if this dissertation does not contest the significance of such phenomena, it does recut their shapes and points of interlock. Focusing on affective (and gendered) exclusion and abnormality clarifies the workings of the normal, and it also posits a relationship between affect and historical change. Time probably did seem to move faster to people alive during the height of the modern at the fin-de-siècle and during the next few decades. Social life changed rapidly, most pertinently in the ways women thought of themselves and chose to act, based on feelings as well as beliefs in social justice, self-interest, or both. Some of these feelings, however, were more normal than others; the issue for contemporaries was how to tell. Feeling more or less normal undoubtedly played a role in girls' sense of ease with heterosociality and adolescent sexual culture, in ethnic assimilation and Americanization, in constructing sexual subjectivity, and in other facets of experience in the urban Northeast. As much as technological advances and capital accumulation, gender and affect had an impact on temporal elasticity—the felt pace of change. Just as historical time seems to vary in its viscosity, it also may seep through and collect more particles of cultural expression as it begins to flow freely. It is as if it becomes unclogged, then gathers strength—but somehow gets stickier.

This temporal variability and its relationship to gendered feelings require individual cases to serve as evidence for a study of gender nonconformity in girls. Composites may bluntly assert unchanging, universal generalizations, but a collection of singular stories can be more truthful in their suggestiveness and inconclusiveness.

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[2] See Nancy Hewitt, "From Seneca Falls to Suffrage? Reimagining a 'Master' Narrative in U.S. Women's History," in Hewitt, ed., No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 15-38.

Seemingly tenuous links between individual cases open more interpretive possibilities, more tendencies; even if indirection offers a high risk of misinterpretation, it also allows for creative deductions. A generous helping of case histories, rich in internal ambiguity, permits us to observe time ebbing and flowing, contracting and expanding, constraining and liberating, befuddling and enlightening. The imaginative and the exemplary have their place in history as much as literary studies, for the study of the past involves analysis both of fragments and of fragmentation. Case studies are not people, they are fragments; cases come into existence through an event that breaks up a life, stops time, and rearranges the fragments for specific purposes. Moreover, cases are always records of interactions between two or more people—the subject and the observer or observers—which also amplifies a sense of the elasticity of temporal existence. In the most acute interpretations, these documents think, feel, breathe, move. Their authorship is the result of a dynamic, not an apparently one-to-one correspondence between an individual's mind and the words she speaks or commits to page.

All of the tomboys who drive the analysis of "Boyhood for Girls" have been "cased" multiply: by the authors of the original sources, in the pages of published studies, by archivists, and within this project. These girls and women, many of whom were struggling with the normal, usually collaborated with their interlocutors in constructing lives. Somehow this was more than a Foucauldian reverse discourse, or at least more emotionally, mysteriously, and evanescently resonant than Foucault's few lines on the subject seem to allow for.[3] As much as Agnes Landis observed her subjects, they observed themselves, sometimes to powerfully therapeutic effect. They reckoned with the normal and abnormal in the brief time they spent with her. Undoubtedly, many continued

[3] Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, 100-102.

to think about the experience after they left the interview. And the affective responses of Landis and the subjects played a role in creating and shaping the documents as well as in the final study, which tabulated Landis's subjective judgment of each woman's "social attractiveness."[4] In the same way, other sources also record affective interactions between tomboy girls and women, and those who gathered information about them. Even Marion Taylor, whose diary entries about her science teacher are the most private source this project analyzes, chronicled her feelings as if in conversation with an omniscient entity: whoever might find and read about her secret desires. She was also aware, painfully so, of the adolescent normal, which she must have read about in popular advice columns and elsewhere. The type of discourse that produces cases from subjective articulations of affect was present in her writings, even without the presence of a faceless expert. Without the affective interactions that create cases, this study could not exist.

In the Landis interviews, the muddy process of dredging up memories of feelings and combining them with their emotional residue helped constitute the erotic, both for the women who experienced these feelings in their past and present and for Landis, whose response to each subject shaped the affective resonance within the documents themselves. Nagging questions about personal normality and abnormality thus had an impact on how these women (Landis and her subjects alike) interpreted the intensely pleasurable, often physically affectionate, but nonsexual relationships with other human beings that were only tangentially related to her main inquiry—the appearance of sexual desire and its expression or repression.[5] And in the other sources analyzed here, concerns about normality also affected how the documents' constituents considered the ways nonsexual

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[4] Landis et al., Sex in Development, 80-82.
[5] For an examination of queer girls' erotic relationships with dogs, see Stockton, The Queer Child, chap. 2.

pleasure permeated their thoughts and actions. Through constructions of psychological and sexual normality and abnormality, these girls and women scrutinized the relationship between the way they felt and how they wanted to fit into the world around them. As they show, it was difficult to find the frontiers between inside and outside, self and other, pleasure and its negations, and normal and abnormal.

For women who had been or still were tomboys, this difficulty seems to have been more pronounced, for another boundary—that between female and male—was present but not always emotionally or even physically significant. As the concept of affinity explains, it was not that tomboys blurred this boundary; they knew where it was and let it lie. Instead, tomboys assimilated into an adopted country so readily that at times they could forget they had been born elsewhere. For many, coming of age represented a call to return to a "homeland" they knew little about. This uneasiness was sometimes the first hint that all was not right, that adjustment would require an affective realignment. Relationships with people and the way a young woman felt about herself must change just as surely as her appearance and activities. The normality imperative was psychological and emotional as much as social.

