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Ianthe's alt.sex.intergen POEMS OF THE WEEK 31st June 1995
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This week's theme is the child-adult FRIENDSHIP within
child-loving relationships. Another slight departure
into a diary entry this week; plus a strikingly surrealist
poem from Lorca (which won't be to everyone's taste)...

* Victor Hugo (France, 1802-1885) 'Jeanne was on Bread and Water'
* "Mark Twain" (Psuedonym of Samuel Clemens. United States, 1835-1910)
* Walt Whitman (United States, 1819-1892) 'A Glimpse'
* Federico Garcia Lorca (Spain, 1898-1936) 'Little Stanton'

   Hugo was the leading writer of the French Romantic movement
   in the 19th Century - author of 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame'
   and 'Les Miserables'. Twain - well, you should all know Twain
   from school, and from all those Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer movies
   - his writing is the foundation stone of modern North American
   literature. Similarly, Whitman's poetry was the foundation
   stone of modern North American poetry. Lorca is perhaps *the*
   greatest dramatist of the 20th Century ('Yerma', 'Blood Wedding',
   etc) and certainly one of its greatest poets.

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   JEANNE WAS ON BREAD AND WATER

Jeanne was on bread and water in a dark room
For some dark crime; but I saw I could not conform
To duty, I visited the outlaw in the gloom
And slipped her underhand a pot of jam
Against the regulations. Those who in my city
See to the health of our society
Were not amused. Jeanne meekly promised them,
"I'll stop making that rude sign with my thumb;
I won't make Pussy scratch me anymore."
But they protested, "That child has got your measure;
She knows how weak and soft you are. She sees
You always laugh, when everybody's cross.
How can we govern her ? Behind our backs
You interfere with order - power goes slack,
Law breaks down: the child's left to run unchecked.
You're ruining everything." I hung my head
And said, "I've nothing to say in my defence.
I'm in the wrong. Paternalism and indulgence
Have always led to the downfall of a people.
Put me on bread and water." "Indeed we will -
You deserve it." Jeanne at this, from her dark place,
Said to me quietly, raising those dear eyes
That have the authority of the sweet and harmless:
"Well, anyway, I shall come and bring you jam."

   Victor Hugo.
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A GLIMPSE

A glimpse through an interstice caught,
Of a crowd of workmen and drivers in a bar-room around
the stove late of a winter night,
and I unremark'd seated in a corner,
Of a youth who loves me and whom I love, silently
approaching and seating himself near, that he may
hold me by the hand,
A long while amid the noises of coming and going, of
drinking and oath and smutty jest,
There we two, content, happy in being together, speaking
little, perhaps not a word.

Walt Whitman.

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DIARY ENTRY [Mark Twain, as an old man in a state of depression at the dull wintry weather of New York, sailed south alone in January 1908, to Bermuda. On the first morning of his arrival, Twain came down to breakfast...]

As I entered the breakfast room the first person I saw in that spacious and far-reaching place was a little girl seated solitary at a table for two. I bent down and patted her cheek and said: "I don't seem to remember your name; what is it ?"

By the sparkle in her brown eyes it amused her. She said: "Why, you've never know it, Mr Clemens, because you've never seen me before."

"Why, that is true, now that I come to think; it certainly is true, and it must be one of the reasons why I have forgotten your name. But I remember it now perfectly -- it's Mary."

She was amused again, amused beyond smiling; amused to a chuckle, and she said: "Oh no, it isn't; it's Margaret."

I feigned to be ashamed of my mistake and said: "Ah well, I couldn't have made that mistake a few years ago; but I am old, and one of age's earliest infirmities is a damaged memory; but I am clearer now -- clearer-headed -- it all comes back to me just as if it were yesterday. It's Margaret Holcomb."

She was surprised into a laugh this time, the rippling laugh that a happy brook makes when it breaks out of the shade into the sunshine, and she said: "Oh, you are wrong again; you don't get anything right. It isn't Holcomb, it's Blackmer,"

I was ashamed again, and confessed it; then:

"How old are you, dear ?"

"Twelve, New Year's. Twelve and a month."

We were close comrades -- inseparables in fact -- for eight

days. Every day we made pedestrian excursions -- called them
that anyway, and honestly they were intended for that, and that
is what they would have been, but for the persistent intrusion
of a grey and grave rough-coated donkey by the name of Maud.

  [Note: Twain's personal secretary once wrote about Twain;

  "His first interest when he goes off to a new place is to
  find little girls" [...] "off he goes with a flash if he
  sees a new pair of slim little legs appear, and if the little
  girl wears butterfly bows of ribbon on the back of her head,
  then his delerium is complete."   [Source: Irving Wallace.]

