The Internet and childhood-related fantasies.
(Sexuality as a medium to express childhood nostalgia)

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation will explore the ambiguous modern notions of childhood and how this definition relates to three Internet paraphilic communities that all share a common point of embarkation: a sexual fantasy based in/around childhood and its associated symbols. They all share a deep connection to the drive for childhood-nostalgia. However, society treats these paraphiliacs differently, with some cultures taking a more muted stance than others. This dissertation is an attempt to use the lens of the online world to bring these differences into sharp focus.

In order to provide the tools necessary to understand this subject, I will explain what a paraphilia is and discuss the Internet as a paraphilia catalyst. To reach the core of this subject, one must also explore our shared cultural notions of childhood. This essay will explore the psychological concept of nostalgia, especially “childhood nostalgia” and its links to “paraphilia.” Through this scholastic observation of paedophilia, infantilism, and childhood related fetishes, this essay will also investigate the idea of sexuality as a medium to reflect and engage in “childhood-nostalgia.” Can childhood be revisited through sex? And if so, how?

By over protecting childhood, and increasingly fostering the need to stay young, it seems society has caught itself in its own youth-obsessed game. This essay will also show that linking childhood and sexuality together is not necessarily reprehensible, as is the case in paedophilia, and there are many other lesser known and harmless adult sexual fetishes also linked to childhood.
The Internet and childhood-related fantasies
(Sexuality as a medium to express childhood nostalgia)

How does childhood-nostalgia motivate adult sexuality?

Introduction

This dissertation will explore the ambiguous modern notions of childhood and its relation to three Internet paraphilic communities having a similar point of embarkation: a sexual fantasy based in/around childhood and its associated symbols. What is interesting to note is that, despite using very different means to express it, these very different sexually deviant communities somehow share a same fantasy, a same starting point. Moreover, this similarity appears as deeply related to childhood nostalgia. However, society treats these paraphiliacs differently, some cultures taking a more muted stance than others. This dissertation is an attempt to use the lens of the online world to make these points.

In order to provide the tools necessary to understand this subject, I will first explain what a “paraphilia” is and discuss the Internet as a “paraphilia catalyst”. To reach the core of this subject, one must also explore our shared cultural notions of childhood.

Once this is done, this essay will explore the psychological concept of nostalgia, especially childhood nostalgia and its links to paraphilia, like paedophilia, infantilism, and child-hood related fetishisms and explore the idea of sexuality as a medium to reflect “childhood nostalgia.” Can childhood be revisited through sex? And if so, how? However, connecting the words sex and childhood is probably one of the major taboos of our century and of our culture and is systematically considered as
condemnable. Is childhood untouchable and off-limits? This essay will not offer a conclusive answer to the latter issue although it will put forward evidence to show that all cultures do not give identical answers to such questions.

The most obvious and the most “famous” childhood-related paraphilia is, of course, **Paedophilia**. Due to legal and ethical concerns, I will explore paedophilia only through secondary sources. From these secondary sources, I will examine its presence online and explain what part “childhood nostalgia” plays in paedophilia. Additionally, I will discuss legal views of paedophilia, contrasting the Western world’s view with the cultural and legal view of the East, specifically in Japan. By so doing, I will also explore the limits of legal arenas such as: Is it only the paedophilic act that is reprehensible or are paedophilic thoughts or materials of communication equally condemnable?

These issues raised by paedophilia will allow a natural transition into the issues covered by the third section, which deals with **Infantilism: the Adult Baby syndrome**, which might be the most literal expression of “childhood nostalgia” and the use of “childhood symbols in fetishes.” Through primary sources found on the Internet, I will also explore these others paraphilias and discuss issues related to the interpretation of childhood.

Again, this will lead us to consider issues like: Is the act of ejaculating on diapers reprehensible? I will survey fetishes such as “plushie” or furry fetishism, and discuss their relationship to childhood nostalgia. In these instances, I will use primary
research found online through newsgroups and chat rooms. Contrasting these fetishes with paedophilia, I will attempt to re-define the limits between paedophilia and the childhood symbols in childhood-related fetish, while also discussing the crossovers as well as their legal limits.