By "normality imperative" I mean a historically situated pressure to change one's gender expression and psychology to be normal—not simply normative. Normal differs from normative in that the latter measures an individual against social standards that vary through time; the normal appeared at a very specific point in history, the early twentieth century. It was produced by technologies and metrics that were new: IQ tests, school curricula, polls, mass-circulation periodicals, consumer culture, theater and movies,

psychology and the human sciences, advice columns, even the built environment.[6] The normal was real in the first decades of the twentieth century, when it seems to have originated. The normality imperative cannot be said to have existed in the 1830s, when Tocqueville observed and tried to account for the conformism of the Americans, for "normal" did not yet exist as a scientifically constructed reality. In the beginning of the modern era, the normal was a powerful presence in everyday life, not only a goal but a path to follow. It could be tyrannical, but it could also be a comfort, providing reassurance for those who wanted it that one was not wholly unusual, brilliant, nervous, exceptional, strange, or otherwise queer.

The normal in this age was also implicitly white, middle-class, and usually mainline Protestant. "Boyhood for Girls" has not ventured far into analysis of race or region, both of which surely played a role in what it meant to be a tomboy for both white girls and girls of color. It has been difficult to reconstruct the lives of tomboys of color, but this is not because they did not exist. Many autobiographies, oral histories, and novels attest to the fact that boyhood for girls was not simply possible but a widely cherished style of childhood living, perhaps especially in African American communities.[7] The emphasis on feminine respectability for striving, socially conscious African American women at the turn of the century did not always extend to their growing daughters, and

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[6] Sarah E. Igo, The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[7] See, for example, the oral histories of Jessie Abbott, Juanita Jewel Craft, Alfreda Duster, Zelma George, Dorothy Height, Audley (Queen Mother) Moore, and Era Bell Thompson in The Black Women's Oral History Project.

among poor blacks tomboyism seems to have been even less exceptional.[8] Just as with white girls, it was supposedly a phase.

Therefore, the problem this study confronted was not exactly the invisibility of tomboys of color, although as expected there was a relative paucity of sources. Rather, it proved difficult to create serviceable cases by doing the imaginative work to reconstruct affects shaped by differences of race and color as well as gender. Gaining access to archival collections containing documentation of ordinary girls of color (summer camps, orphanages, juvenile court records, hospitals, and so forth) was frustrated by institutional regulations. The sources that were available mainly included the oral histories and memoirs of prominent women, which were somehow less amenable to being "cased" than the anonymous or obscure white girls whose stories populate this project. In a sense, being well known inhibits speculative analysis of affective registers. There is a great deal of information about this small number of individuals, but it is often already formulated into narratives acceptable to these women; it resists being pulled apart and rendered as individual cases. (This is also the reason why renowned white tomboys such as Katharine Hepburn have not been considered.) To a great extent, this analytic exclusion of tomboys of color contributes to their segregation into the abnormal. Further research will have to rectify this flaw.

What, then, is normal today? As girls' quotidian activities include karate lessons and soccer games, normative gender roles become ambiguous, just as they were a hundred years ago. Today, the "girly-girl" obsession with pink princesses seems to be the phase that ought to be outgrown, not tomboyism. The situation has apparently reversed.

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[8] Outstanding African American memoirs of tomboy childhoods include Althea Gibson, I Always Wanted to Be Somebody (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), and Ethel Waters, His Eye Is on the Sparrow (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1950).

Adults' fascination with gender nonconformity now seems to revolve around a child's deep and persistent sense of being assigned to the wrong gender, subjectively experienced in the earliest years of life. As this study shows, tomboys in the past often felt more like boys than girls and sometimes experienced pressures to conform to feminine ideals as traumatic. But while they were young, these girls reached for the idea of affinity—occupying a space between genders or crossing their borders completely without any desire to negate sex differences. Affinity was their own construction, and though it was often rendered abnormal by psychiatric authorities, it served tomboys well enough. It was not quite a precursor of transgender identity, but today it may be a useful way to approach the history of transgender itself. For tomboys, affinity might have been normative without being completely normal—that is, affinity was common enough to serve as a categorical standard for tomboyism, but it was still a problem for authorities who believed that individuals must adjust to acceptable expressions of gender. Affinity was an ingenious theory about gender and the body handed down to the present, mutated by vernacular psychology into tomboy lore.

Appendix | The Interviews

Of the nine listed authors of Sex in Development, the husband-and-wife team of Carney and Agnes Landis were the first and second, respectively. The study's 295 anonymous research subjects must also be counted among the book's main creators: they became the statistical tables, the case studies, and the bodies that drove the project's analysis. These women's stories, however, were unruly. As the final report admitted, "The original [research] problem divided and subdivided itself until it was no longer recognizable, and the data could not be rearranged to afford a clear answer to the original problem that had been formulated. … If only this very complicated mass of material could have been reported as accurately and precisely as an experimental laboratory report, our scientific souls would have been satisfied."[1] The lives of Carney, Agnes, and the 295 women who became their subjects reveal a pattern elegant in design but imprecise in execution, a problematic interweaving of personalities, professional activities, scientific inquiry, and the affective registers that knit them together. In this appendix, I infer the motivations of these human beings. In 1940, the years-long efforts of the Landises, their coauthors, and their subjects finally enabled a compositor to set the pages of Sex in Development in hot type. Seventy years later, and more than a hundred years after many of these actors were

[1] Landis et al., Sex in Development, xi-xii.

born, they shaped this dissertation. The following informal discussion gambols through the look and feel of the interview documents themselves, the ambitions and frailties of Carney and Agnes Landis, the goals of the 295 subjects, and the historical context that influenced all of them.

