

Loss of Innocence:

Albert Moll, Sigmund Freud and the Invention of Childhood Sexuality around 1900

LUTZ D. H. SAUERTEIG

Abstract: This paper analyses how, prior to the work of Sigmund Freud, an understanding of infant and childhood sexuality emerged during the nineteenth century. Key contributors to the debate were Albert Moll, Max Dessoir and others, as *fin-de-siècle* artists and writers celebrated a sexualised image of the child. By the beginning of the twentieth century, most paediatricians, sexologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts and pedagogues agreed that sexuality formed part of a child's 'normal' development. This paper argues that the main disagreements in discourses about childhood sexuality related to different interpretations of children's sexual experiences. On the one hand stood an explanation that argued for a homology between children's and adults' sexual experiences, on the other hand was an understanding that suggested that adults and children had distinct and different experiences. Whereas the homological interpretation was favoured by the majority of commentators, including Moll, Freud, and to some extent also by C.G. Jung, the heterological interpretation was supported by a minority, including childhood psychologist Charlotte Bühler.

Keywords: Childhood Sexuality; History of Childhood; Sexualisation; Child–Woman; Psychiatry; Psychology; Psychoanalysis; Sexology; Charlotte Bühler; Max Dessoir; Havelock Ellis; Wilhelm Fließ; Sigmund Freud; Carl Gustav Jung; Karl Kraus; Samuel Lindner; Albert Moll; Jean-Jacques Rousseau; Egon Schiele; Wilhelm Stekel; William Stern; Fritz Wittels

Dr Lutz D. H. Sauerteig, Centre for the History of Medicine and Disease, Wolfson Research Institute, Queen's Campus, Durham University, Stockton-on-Tees TS17 6BH. Email: l.d.sauerteig@durham.ac.uk