1/ INTERNET PARAPHILIAS AND CHILDHOOD NOSTALGIA

The Internet has exposed the fact that sexuality and sexual desires may be more widespread than ever imagined. Gregory L. Lehne, wrote in his essay on “Phenomenology of Paraphilia: Love Map Theory”: “The diversity of sexual activities on the Internet almost defies categorization, or even enumeration (…) Possibly, new paraphiliias seem to arise frequently based on the criteria of bizarre sexual content.”(Lehne, 2009,P.13) Paraphilia includes fetishism, paedophilia, sadomasochism, zoophilia, transvestism, voyeurism etc.

a. What is a paraphilia?

As defined by The diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, “a paraphilia is a biomedical term used to describe sexual arousal to objects, situations, or individuals that are not part of normative stimulation and that may cause distress or serious problems for the paraphiliacs or persons associated with him or her.” (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) A paraphilia involves sexual arousal and gratification from sexual behavior that is atypical or extreme. Paraphiliias existed long
before the Internet, but the Internet seems to be a catalysing agent of sexual deviancy and is throwing a new light on these uncommon sexualities.

“Before the advent of the Internet, the distribution and acquisition of paraphilic pornography required that the interested individual access a clandestine network of suppliers under significant risk of detection and arrest,” wrote L. Alvin Malesky in his essay, “Child Pornography.” (Malesky, 2009, P. 309)

Peggy Y. Kim and J. Michael Bailey in their essay “Side-streets on the Information Superhighway: Paraphilias and Sexual Variations on the Internet” argue: “The internet may be a haven for people who are looking for such desired objects or avenues to pursue their paraphiliac behaviour.” (Kim and Bailey, 1997, P. 35) The Internet has eliminated many obstacles and provides uniquely new opportunities for people with unusual sexual appetites to find each other and connect. Additionally, the anonymous, instantaneous and relatively safe nature of the Internet opens up all sorts of new possibilities for people with such specific sexual desires to find not only others who share their predilections, but also scads of information and the desired fetish objects as well. Kim and Bailey wrote:

“The internet can also provide a sense of anonymity and community for paraphiliacs, especially since they may feel excluded from the sexual desires of the mainstream, or because they feel a need to hide such behaviour from other people, whether for legal or social reasons. The internet may provide ways to become intimate with other people quickly, as people can be forthcoming about their sexual preferences.” (Kim and Bailey, 1997, P. 39)

But what sorts of materials are available on the Internet and what kind of interactions are possible for paraphiliacs? Kim and Bailey observed different ways paraphiliacs interact online and found that paraphiliacs obtain material through a range of Internet possibilities. A newsgroup is one means for paraphiliacs to interact with each other on the Internet. People come together in a newsgroup to discuss the topic of a
subject. Anyone can post an article. Other people can answer/respond to it, and they can do it publicly or privately. Kim and Bailey wrote that the potential for finding a suitable partner or fetishist object through posting is dramatically increased. (Kim and Bailey, 1997, P.36). Information is also openly exchanged through websites dedicated to a specific interest. Most of these websites will be individually run personal home pages and will contain links to relevant newsgroups or chat rooms. Individuals on the newsgroups and websites will often write about the paraphilia controlling them rather than them controlling the paraphilia.

Paraphiliacs are often drawn to the Internet because paraphilias are far better expressed on the Internet than elsewhere. L. Alvin Malesky wrote in his essay, “On Child Pornography”: “The Internet blurs the boundaries between fantasy and reality, allowing the individual to explore and indulge their fantasies” (Malesky, 2009, P. 307) Some paraphiliacs have stated they can express themselves more fully on the Internet, while they remain anonymous. Anonymity is an essential part of online communication: anonymous servers are an integral tool for Internet navigation. Some servers even use encryption and re-mailer software to handle illegal content like paedophilia.