The Documents

Agnes Landis designed the controlled interviews (one set of questions for single women, a similar set for married), recruited the subjects, and spoke to all of them from late 1934 through 1937.[2] The interviews survive not as extensive narrative oral histories but as printed blanks impressed with typewritten answers to each question, sometimes complete sentences, sometimes simple "yeses" and "nos," sometimes X's marked for multiple-choice questions, all of which give the pages the aura of a stack of standardized tests. Vital information—subjects' dates and places of birth, occupations, parents' occupations, records of childhood illnesses, and educational histories—appears on the first page of each blank. Agnes's summary of each session follows the interview proper.[3] Almost all the blanks are appended to cryptic handwritten physicians' charts and reports, the traces of another clinical encounter: a gynecological exam typically administered a few days after the interview. A technician also performed pelvic x-rays to correlate sexual adjustment, gender expression, and the shape of the body.[4] And, for the "abnormal" women—

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[2] Ibid., xv. Landis asked married women more detailed questions about orgasm and the coital positions the women and their husbands preferred. She prompted the single women to recount their earliest childhood memories at the start of the interview, whereas her questions for the married women began with childhood family relationships. At the outset of the study, only single women were interviewed. It is not clear when or why the Landises chose to expand their inquiry to married women. The first married woman (one of the abnormal subjects) spoke to Landis in April 1936. See interview transcript, Case 1 (m), April 2, 1936, box 2, series III E, folder 1, CL.

[3] I have assumed that Agnes Landis did in fact write the summaries, for they sometimes contain remarks on subjects' appearance, tone of voice, and other observations that could not have come from reading shorthand notations of the subjects' words.

[4] See Landis et al., Sex in Development, 53 and 104-106 for discussion of pelvic shapes, sexual adjustment, gender expression, and "homoerotism." The x-ray films have been lost.

nearly half the sample, chosen from the female populations of two psychiatric hospitals—a short "Psychiatric Summary," likely notes gleaned from physicians' reports.

The documents followed a circuitous path from Agnes Landis's professional suite to archive.[5] In the early 1940s, the Indiana University sex researcher Alfred Kinsey requested the Landis data. It seems his assistants created the blanks, possibly copying from shorthand transcriptions of the interviews. Kinsey returned the original data, but it has disappeared.[6] Most of the blanks are contained in the manuscript holdings of the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction in Bloomington, Indiana. No known records identify the 295 subjects by their real names;[7] not even contextual clues in the interviews themselves permit such a search—New York City was simply too big, too teeming with the second-generation immigrants and recent migrants from small towns and farms who constituted much of the study's data set. The Landis subjects' names have disappeared, replaced on the blanks by alphanumeric case numbers.

The women did not tell their stories in the order in which they happened. During each session, Landis asked her subjects the ages at which various events (such as menarche) occurred. Working from the women's dates of birth, I grouped together various life events by age and calculated the approximate dates at which they occurred. This resulted in a better sense of the women's life stories and their historical context. In many interviews, significant events clustered around certain ages, allowing for a fuller sense of each woman's perception of turning points in her life. For example, if serious childhood illness, the death of a parent, and a move to a new

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[5] Landis's summaries sometimes indicate that subjects "arrived" for their interviews, making it doubtful that she traveled anywhere to meet them. Indeed, she often conducted more than one a day, and given that they could last more than two hours, she certainly could not have had much time to keep appointments outside the hospital. See interview transcript, Case 29N, April 26, 1935, box 2, series III D, folder 2, CL.
[6] Email communication between the author and Liana Zhou, Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, September 2, 2009.
[7] Information from finding aid, CL.

neighborhood occurred at the same age, these memories seemed especially important. Even if a subject's memory was faulty, clusters of recollections hinted at the mood of a life-phase that was real enough for the woman who experienced it.

I gave the interviewees first names chosen from the Social Security Administration's historical database of popular names for children born between 1900 and 1920.[8] But this selection was arbitrary. Some of the Jewish women (about half of the Landis sample) received typically "Jewish" names, but the pressure to assimilate encouraged many first-generation immigrants to bestow "American" names on their daughters. Conversations with friends revealed that names of second-generation grandmothers could be ethnically ambiguous, even though it seems that Jewish parents gravitated toward certain names: Sylvia, Florence, Harriet, variations of Rose, and several others. I declined to give Jewish girls names loaded with Christian significance—Mary, of course, but also the tomboyish Joan, whose snowballing popularity around her beatification in 1909 and canonization in 1920 might have given pause to Jewish parents. For many girls, Jewish and gentile, I used nicknames to evoke the color of childhood informality and play. Because tomboys sometimes took boys' nicknames, I used boyish monikers in some places.

I believe the interviews I turned into case studies are representative of the tomboy lives within the Landis collection (approximately forty).[9] I analyzed only cases in which American-born subjects born between 1900 and 1920 described themselves as tomboys, or in which Landis expounded on a woman's tomboyish or masculine qualities in her summary. I did not attempt to

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[8] See "Popular Baby Names by Decade," http://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/decades/index.html, accessed June 28, 2012.

