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PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This is the British name for the private secondary schools that educate, for sizable fees, upper-class and upwardly mobile middle-class children between the ages of twelve and eighteen—the future elite of the nation. Their educational methods and the environment in which adolescents spend the formative years of their adolescence have done much to shape British character. Although some of them were founded in the mid-fourteenth century beginning with Winchester in 1378, whose statutes, enacted in 1400, governed it until 1857, they took on their present character only with the reforms of Thomas Arnold (father of Matthew) toward the middle of the nineteenth century, but during the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth the study of Latin and Greek formed practically the entire curriculum.

Basic Features. Traditionally boarding schools with harsh living conditions (including physical discomfort and corporal punishment for misdemeanors), public schools permitted a good deal of autonomy, allowing the adolescent subculture—with all its cruelty and demand for conformity—to dominate the lives of the boys. The curriculum introduced by Arnold was strongly classical, Latin and Greek being the principal subjects; but public schools also emphasized athletics and teamwork that made for success on the playing field. At the same time Victorian evangelism invested the schools with

the pietistic ideal of creating “Christian gentlemen.” Graduates of the “public schools,” the best secondary institutions in the country, have an enormous advantage in competing for admission to the leading universities—**Cambridge and Oxford** as well as London, or to Sandhurst or the Royal Naval College. And to boot, access to the nine great public schools, led by Eton and Harrow, was limited to the sons of alumni, who had to be registered with the school at the time of their birth.

Homosocial and Homosexual Aspects. The public schools have a homoerotic ambiance that may not find overt expression; but confined as they are with members of their own sex, at what is for many the “homosexual phase,” and approaching the peak of their physical beauty, the boys are perforce involved in intense friendships that amount to love affairs. The degree of acceptance of these attachments has varied over the decades, but there is abundant evidence for homosexual affairs between public school boys and between them and their teachers, who are in some instances homosexuals of the pederastic type—attracted solely to boys of that age, not to adults.

At the same time the public schools inculcate an ethos of duty, of loyalty, of service to king and country that amounts to an initiation into what Hans Blüher called the “male society,” the form of social organization based on male bonding that is the foundation of the state and of its administrative and military apparatus. And the public schools, whatever defects their curriculum may have had, did train and instill in the men who governed the Empire the virtues requisite for ruling.

Evidence for homosexual activity within the public schools is slight from the early modern period, although Nicholas Udall, the headmaster of Eton, was in 1543 exposed as a result of an unsuccessful attempt of two of his pupils implicated in the theft of silver objects to blackmail him into silence. The death penalty for buggery

to which he would have been subject was commuted to imprisonment by the Privy Council, and in 1547 he was released and appointed headmaster of Westminster.

In the nineteenth century C. J. Vaughan, the headmaster of Harrow, was compromised when a good-looking boy named Alfred Pretor revealed to John Addington Symonds that Vaughan had been having an affair with him. Symonds kept the secret for eight years, then revealed it to a professor at Oxford who told him to disclose the information to his father. The elder Symonds promptly forced Vaughan to resign as headmaster and to promise that he would never hold any high position in the Church of England. This scandalous (but suppressed) episode explains why Vaughan mysteriously "curbed his ambition" for the rest of his life.

If only a fourth of the public school boys are involved in overt homosexual activity, far fewer become lifelong homosexuals, yet they all share a lingering attachment to the camaraderie and the group identity crucial to the "male society." That sense of solidarity and cohesiveness stood Britain in good stead during the two world wars; but weaknesses in the public schools' curriculums share in the blame for the decline of Britain in an age when science and technology are increasingly important factors in a nation's competitiveness.

The American boarding schools, especially ones in New England, are modeled on the British public schools, though they are less rigorous and less insistent upon the Greek and Latin classics. But like their counterparts in the (British) Commonwealth, they foster homoeroticism. The same is true of the military schools that predominate in the American South, more removed as they are from the British public school model. Thus much of the elite of the whole Anglo-Saxon world passes through this male bonding process before college and the military.

In the eighteenth century Count Beccaria recommended abolishing one-sex

schools precisely because they served as breeding grounds for "Greek customs." The spread of the coeducational model in Western industrial societies reflects in part such cautionary views, as well as feminist aspirations for equality.