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LITTLE STANTON   [Note: for Stanton Hogan, with whose family the
                  poet lodged during September 1929, in rural
                  Shandanken near New York. The word 'cancer' in
                  this poem seems to be a metaphor for boy-loving...]

   "Do you like me ?"
   "Yes, and you ?"
   "Yes, yes."

When I'm by myself
your ten years stay with me.
So do the three blind horses,
your fifteen faces with the face after stoning
and tiny frozen fevers on leaves of corn.
Stanton, my son, Stanton.
At twelve midnight, cancer wandered throught the corridors
and spoke with the documents' empty snails,
cancer springing to life, full of clouds and thermometers,
with an apple's chaste longing to be pecked by nightingales.
In the house where there is cancer,
the white walls shatter in the delirium of astronomy
and the burn glows brightly for many years
in the tiny stables, in forests where paths intersect.
My sorrows bled in the afternoons
when your eyes became two walls,
when your hands became two countries
and my body murmured like grass.
My agony went looking for its clothes,
dusty, bitten by dogs,
and you went with it, without trembling
to the threshold of dark water.
Oh Stanton, idiotic and beautiful among the little animals,
your mother hammered to pieces by the village blacksmiths,
one brother under the arches
and the other eaten by the anthills,
and cancer, free of wires, beating in the rooms like a heart !
There are wet nurses who give children
rivers of moss and bitter feet,
and black women who spread love potions made from rats in the bedrooms upstairs.
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Because it's true, there are people
who want to dump doves in the sewers
and I know what else they want-- the people
hanging out in the street who suddenly squeeze our fingertips.

Your ignorance is a mountain of lions, Stanton.
The day cancer gave you a whipping,
and spit on you in the bedroom where the guests died in the epidemic,
and opened its broken rose of dry glass and soft hands
to spatter mud in the eyes of sailors--
you looked for my agony in the grass,
the terrible flowers of my agony,
while the speechless, acid cancer that wants to go to bed with you
pulverised red landscapes on the bedsheets of bitterness
and placed on the coffins
little frozen trees of boric acid.
Stanton, go to the woods with your jew's-harp,
go to learn celestial words
that sleep in tree trunks, clouds, and turtles,
in sleeping dogs, in lead and wind,
in irises that don't sleep and water that copies nothing.
Go to learn, my son, what your people forget.

When the thunder of war begins,
I'll leave a piece of cheese for your dog in the office.
Your ten years will be the leaves
flying in the clothes of the dead,
ten roses of powerless sulfur
on the shoulder of my dawn.
And I, Stanton, by myself, forgotten,
your withered faces on my mouth--
I'll go shouting my way through the green statues of Malaria.

Federico Garcia Lorca.

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For more information on the child-loving of the above authors, see:

Cooley, John. Mark Twain's Aquarium - The Samuel Clemens Angel Fish Correspondence, 1905-1910. University Of Georgia, USA, 1991.
(Record of Twain's 'club' for little girls. Available from the Ophelia Editions address.)

Cooley, John.
Mark Twain's angel-fish: innocence at home ?
THE MISSISSIPPI QUARTERLY, Vol. 38, Winter 1984/85. pp. 3-19

Shively, Charley. (Ed.) Drum-beats - Walt Whitman's Civil War boy lovers. Gay Sunshine Press, USA, 1986.
(I think this is still available from Ariel's Pages in the USA)

...and my recent lengthy posting to alt.support.boy-lovers about Federico Garcia Lorca's boy-loving.
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REPLY TO PHIL'S RECENT POST
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IN:
  >Newsgroups: alt.sex.intergen
  >From: an251400@anon.penet.fi
  >Date: Fri, 30 Jun 1995 04:31:24 UTC
  >Subject: PHIL0029: Lycanphobe; discussion

PHIL writes:
  >One thing it [recent story/novellette posted to alt.sex.intergen] taught
  >me was that where society is successful in forcing people to hide their
  >arguments under metaphor and analogy, then society is successful in its
  >censorship. The disguises they force censored ideas to wear will be
  >sufficient to prevent those ideas from being recognized in any useful way.

I think one has to see this in relation to the historical process by which child-loving desires have been pushed 'underground' in literature.

In the face of a growing babble of 'official' and 'scienta sexualis' discourse about 'them', we were forced to turn increasingly to the 'arts erotica' - poetry, painting, and increasingly photography - to find a psychic refuge.