[9] Forty is a rough number because I eliminated some women from consideration and inferred tomboyism in other cases. I transcribed twenty-six interviews in which subjects self-identified as tomboys or Agnes Landis described them as such. Contextual clues in many other interviews led me to hypothesize that these women were tomboys. For the sake of efficiency, I did not consider interviewees born before 1900 or after 1920, or those who grew up outside the United States.

control for the enormous variations in self-definition. Although the women were not alike in the degree of their boyishness as we might define it—for example, a few reported that they were mistaken for boys during girlhood, while others played with dolls—there was no way to make objective judgments about how tomboyish they were because of the lack of contextual information that might be gleaned from outside sources (family albums, school records, diaries, and the like).

The anonymity of the subjects, therefore, precludes a certainty that would satisfy my own "scientific soul," to recall Carney Landis's words. Yet I also believe this anonymity is a kind of privacy that ought to be respected. Additional clues about the women's families, education, and interests, to say nothing of photographs or other tokens of their lives as city women, would add enormously to this study. Then again, in order to gain knowledge of their sexuality, Agnes Landis assured them that no one would have access to identifying information. This might be seen as a sort of trust that should not be broken, even decades later, even though these women are all but certainly deceased. A thicket of institutional regulations increasingly surrounds access to confidential files, usually to the detriment of historical inquiry. But I have chosen to err on the side of privacy, on the side of respect. I have not attempted to contact the conservators of the New York State Psychiatric Institute and Hospital or the Rockland State Hospital to examine the records of patients from the 1930s. But I did ask for more information on the Landises. Nothing was saved, despite Carney's preeminent position on the staff of the Psychiatric Institute. To public records we must go to enter the minds and hearts of the Landises, oddly matched partners in life and laboratory.

The Scientists

Carney and Agnes Landis were Midwestern transplants to New York City. After an itinerant academic career following the completion of his doctorate in psychology at the University of Minnesota in 1924, Carney arrived at the New York State Psychiatric Institute and Hospital in 1929.[10] By the time Sex in Development was published, he was associate professor of psychology at Columbia University and the principal research psychologist at the Psychiatric Institute. According to the title page of Sex in Development, Agnes obtained work as a research fellow there. She, too, was a psychologist, earning her Ph.D. from Minnesota in 1934, apparently while she was living in New York.[11] Her credentials were as solid as anyone's—her degree identical to her husband's—but being a married woman (and a mother) would have been a serious disadvantage in the clubby world of East Coast medical institutions and universities. She was not a statistician or laboratory assistant, positions in science more amenable to women's presence in the 1930s.[12] Despite her training, therefore, her husband probably had a good deal of influence in securing her employment. Agnes benefited from her husband's connections, but her status as a "trailing spouse" belied the contribution to science she would make through Sex in Development. Even today, this inferior second-author standing obscures her accomplishments as long as we take the book as a document cut off from its conception and evolution, without a robust history of its own.

Agnes and Carney were research partners of a sort, despite Agnes's subordinate role. Yet if their professional relationship in any way reflected their married life, their work at the

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[10] David Zubin and Joseph Zubin, "From Speculation to Empiricism in the Study of Mental Disorder: Research at the New York State Psychiatric Institute in the First Half of the Twentieth Century," Annals of the New York Academy of Science 291 (April 18, 1977): 126-127.
[11] University of Minnesota Commencement Convocation program, March 22, 1934, 41, http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/57551/1/1934-commencement.pdf, accessed February 20, 2012.
[12] Julie Des Jardins, The Madame Curie Complex: The Hidden History of Women in Science (New York: The Feminist Press, 2010), 7 and ch. 3.

Psychiatric Institute in the mid-1930s might have been tense. Evidence suggests that distinctive intellectual bents and motivations colored their inquiries on sexuality. Both were experimental psychologists, but Agnes's labor for Sex in Development involved extensive interactions with human beings—in fact, people whose backgrounds were quite different from her own. She would have had to be able to see her interviewees as women and data simultaneously, while Carney could perform his work at an analytical distance.

Carney had embodied this empirical separation from human research subjects from the beginning of his career. Although his secondary role in authoring the surviving interviews renders him less important to this study than Agnes, much more can be said about his work. His Ph.D. thesis analyzed physical manifestations of emotion in humans. He measured the blood pressure and photographed the facial expressions of twenty-five women and men, most of whom he knew from the university, as they participated in a battery of "situations," such as reading a passage from Luke, listening to jazz records, perusing pornography, sniffing ammonia, and reaching into a dark pail containing three live frogs. (The pail administered an electric shock.) The entire run of seventeen situations lasted about three hours.[13]

In situation 15, the climax of the experiment, Landis laid a butcher's knife on a table. As he explained in his thesis, "A live white rat was … given to the subject. He was instructed, 'Hold this rat with your left hand and then cut off its head with the knife.' The situation was tried with 21 subjects. Fifteen subjects followed instructions with more or less urging. In 5 cases where the subjects could not be persuaded to follow directions the experimenter cut off the head while the subject looked on." One participant, a thirteen-year-old boy, began to cry, as did two others. As Landis reported, "There was a great deal of vascilliation [sic], many false starts and then a final

[13] Carney Landis, "Studies of Emotional Reactions, II: General Behavior and Facial Expression," reprinted from The Journal of Comparative Psychology 4:5 and 6 (October and December, 1934): 447-509.

hurried reaction which because of the effort and attempt to hurry usually resulted in a rather awkward and prolonged job of decapitation." In the next situation, subjects attempted to multiply large numbers while being given electric shocks of varying intensity. Many protested further; even more broke into tears. Situation 17 came when Landis announced that the experiment was over. "Some of the more seriously upset continued crying but in a more sobbing fashion," he wrote. "Most subjects were quite talkative and rather incoherent in their remarks."[14] This research lives in infamy on the Internet, sensationalized as one of history's "top ten" most unethical or "bizarre" experiments, putting Landis in the company of Stanley Milgram, the authorities behind the Tuskegee Experiment, even Josef Mengele.[15]