Female Parallels. Girls' schools in many respects mirror the male ones, but they earlier introduced more modern subjects—science, history, and living languages. Not a few of the teachers are lesbians who cherish a dislike of men and a resentment of male privilege which they subtly convey to their pupils. The universal feature of the sexual life at girls' schools is the "crush"—the love of a younger girl, one between eleven and fourteen, for an older one who often played the role of surrogate mother. Older girls tend to be attracted to teachers and are rivals for their favor as in the school of *Sappho*. The embargo placed on heterosexual relationships—with the perils of loss of virginity and pregnancy—encourages strong physical attraction to members of one's own sex. Measures to discourage contact between members of different age-cohorts and the ensuing "sentimental friendships" have not been able to suppress the emotional needs of those experiencing the first flush of adolescence.

Literary Aspects. Its rigors notwithstanding, the sentimental attachment to the public school has fostered a genre of popular novels in which homoerotic sentiments pervade—but usually only as a subtext that the casual reader may miss. The archetype of the genre is Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857). H. A. Vachell's *The Hill: A Romance of Friendship* (1905) is a chaste version of the *David and Jonathan* theme. Michael Campbell's *Lord Dismiss Us* (1968) captures some of the emotional intensity of (unconsummated) love between two sixteen year olds.

The French diplomat and novelist Roger Peyrefitte wrote candidly of his school in *Les Amitiés particulières* (1945), his friend Henry de Montherlant less so.

Catholic boys in French boarding schools were educated by Jesuits and other celibate members of the clergy, who (though usually chaste) were often inclined to homoerotic sentiments. Colette recalled her schoolgirl lesbianism in a matter-of-fact way, while the German writer Christa Winsloe (in *The Child Manuela*, and its several film versions entitled *Mädchen in Uniform*) emphasized the conflicts stemming from an idealistic love affair between a teacher and her girl pupil.

Conclusion. The overall pattern of public school homosexuality is one of intense emotional bonds between adolescents, sometimes encouraged or facilitated by pederastic homosexuals or corophile lesbians on the staffs. For most these erotic attachments are transitory; for a few, they mark the onset of a homosexual career. In Britain especially, the collective experience does much to strengthen the kind of same-sex bonding that gives elite society its distinctive ethos and value system.

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PUBLIC SEX

See Impersonal Sex.

PUNK

In American prison and hobo usage this word has had (at least since the beginning of the twentieth century) the meaning of a young, usually smaller and heterosexual, male who is exploited as a

female surrogate by older, tougher, more powerful (and for the most part essentially heterosexual) males, or "jockers." Since less is known about hobo punks, the following discussion focuses on the jailhouse punk.

Jail Punks. A punk in this sense is involuntarily recruited to the role, usually through gang rape, though he is likely to adapt to it over time if he does not commit suicide; in the prison class structure, he stands apart from the "man" and the "queen," or effeminate homosexual. Often there is considerable tension between the two sexually passive classes, as the "queens" reinforce the feminizing process initiated by the "men," and the punks resist it. The "queens" also tend to look down on the punks as weak, while seeing themselves as doing what they want.

The process of converting someone into a punk is called "turning out" and its climactic point is the moment of sexual penetration, after which the punk is said to have "lost his manhood," considered by prisoners to be irreversible; hence "once a punk, always a punk."

Studies of prison sexual patterns indicate that considerable numbers of heterosexual young males are "turned out" in this manner. A careful sociological survey by Wayne Wooden and Jay Parker defined punk as "an inmate who has been forced into a sexually submissive role" and reported that at least nine percent of the heterosexual inmates (of all ages and ethnic groups) in a medium-security prison had been sexually assaulted in that prison. The frequency of "turning out" for youngsters in a big-city jail or high-security prison or many juvenile prisons is likely to be much higher, though never sufficient to meet the demand. Factors which raise the likelihood of a prisoner's becoming a punk, in addition to youth and small size, are lack of combat skills or experience, middle-class background, lack of familiarity with jail and criminal mores (first-timers), lack of gang membership, non-violent offenses as reason for incarceration, and adherence