Dr. John Money introduced the concept of “Love Maps” to describe the diversity of human sexuality and paraphilias and support a critical approach to them. (Money, 1986) According to Dr. Money everyone has a Love Map, which represents the variety of characteristics of partners and activities one potentially finds sexually arousing. A Love Map can be thought of as a mental map of the range of sexual
activities that might potentially interest a person. Human love maps are diverse, because people are diverse. However, as one is usually not aware of one’s own personal love map, one has to discover it. Lehne wrote: “Individuals learn about their own love map from reflection upon their fantasies and actual experiences and vicarious experiences (Such as reading, looking at pictures, hearing stories.” (Lehne, 2009, P.14) He added: “Love maps allow for choices about which areas to explore or not explore, just because an area exists in a love map does not mean that an individual must explore it.” (Lehne, 2009, P.14)

The Internet however pushes people to discover unexplored parts of their love maps. Today, the Internet is a primary source for sex education as well as for individuals to learn about the full extent and breadth of their personal love map. People can discreetly, anonymously gaze at photographs, watch videos and read stories to find out what turns them on and what does not. Lehne said: “Exciting new content has to be related to a territory previously delineated in their love map, but perhaps not explored.” (Lehne, 2009, P.20) Following this line of thinking, the Internet would not create new fantasies but rather reveal and activate previously existing ones. This leads to exploring more deeply the relations between childhood-related paraphilias and Internet. Is the Internet “creating” paedophiles? Why do we assume that adult sexuality linked to childhood is automatically equivalent to child abuse? This brings the discussion to the essential question:
b. How is childhood portrayed and presented in our society?

A sharp distinction needs to be made between children and childhood. Children are human beings below a legal age limit. However, the concept of childhood is only relevant to adults. It was adults who created it and use it. Childhood is an adult representation, sometimes an adult dream and/or an adult lie, created mainly through visual culture and literature. Patricia Holland wrote in her book Picturing Childhood: “Childhood is effectively an account of adult views of what children are and how they should be.” (Holland, 2004, P.XI) In her book, Holland also explains that children are unable to present themselves, as they would want to be. They have no control over the image the adult creates. “Without any input from children themselves, childhood can only remain an impossible concept, always mediated by adulthood, its guileless innocence searched but never found,” clarifies Holland. (Holland, 2004, P.21)

Annie Leclerc author of the book, “Paedophilia ou l'amour des enfants argues”: “We were never children, because being children is working at not being a child anymore.” (Leclerc, 2010) Children are dreaming of adulthood, when adults are dreaming of childhood. Today, we are witnessing a distinct change in what is childhood. Anne Higonnet acknowledges that pictures of children are both the most sacred and the most controversial ones of our times. “No subject seems cuter or more sentimental. Yet pictures of children have proved dangerously difficult to understand or control.” (Higgonet, 2004,P.7)
The ideal of childhood has presently entered a crisis. According to historians, the modern western concept of what we call innocent childhood started around the seventeenth century. Eighteenth century British portrait painters Sir Joshua Reynolds and Sir Henry Raeburn, whose work introduced a new vision of children, called “the romantic childhood”, led the first movement in the visual history of childhood. (Higgonet, 2004, P.7) Romantic childhood became a popular style of painting. In 1839 the medium of photography was inaugurated and photography became the preferred ways and means of representing childhood and remains so to this day. “The Victorians believed children were categorically different from adults by virtue of their innocence,” said Higonnet. (Higgonet, 2004, P.10)