At Carney's death in 1962, he was head of the psychology department at the Psychiatric Institute, part of the vast medical complex known by then as Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital.[16] His interests were wide-ranging. Though he was an experimentalist through and through, he was willing to follow his curiosity wherever it took him. In the early 1930s, he corresponded with the British expatriate yogi and psychic researcher Hereward Carrington. The two evidently carried out experiments to investigate the effects of electric currents on human brain activity.[17] Landis was also a member of the Committee for the Study of Sex Variants, convened in 1935 by the renowned gynecologist Robert Latou Dickinson (a Sex in Development coauthor). The

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[14] Ibid., 459, 485, and 487.

[15] See, for example, "Top Ten Unethical Psychological Experiments," http://listverse.com/2008/09/07/top-10-unethical-psychological-experiments/; "Top 20 Most Bizarre Experiments of All Time," http://www.madsciencemuseum.com/msm/gallery/top_20_most_bizarre_experiments/P1; "#8: Facial Expressions While Decapitating a Rat," http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/Top/ecomments/4744; "Top Ten Bizarre Science Experiments," http://www.toptenz.net/top-10-bizarre-science-experiments.php; "Unethical Experiments in the Name of Science," http://dianiko.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/unethical-experiments-in-a-name-of-science/, all accessed February 19, 2012.

[16] "Dr. Landis Dead; Psychologist, 65," New York Times, March 6, 1962, 35. Columbia-Presbyterian is now New York Presbyterian Hospital.

[17] Carney Landis to Hereward Carrington, May 19, 1932 and January 31, 1933, Hereward Carrington Papers, box 2, folder 4; Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ.

committee was responsible for funding George W. Henry's landmark study of homosexual communities in New York City, Sex Variants.[18] Landis published and coauthored books and articles on women's sexuality around the time the interviews for Sex in Development were underway and shortly after the book was published.[19] In the 1950s, he published articles about the effects of psychosurgery (a catchall term for procedures including lobotomy) and LSD on schizophrenics,[20] among many other topics.

Although Landis was part of a faction of experimental psychologists that squared off with clinicians soon after he arrived at the Psychiatric Institute in 1929,[21] he underwent fifteen months of psychoanalysis (one hour a day, five days a week) in 1936-1937. His intentions were admirable. As he explained frankly in a 1940 journal symposium, he tried analysis for three reasons: to help him interpret his research on women's sexuality (that is, the material for Sex in Development); to hone his ability to teach about psychoanalysis in courses on abnormal psychology; and to help ameliorate "certain personal problems of an affective nature[.]" He was ultimately ambivalent about the efficacy of his time on the couch, but the process of summoning up childhood memories and dreams afforded him a visceral understanding of what the inscrutable Freudians meant by such terms as regression and transference. "As a child I had been catechized concerning my misdeeds and failures to follow parental orders," he recounted.

> All too frequently … I had been told that I would be switched that evening or the next morning. In the meantime I was filled with apprehension waiting for the thrashing[.] … The anxiety feeling in analysis was to me identical with my childhood apprehension …

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[18] Terry, An American Obsession, chs. 6 and 7; Minton, Departing from Deviance, 34-46, 94-98.
[19] Carney Landis, Marjorie Bolles, and D. A. D'Esopo, "Psychological and Physical Concomitants of Adjustment in Marriage," Human Biology 12 (December 1940): 559-565.
[20] Carney Landis, "Psychological Observations on Psychosurgery Patients," Psychiatric Quarterly 25 (1951): 409-417; Carney Landis and Violet Hamwi, "Some Prognostic Criteria for Recovery from Psychosis Following Psychosurgery," Psychiatric Quarterly Supplement 28 (1954): 78-83; C. Landis and J. Clausen, "Certain Effects of Mescaline and Lysergic Acid on Psychological Function," Journal of Psychology 38 (1954): 211-221.
[21] Zubin and Zubin, "From Speculation to Empiricism in the Study of Mental Disorder," 126-127.

> The only difference between this confessional with the analyst and the accounts I had given thirty years previously to my father was that the analyst said nothing during my rambling accounts and did not mention a thrashing. … Actually the close similarity of [the] situation reinstated an identity of emotional mood.[22]

Yet Landis remained skeptical of American psychoanalysis's focus on sexuality; he proposed that fear or anger could be just as instrumental in the development of neurosis.[23] Perhaps his background as the son of a strictly religious farmer from West Alexandria, Ohio, a tiny town outside Dayton, nursed this reasoning. "Freud says the locomotive in the dream is a death symbol," Landis wrote, explaining his reservations. "As a child … railroads meant to me going away to cities, an escape from the parental discipline and farmwork which I hated. … Running away did not mean dying or death; it meant escape and independence, a shaking off of annoyance and trouble."[24] But becoming an urbane scientist did not erase the rigid habits of his childhood. An obituary writer believed that Landis always displayed a pronounced preference for the laboratory, where "no ethical problems existed," over the world outside the hospital.[25] Yet to Landis, analysis was not worthless. It could actually induce neurosis, making it invaluable for studying human subjects: "It seems to me that the general experimental psychologist might avail himself of this technique … to bring out interesting material."[26] In other words, psychoanalysis could make healthy humans unhealthy, all to the benefit of science.