Foucault may have been correct in his hypothesis that sex at the end of the 19th century was not 'repressed' outright, but rather became increasingly something to be 'repressed' by being brought-to-light, discussed, named and categorised. But his hypothesis presupposes a parallel silencing of sexual dissidents whose contradictory voices might disrupt the coherence and use-power of these necessarily 'official' discourses - a silencing matched by the public amplification used when 'hearing' dissident voices engaged in guilty and penitent confession.

When inquisitorial 'official' knowledges in the West began to _hear_ dissident voices engaged in such guilty and penitent confession (eg, the use of letters and poems as criminal evidence in trials from about 1885 onwards), there were parallel moves to _silence_ erotic dissidents whose 'celebratory' voices might disrupt the tenous coherence of 'official' discourses. In order to avoid either an unwelcome 'hearing' or a 'silencing', child-loving literary sub-cultures of the late 19th and early 20th centuries found it increasingly necessary to use themes, code-words and allusions which would covertly alert those 'in the know' to the likelihood that a desirous 'reading' was anticipated and allowed for by the poet's desirous 'writing' - all acomplished in a way which would generate only a puzzled unease in outsiders. I think they succeeded brilliantly.

Unfortunately it is likely that the modern reader will read the works of past child-lovers without realising that (for example) various shades of red (violet, crimson, dark purple, ruby, and scarlet) were code-words for 'perversity', indicating that a particular poem is meant to be deeply and

perversely 'read' (red). Likewise, the modern reader will be unfamiliar with the allusions generated by the 19th Century sub-culture's dazzling (re)appropriation of the cultural remains of Greece and Crete to serve as partial legitimation for the literary and artistic expressions of dissident desires.

Similarly, last-week's 'Poem of the Week' from Pasolini is made more 'obvious' if one knows that the word 'shame' was commonly used to imply homosexual love in poetry from 1885 onwards. Pasolini uses it twice in the poem, eg:

> he went hot all over like a pearl when greeting me,
> eaten up by his delightful shame.

On the other hand, an undisguised 'unmasked' form of words (apart from being rather bland) may actually be what a prejudiced society desires and _needs_ from us. Witness the enormous effort that power puts into forcing 'us' to give accounts of 'ourselves': in the blankly confessional speech of the court dock, the psychologist's office, the 'abuse handbook', or the journalistic expose. When 'we' write blatant and open accounts of desire, it is likely that we are providing society with a vital component of its ongoing process of demonisation. Stallybrass and White's work has suggested how such a process might operate...

> "the very subjects it [normal society] excludes become exotic costumes which it assumes in order to play out the disorders of _its own_ identity [by which it can] at last speak to itself about all it desired and denied. [Stallybrass and White 'The Politics and Poetics of Transgression', 1985. p.200]

So, by cloaking written accounts of 'our' desires in metaphor and allusion we may at once confound this process of projection and demonisation, generate a clandestine network of 'kindred spirits', and _at the same time_ allow our writings to approach the mainstream of culture. When one looks at the list of child-loving writers one can see how close 'we' have come to the very heart of Western literature: Edgar Allen Poe; Edward Lear; Charles Kingsley;
Whitman; Lewis Carroll; John Ruskin; Mark Twain; Kilvert; Henry James; J.M. Barrie; T.H. White; Andre Gide; William Carlos Williams; Thomas Mann; T.E. Lawrence, Herbert Read; Wilfred Owen; Lorca; Nabokov; Richard Hughes; W.H. Auden; Elytis; Paul Goodman; etc, etc... (One could also make a good case that nearly all the classic children's fiction of the late 19th Century arose from some form of child-loving desire.)

Creative writing, however cloaked in allusion and metaphor, is also a kind of valuable historical record. Not the 'official' one, but nevertheless a history all the more important for being 'bottom up' (sic), an expression of dis-ease which records attempts to create shared cultural spaces in which social pressures can be eased and 'official' identities evaded, moderated or even negated.

Child-loving poetry (for instance), in part structured through an almost diasporic dialogue with other child-loving poets, is a valuable set of written accounts of how such desires were 'lived/imagined'. As such, poetry usefully provides us with a narrative-of-desire which has recorded historical experience in a radically different manner from the the sex-act obsessed flounderings of psychologists, moral reformers, journalists, criminologists and doctors.

Along with other creative arts, poetry, with little attachment to any of the official powers, was made to do the only thing that in the modern age it can do well - to keep some neglected parts of our human experience alive until the weather changes; as in some unforseeable way it may do.

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