James Kincaid, author of “Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture”, argues that children seemed better than adults, that children were innocent, and by being at once different and better than adults it would make them irresistibly desirable. (Higgonet, 2004, P.10). We are now seeing the consequences of such romantic childhood in a world with modern media technology. Indeed, for some, children really became irresistible. The child's image is today more erotic than it's ever been. “Sexuality is now part of what we see in images of children,” said Higgonnet (Higgonet, 2004, P.153). Innocence became an adult fantasy. Today, we are caught between two ways of representing childhood. We still want to believe in the ideal of romantic childhood although developments in the 1980s and the 1990s challenged our perceptions of powerless childhood.
These days, our society encourages very young children to wish to become models and to star in TV shows. American cinema has always showcased child stars, dating back to its earliest days, while in today’s musical landscape we see very young singers like Justin Bieber or Willow Smith are even more popular. In fashion, supermodels are starting careers at 14 years old. And kids’ beauty pageants routinely take place all over the United States. Consider the story of Brooke Shields, who played a child prostitute in Louis Malle’s movie “Pretty Baby.” The film made her the most desirable and richest kid of the 1980s. And any discussion of the history of childhood as it progressed through the 1990s must include the 1995 Calvin Klein scandal. Fashion label, Calvin Klein, was accused of child pornography for one of its series of advertisements. In the ad campaign’s photographs, teen models were seated in poses that allowed the viewer to see a glimpse of their underwear. Suddenly, the Lolita phenomenon was re-introduced to pop culture. “The sexualisation of childhood is not a fringe phenomenon inflicted by perverts on a protesting society but a fundamental change furthered by legitimate industries and millions of satisfied consumers,” explains Higgonet. (Higgonet, 2004, P.153) She added: “We may not want to think about it but perhaps children are just as sexualized by ordinary consumer culture as they are by porn.” (Higgonet, 2004, P.191). Western culture urges and provokes children to grow up faster, to become older younger, but at the same time it wishes to preserve their innocence. It is the adult interpretation of childhood and the adult “gaze” that defines who children become.

“The image of the child had become perhaps the most powerfully contradictory image in western consumer culture. Promising the future but also turned nostalgically to the past, trading on innocence but implying sexuality, simultaneously denying and arousing desire (…)” explained Higgonet. (Higonnet, 1998,P.153)
As a result, when adults become sexually attracted to children, or to the concept of childhood, society reacts increasingly. “Calling the nature of childhood into question has given rise to a complex of new fears,” said Holland. (Lerclerc, 2010)

The reaction of our society against these fears has been to protect children from the adult “gaze,” by controlling pictures of children. We are living in a world where each “suggestive” image of a child might potentially be suspect and incite the enforcement of child pornography laws, in line with the view of love maps predefining potential behaviours that would be activated by such image. For the law, these images of childhood are understood as a distortion, as perversion from what is the true and natural childhood. This is at odds with other principles of our society, like free speech, as this society voluntarily confuses images and actions. Images can represent actions and reality, but they can also represent an idea. By censoring images, we censor the idea of childhood as something that is sexually attractive to adults.

Higonnet stated that society increasingly chooses not to make a distinction between the rights of children to be protected against abuse and the rights of imaginary pictures as an element of free speech. We have entered an era of censorship under the auspices of the prevention of child pornography.

Overall, adults increasingly live in a schizophrenic cult of childhood. Childhood is partly adult nostalgia. The concept of childhood is created by and for adulthood. Children are always pictured for the pleasure of adults, who have control over them. Annie Leclerc wrote that adults are naturally interested in children for the joy of and the prolongation of their own existence. (Leclerc, 2010) However, and unavoidably, childhood is also about feeding nostalgia for an adult’s lost past.
“Childhood is never fully left behind, we also remember that adults’ inner childhood is nothing like these images. Wishful desire is balanced against realistic disappointment. The imagery of childhood retains a powerful nostalgia,” wrote Holland. (Holland, 1998, P.16)

Many adults wish and pray they could go back to the holy state of childhood.

“Childhood is a depositary for many precious qualities that adulthood needs but which are incompatible with adult status, qualities such as impulsiveness, playfulness, emotional expressiveness, indulgence in fantasy and sexual innocence,” explains Holland. (Holland, 1998, P.15)

Using the example of three different types of childhood-related paraphilias, the following sections of this essay will examine how childhood is revisited through the medium of sex. Additionally, it will discuss how childhood-related paraphilias are challenging the established boundaries between childhood and adulthood and pushing the legal lines and limits of this strange borderland. For now, let us conclude this first part with another quote from Patricia Holland: “The relationship between childhood and adulthood is not a dichotomy but a variety of fluctuating states, constantly under negotiations.” (Holland, 1998, P.16)

2/ PAEDOPHILIA

While the observation of paedophilia and paedophiles on the Internet is neither easy nor legally safe, there is substantial book and journal evidence that a link between paedophilia and nostalgia of childhood exists. Moreover, as the conception of childhood differs across cultures, the assessment of its degree of reprehensibility may differ, as evidenced by the case of Japan.
a. Paedophilia and the Internet

“Humbert Humbert is a middle-aged, fastidious college professor. He also likes little girls. And none more so than Lolita, whom he’ll do anything to possess. Is he in love, or insane, a silver-tongued poet or a pervert, a tortured soul or a monster—or is he all of these” (Vickers, 2008, P.5).