Agnes apparently knew Carney at the University of Minnesota. She was an undergraduate there in 1924, when he conducted his doctoral research, though she did not take

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[22] Carney Landis, "Psychoanalytic Phenomena," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 35 (January 1940): 18-19.
[23] Carney Landis, "Psychoanalysis and Scientific Method," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 84 (June 30, 1941): 515-525.
[24] Landis, "Psychoanalytic Phenomena," 24.
[25] William A. Hunt, "Carney Landis, 1897-1962," American Journal of Psychology 75 (September 1962): 391.
[26] Landis, "Psychoanalytic Phenomena," 28.

part in the experiments. Born in 1899 in Hennepin County (which included the campus, in Minneapolis), Agnes Marie Thorson was the daughter of a minister and the youngest of his seventeen children.[27] In college she studied education and psychology, even publishing what must have been an undergraduate paper, "The Relationship of Tongue Movements to Internal Speech," in 1925.[28] She was a member of the Lutheran Students' Association, played on her class hockey team, and sang alto in the Glee Club.[29] Perhaps Carney was her instructor in an experimental psychology class, coaching her to urge hungry, confused mice through mazes. They married in 1926, when she was about twenty-seven. By the time she received her Ph.D. in 1934, she had a daughter named Molly Jean, nearly three years old. Nineteen thirty-four was also the year she began the interviews for Sex in Development.

The extent of Agnes Landis's formal clinical experience before 1934 is unknown, but the title of her doctoral thesis, "An Investigation of Perseverance in the Pre-School Child," indicates that she was trained to observe human behavior.[30] It may be, then, that she and Carney agreed that she would be better suited to recruit the subjects and conduct the interviews that became the data for Sex in Development. If Carney had only vague knowledge of psychoanalysis prior to 1936, Agnes probably had completed coursework in abnormal psychology by 1934, learning more about clinical work and the Adlerian and Freudian tenets that informed the survey. It is also possible that she and Carney thought female subjects would be more forthcoming with a woman scientist. Thus, she became the primary author of the controlled interview questions, which

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[27] "Agnes M. Thorson—Overview," Ancestry.com, accessed February 18, 2012.
[28] Agnes M. Thorson, "The Relationship of Tongue Movements to Internal Speech," Journal of Experimental Psychology 8 (February 1925): 1-32.
[29] Agnes Thorson is pictured as a junior in the University of Minnesota's 1923 Gopher yearbook. Ancestry.com, U.S. School Yearbooks (database on-line). Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010, accessed February 18, 2012.
[30] The thesis itself was unavailable for consultation at the time of this writing.

strongly reflected psychoanalytic postulates in queries about the role of family life in developing sexual feeling.

Agnes did not publish recollections of her Midwestern childhood, including what it was like to live in such a big family, the ways religion influenced her, why she entered the university relatively late, when she was about twenty-one, or what she had hoped to gain from her education. No known archive has collected her letters or other meaningful documents about her personal and professional life after her divorce.[31] But her work evidently combined research and clinical practice more than Carney's. It is therefore possible that she had learned to establish a rapport with patients more effectively. This does not mean she was a better person than Carney—warmer, friendlier, more likely to look at people as individuals rather than experimental subjects, and therefore more ethically disposed—but available information points to a different professional personality.

Agnes and Carney Landis separated in 1939 and divorced in 1940, the year the book was published. The split was evidently acrimonious. He remarried in 1940, shortly after he was legally able to do so; his new bride was a distant relative of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the sitting president of the United States.[32] Two years later, Carney appealed the alimony decree, arguing that his financial condition had worsened. But according to court documents, he "seem[ed] to have little, if any, affection" for Molly Jean, declining to have her visit during the summer even though she was gravely ill. Agnes at the time was "destitute."[33] She, in turn, had to sue him in 1945 to claim back payments plus interest on alimony he had stopped remitting in

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[31] Carney and Agnes's surviving grandchildren turned up no such documents.
[32] Landis v Landis, January 29, 1942, 30 Backes 222, 131 N.J. Eq. 222, 24 A.2d 362; "Legacy to F.D. Roosevelt," New York Times, April 6, 1926, 22. Roosevelt and Carney's second wife, Laura Brownell, were among the relatives and beneficiaries of Mrs. Frederic Deland Hitch, who died in 1926 (the spelling "Deland" is in the original).
[33] Landis v Landis, January 29, 1942.

1942, soon after he lost his appeal.[34] It seems that even with a doctorate, she never found another academic job. She taught school for a stint, and by 1949 she was a clinical psychologist and director of research at the Veterans Administration hospital in Brooklyn.[35] She died in New York City in 1995.[36]

The Subjects

Besides designing the interviews, Agnes also helped select the two sets of subjects, classed "abnormal" and "normal." The abnormal women were patients at the Psychiatric Institute and Rockland State Hospital, north of the city in Orangeburg, and they were selected first. As the study explained, to recruit the normal women, Agnes "made contact with … women's clubs, adult education agencies, recreational societies, and the like"—all centers of voluntarism and community activity that would likely yield participants who would believe in the scientific aims of the study. She described the purpose of the inquiry to "small groups of women," emphasizing that volunteers would be assured confidentiality and have access to the reports from their physical examinations and the "vocational tests" they were to complete. (No repository contains these tests today.) As Sex in Development noted, she "made every attempt to present the prospectus of the investigation as accurately as possible without describing it in such a way that it would seem to be a haven to those who were in severe need of psychiatric guidance."[37] Even

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[34] Landis v Landis, April 3, 1945, 55 N.Y.S.2d 228. The court found Carney's reasons for refusing payment "sham and frivolous."
[35] American Public Health Association, Association News 39 (April 1949), 555, http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.39.4.550, accessed February 18, 2012.
[36] Social Security Administration, Social Security Death Index, Master File, Ancestry.com, Social Security Death Index (database online), Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2011, accessed February 20, 2012.
[37] Landis et al., Sex in Development, 19-20.

normal women, she knew, might not be mentally or emotionally fit enough to serve as part of a test population.

The "recruitment" of the abnormal women was restricted. "Only cases capable of adequate cooperation were included in the study," Sex in Development explained. "This was a selective factor, since no attempt was made to obtain material on mute, acutely depressed, or acutely disturbed patients."[38] Moreover, because the hospitalization procedure at the institute was selective (only non-chronic cases and those judged of interest to researchers were admitted),[39] the nature of the study's abnormal population was further skewed. As the report conceded, "To be completely accurate we should refer to [the normal] group as the nonhospitalized or contrasted group. … [But] we shall refer to it as the normal group since this is the most natural term to use."[40] Normal women could express worries that they were neurotic and plea for sexual counseling; Agnes's summaries sometimes included negative judgments of normal women's quirks and affective troubles.

The interviews of the abnormal women present certain problems. Their psychiatric conditions varied widely. Some were diagnosed with depression, some with mania, some with manic depression, some with psychosis, some with one of the varieties of dementia praecox/schizophrenia. Some had multiple diagnoses, crossed out and retyped on their blanks, evidence of the historically slippery nature of psychiatric nosology. The interviews with the abnormal women are, on the whole, no more or less extensive than the normal women's, and many of these subjects made remarkable attempts to articulate their feelings about sexuality. But it can be jarring to read words that seem to reflect paranoia, or an "irrelevant" statement such as

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[38] Ibid., 19.
[39] George H. Kirby, "The New York Psychiatric Institute and Hospital: A Sketch of Its Development from 1895 to 1929," Psychiatric Quarterly 4 (1930), 161.
[40] Landis et al., Sex in Development, 17-20 (quotation from 20).

"I have a lump in my breast—that will kill me," coming deep into a line of questions about orgasm.[41] Moreover, it is impossible to ignore the Psychiatric Summaries stapled to most abnormal women's interview blanks. These dispassionate documents carry warnings of tendencies to lie compulsively, observations of erratic or aggressive behavior, reports of alcohol or narcotics addiction, and other material that is impossible to discount once read.

The study slanted heavily toward Jewish women, who constituted just over half the entire sample. As Sex in Development explained, "Most of the patients come from upper Manhattan and the Bronx, and the religious and racial characteristics of our [abnormal] group are a reflection of the population make-up of these districts. … They cannot be considered a random sample of the general population of the mentally ill."[42] After the psychiatric patients were selected, Agnes chose the normal group to match their socioeconomic and ethnic characteristics, which in practice meant persuading many Jewish women to participate.

Landis did not have to travel far to recruit her normal group, for upper Manhattan and the Bronx hosted significant populations of second-generation Jewish women and men. By the onset of the Depression, there was a diasporic quality to Jewish life within the city. The children of immigrants dispersed throughout the boroughs to give the sidewalks of New York political, religious, class, and cultural flavors particular to distinct groups of the city's Jewry. Members of the secular upper crust clustered on the Upper West Side—the "Gilded Ghetto"—where the median family income was over $8,000 yearly. On the other hand, "Jews without money," as the communist writer Michael Gold referred to those who remained on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, found it difficult to survive, earning only about $1,000 annually.[43]

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[41] Interview transcript, Case 25 (m), May 15, 1937, box 2, series III E, folder 4, CL.
[42] Landis et al., Sex in Development, 17.
[43] Beth S. Wenger, New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 84-85, 94-95 (income statistics from 85).

Landis probably started in Washington Heights. The Psychiatric Institute had recently relocated to a brand-new facility overlooking the Hudson River at 168th Street and Riverside Drive, near the neighborhood's southwestern boundary. Washington Heights had begun absorbing upwardly mobile American Jews from Harlem in the 1920s. Many German-Jewish refugees arrived in the 1930s, setting themselves apart from long-established "assimilated" German Jews by adhering to Orthodox Judaism and continuing to speak German.[44] Washington Heights was a heterogeneous middle-class community far removed from the city's slums, with an estimated median yearly income of about $4,000. Many residents lived in comfortable apartment buildings, some with elevators—a striking contrast to the much older, shoddy, overcrowded, and dangerous tenements that had received many immigrants in the nineteenth century (and where some of them had grown up). Plentiful parks—not small, treeless playgrounds—provided opportunities for play. Washington Heights was home to the main campus of Yeshiva College (later University), in addition to shuls, synagogues, YWHAs and YMHAs, and other Jewish clubs and cultural centers.[45]

Landis also journeyed to the Bronx, just over the Harlem River to the east. Like upper Manhattan, the Bronx became home to waves of Jewish New Yorkers in the 1920s. Much larger in size, the Bronx was also more diverse in the class status, political leanings, and religious practices of its neighborhoods. Cutting north through the western part of the borough, the Grand Concourse and its glittering Art Deco palaces signified the social arrival of white-collar Jewish

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[44] According to Beth Wenger, the German refugees were determined to create their own culturally distinct community, which some American-born Jews "sarcastically" called the "Fourth Reich." Wenger, New York Jews and the Great Depression, 94. On the distinctive character of the German-Jewish population of Washington Heights, see Steven M. Lowenstein, Frankfurt on the Hudson: The German-Jewish Community of Washington Heights, 1933-1983, Its Structure and Culture (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989).