The above summary supplied by amazon.co.uk, promoting the novel, illustrates the difficulty of synopsizing the plot of Lolita. (Graham Vickers, 2008, P.5) Defining paedophilia is a very subtle and difficult task. There are various schools of thought on its nature and ways to interpret it. The medias often tend to portray paedophiles as the monsters of our century. But what is paedophilia? Paedophilia is not necessarily accompanied with an act, paedophilia is not a type of pictures and paedophilia is originally not a juridical concept. Paedophilia is a psychiatric and psychoanalytic concept; it consists in an adult sexual attraction to children or young teenagers.

Nevertheless, being a paedophile is made reprehensible by the law. We tend to purposely confuse paedo-criminals and paedophiles. Being a paedo-criminal implies an action: molesting children. Being a paedophile only means having fantasies and a desire for children. However, our society does not always make a clear difference. On the contrary, we are living in an age where there increasingly is a juridification of the imagination and a voluntary confusion between the propagation of imagination and reality. According to Rudiger Lautmann in his book “Attraction to children” (Lautmann: 1994, P.8), there are three types paedophiles. The first one, called “the true paedophile” has general interest in social contact with children, including a sexual dimension, the second one satisfies himself by using children as replacements because he is unable to gain access to adults
and the last one is an aggressive sadistic perpetrator, pathologically driven to violence. Practically, I only observed the first and the second types of paedophiles.

The only place where paedophiles can discuss their fantasies is on the Internet. Finding actual paedo-criminal pornography images is nearly impossible to anyone who does not belong to a paedophile circle and accessing such images is illegal. These networks are incredibly hidden. Exchange of images usually goes through personal FTP servers, usenets, peer to peer or spams. Anonymity is a big deal. Content is usually encrypted. A lot of paedophiles use non-pornographic or erotic content. Most of the images come from catalogues, or are artistic pictures. Pictures of a little girl in a bikini might be considered as paedophile content. But, to a large extent, what you see in the picture depends on the eye of the viewer. Nevertheless finding chats or networks where paedophiles exchange views is easy and legal. On these networks, one comes into contact abstinent paedophiles and active ones. Some websites even try to open discussions with non-paedophiles, trying to gain some sort of comprehension. I observed on Internet communities of paedophiles users who asserted their love of children. That said, as my tutor informed me, I’m not allowed to add to my essay content found on paedophiles websites, even though accessing these websites is legal, I avoided including content found on the internet. Instead, I found content in essays and books reflecting the ideas I have read online. Because of the dominance of the abuse concept, trying to understand paedophilia might seem like a sacrilege. My point is not to defend paedophiles, but to try to gauge the link between paedophilia and nostalgia.
b. Paedophilia and Nostalgia

“Of all the ways of using history, nostalgia is the most general, looks the most innocent and is perhaps the most dangerous” wrote Malcolm Chase. (Chase, 1989, P.1)

The Boylovers community is particularly active in defending their right to love children. In the boylove manifesto written by Jay-h it is written:

“ Boylove is a worldwide phenomenon that does not recognize the boundaries of gender, race, nationality, age, religious beliefs or philosophy. Boylove describes a special kind of relationship between human males. Boylove has always been with us, exits among us and will continue to exist” (Jay H., 1997)

Boylovers say that they are in love with children. They usually only like one boy at a time, and they defend themselves by arguing that their concern is to help the boy develop his personality and his sexuality freely. They ask for society to reconsider the status of the child. But what does reconsidering the status of the child mean? Boylovers defend intergeneration relationships. By not recognizing the boundaries of age, these paedophiles rebel against the modern idea of time. They allegedly refuse to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition and is precisely one of the conditions of nostalgia.