[45] Lowenstein, Frankfurt on the Hudson, ch. 3; Wenger, New York Jews and the Great Depression, 84, 85, 90-94 (income statistic on 85).

families, who made up perhaps three quarters of the boulevard's population.[46] But the professionals of the Concourse and adjacent areas did not experience the effects of the Depression as severely as their more modest counterparts to the east. Suffused with both middle-class strivers and unemployed breadwinners who had no way of knowing how they would pay the next month's rent, the tightknit districts of the eastern Bronx were a haven for communists, socialists, diehard New Dealers, and labor activists. Cooperative housing experiments flourished. In the nostalgia constructed about the eastern Bronx, neighbors came to one another's aid and the language of the streets was Yiddish. Raised among poor Jews in the "thick tangle of streets" of Crotona Park East, the New York Intellectual Irving Howe recalled the look of the place during the Depression. "We lived in narrow five-story tenements, wall flush against wall, and with slate-colored stoops rising sharply in front," he wrote in 1984. "There was never enough space. The buildings, clenched into rows, looked down upon us like sentinels, and the apartments in the buildings were packed with relatives and children, many of them fugitives from unpaid rent. These tenements had first gone up during the early years of the century, and if not quite so grimy as those of the Lower East Side in Manhattan or the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, they were bad enough."[47]

Some of the Landis interviews indicate that their subjects hailed from respectable but not quite comfortable sections of the Bronx. Quite a few grew up poor in the 1900s and 1910s; by the 1930s they had often completed a "business course" during or after high school and worked in pink-collar jobs, sometimes to help support their families or save enough money to get married. But though they did not earn much, these stenographers, typists, switchboard operators, and secretaries did not have to sew silk flowers by candlelight or work in industrial sweatshops.

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[46] Wenger, New York Jews and the Great Depression, 91.
[47] Quoted in Beth S. Wenger, ed., The Jewish Americans: Three Centuries of Jewish Voices in America (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 221.

If there was such a thing as a Depression-era middle class—say, a slice of the underemployed with some professional training—many of the Landis subjects and their husbands or boyfriends would have qualified.

A great number of the Jewish women (and therefore a significant proportion of all subjects) were second-generation Americans. Born in or before 1920, they grew up under intense pressure to Americanize just as nativism and anti-Semitism played out in what amounted to a comprehensive ban on Jewish immigration in 1924. Moreover, by December 1934, when the interviews commenced, Hitler had consolidated one-party rule in Germany, established the first concentration camp for political prisoners, and instituted anti-Semitism as official Nazi policy. As the Landis data piled up through 1937, events at home and abroad surely tugged at the Jewish subjects' minds, but the interviews give no hints about such thoughts. Landis asked no questions about politics, local or global, even though anti-Semitism and demands that immigrants assimilate surely had an effect on the way these women thought about sexuality: what was the true American way to be sexual; what was American sexual subjectivity; could there be a Jewish-American form of sexual expression? Beyond the temptations of mass culture and the appeal of vernacular psychology analyzed in this dissertation, the struggle to become American—including adjusting one's gender expression and the place of sexuality in one's life—was inherently political. Unfortunately, the interviews resist yielding such material.

Surprisingly for a study that attempted to measure the degree to which women were able to discount the influence of family ties and repressive attitudes toward sexuality, none of the interview questions concerned religion—not the punitive Protestantism that figured so prominently in Carney Landis's childhood, and most certainly not Judaism. Neither did the interviews take into account divergent cultural attitudes toward family life, such as might have

prevailed among immigrant communities and between parents and children. Most of the Jewish women in the study identified as Orthodox and had probably grown up understanding that their roles in religion, the family, and social life were distinct from men's, even if they were not especially observant. But the place of sexuality in Judaism was different from assumptions the Landises seem to have made, deeply steeped in Midwestern Protestantism as they were. Jewish doctrine and custom prescribed sexual pleasure for women as well as men, especially within marriage, in a way that Protestant and Catholic teachings did not. Marriage contracts specified that it was a husband's duty to satisfy his wife's sexual needs, not the other way around. Moreover, marriage was not primarily for procreation but for companionship and mutual support. Inasmuch as sex was an expression of this closeness, it was a mitzvah—a deed that fulfilled God's commandments. Sex for purposes other than procreation was acceptable if a couple already had children or intended to. Additionally, premarital sex was not held to be a sin in the eyes of God unless it fell under Talmudic prohibitions.[48] This is not to say that the Jewish women in the study grew up with more liberated attitudes about sexuality. Rather, their feelings about it might have been different from their Protestant and Catholic counterparts in ways for which the published study could not control and did not recognize.

Sex in Development, therefore, is a study rife with quirks, which can only be comprehended fully by immersion in archival material. The surviving interviews resist reinterpretation as data that can withstand the methodological demands of a modern scientific survey. On the other hand, allowing tomboyism—one theme pronounced by a significant minority of the subjects—to frame another study, this study, supports ripe analysis. The interviews are so rich that other scholars must not delay in evincing even more tropes. It is still

[48] Judith Romney Wegner, "The Image and Status of Women in Classical Rabbinic Judaism," in Judith Reesa Baskin, ed., Jewish Women in Historical Perspective, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 73-100.

too often taken for granted that people in the past did not talk about their sex lives. The Landis interviews show that they did. And furthermore, they did so with as much evident honesty as many people today do.

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