“It’s not just the sex that interests me- it’s the whole kid. From the top of his head to the tip of his toes- everything, really. You can explain lots of things to him, you can enjoy all kinds of nonsense with him” said a paedophile interviewed by Rudiger Lautmann. (Lautmann: 1994, P.7)

Non-sense and play are part of the childhood quality paedophiles are looking for.

When children play, they lose the notion of time, notion that adults have a hard time forgetting about. Malcom Chase and Christopher Shaw wrote:

“Perhaps as a species we are given to nostalgia, for each adult carries the memory of an age when the experience of time was different. Following the work of Heinrich
Schutz, we propose a distinction between public time and the subjective experience of time, which Bergson called the durée. Public time is literally what the town hall or railway station clock tells (...) On the other hand; we also have the experience of private time. It goes fast or it draft, we are caught up with events or we are bored. Our psychological internal clocks know nothing of the mechanical escapement or the pulse of quartz. While adults experience both kinds of time it is plausible to suggest that small children live in only one.” (Chase, 1989, P.5).

The intention of a paedophile could be to recreate the undivided consciousness of childhood. “Children at play seem absorbed in activities that are not pre defined by adult society,” wrote Holland. (Holland, 2004, P.97)

“Play is the opposite of work, it turns irresponsibility into a pleasure and it is legitimised by childish dependence. Play is an expression of euphoric values of freedom, authenticity and purposelessness creativity and above all of enjoyment and fun.” (Holland, 2004, P.64)

Paedophiles want to be part of the play. This leads me to think, that having a love interest in children might be related to childhood nostalgia. It has to be about trying to catch something that is lost, in a weird sexual way. “There is an intelligent and an unintelligent way of handling nostalgia, a way of sickening under it and a way of using it,” wrote Ralph Harper. (Harper, 1966,P.105) Development, transition is also something paedophiles are looking for. One of the paedophile interviewed by Rudiger Lautmann said:

“What attracts me, I think, is when the body is not quite developed. Something where the fantasy still has room to play itself out, so as a person develops further. The person has not reached an end-status, and indeed, there really isn’t one. I still have the chance to experience some part of their development with them. (...) I like always keeping roving. This also impacts the sexual aspect of the whole thing. What fascinates me about children is that through them, I can live out the fantasy of still being in transition” (Lautmann: 1994, P.24)

Nostalgia is the juxtaposition of the present and the past. It is clearly about wanting to live again the feeling of being a kid through someone else. The second type of paedophile does not easily relate to adults. Most of these paedophiles never had a
relationship with a man of a woman and are only looking for relationships with children. These paedophiles never really grew up and didn’t go through the teenager’s steps of dating someone. They lack maturity, as sexual attraction and their criteria for attractions did not evolve through time. Some of them even say that they have an obsession with their first childhood love. Mark Henser, the paedophile who committed suicide after being filmed by BBC 2 for the television program “The hunt for Britain’s paedophile” said: “I think I relate more to boys than to anyone else. I find it very hard to have a relationship with an adult. “ (The Hunt for Britain’s paedophile, 2002) He added: “You’re not sharing just a sexual experience, you share life in general, hobbies, football or whatever”. At some point, he even said that he didn’t want to grow up. When talking about paedophiles, he will admit: “You look in companionship in possibly the wrong people. Lots of paedophiles say that they love the boys and which is right, they do. We do love the boys. That’s it”. Annie Leclerc wrote in her book “Paedophilia ou l’amour des enfants” that you need to engulf in order to be engulfed in childhood. (Leclerc: 2010, P.35) Being a paedophile is somehow a way to reinvestigate childhood in a very twisted way. It’s the need to blow off the perfection of youth to someone else. Childhood is always something hurtful in an adult, says Leclerc. (Leclerc: 2010, P. 35) “Nostalgia is a confusion emotion, full of paradoxes. It is painful and yet in the pain, there may be a peculiar sweetness defying description,” said Janelle L. Wilson (Wilson: 2005,P.23) This quote seems to reflect the meaning of the paedophiles testimonials I highlighted

c. Japan and the Lolita phenomenon

Annie Leclerc argues that paedophilia is only a more twisted version of a broader phenomenon, the passion of adults for children, which would be specific to the
human species. (Leclerc: 2010, P.7) Contrasting with the western world however, Japan has been more open, less hypocrite or less aware of dangers in this context. Japanese culture is also more willingly embracing childhood nostalgia. In Europe or in United states, having paedophile thoughts is totally unacceptable. In the last years Amazon has been accused several times by the United States justice foundation of contributing to the potential rape and molestation of children through the online sales of books with paedophilic ideology. Amazon replied that their goal was to support freedom of expression and to provide customers with the broadest selection. Nevertheless, they ended up removing the books. Creating paedophiles drawing is forbidden by law. Society deems a paedophile’s thoughts reprehensible, even though drawings or writings never harmed anyone directly.

This is where Japan offers a fairly strong contrast. Japan is generally obsessed with the idea of “kawaiii”, which means cute. In particular, “Hello Kitty” offers a very wide range of products. It goes as far as Hello Kitty dildos. Also, the “pink childhood” aesthetic as we know it, is not only dedicated to children, but also to adults. The schoolgirl uniform is one of the biggest erotic symbols in Japan. Japanese girls like to dress in teddy bear printed dresses; this subculture is even called “Lolita fashion”. Thus the delineation of adulthood and childhood is not as clear as in Europe or in the United states. In his essay “The reality of virtual child pornography in Japan”, Patrick W. Galbraith, indicates:

“The mass media tends to communicate using images of young girls and to position the comfort-seeking consumer as an infantilized and feminized object. Hartley refers to this phenomenon of “juvenation” or “the creative practice of communicating via the medium of youthfulness” (Hartley, 19998: 51)) (Galbraith, 2001, P. 83)
Indeed, since the 70’s, Japan has been positioning the young girl at the centre of its consumer culture. An extension of this culture is the sexually explicit materials depicting fictional minors, which used to be available and legal. According to Wikipedia, Lolicon (for girls) or Shotacon (for boys) mangas are a genre of manga and anime wherein childlike females or boys characters are often depicted in an erotic manner. (Lolicon 2011) When looking at lolicon mangas, it is not unusual to see the representation of, say, a 4 year old having sex with an old men. Critics such as Naito Chizuco have called Japan a “loliconized society”, where lolicon has come to represent societal desire in a broader sense. (Galbraith, 2001, P. 84) As noted by Patrick W. Galbraith, Japan offers an opportunity to see how another modern capitalist nation deals with the Lolita effect. (Galbraith, 2001, P. 86) To defend themselves, Lolican fans argue that Lolicon doesn’t involve any real kids and no physical harm is done. They don't consider it as child pornography because they make the distinction between reality and imagination.

“Despite the possibly criminal nature of the representations, fans do not understand highly stylized characters as real or sexualized presentations of young characters to be child pornography.” wrote Patrick W. Galbraith. (Galbraith, 2001, P. 92)

Lolicon fans argue that they are attracted to an aesthetic of cuteness rather than by the actual age of the characters. Lolicon has been under intensive debate in Japan. Some claim that Lolicon encourage children sex crimes. Others consider that sexual abuse on minors has declined since the 1970’s, which coincides with the increasing presence of fictional Lolicon. There is no definitive evidence in either direction. However, according to Wikipedia (Lolicon, 2011) in December 2011 a new bill was approved in Japan. Manga, anime of other images depicting sexual or pseudo-sexual
acts that would be illegal in real life, are no longer legal. Nevertheless, the bill does not regulate downloaded content or websites. It is only intended for publications such as books and DVDs, showing again differences in the way societies assess their relation to childhood. “At present certain forms of imagination are under attack on a global scale. They are labelled dangerous or obscene and banned.” wrote Patrick W. Galbraith. (Galbraith, 2001, P. 109)

However, the case of Japan reminds us that repression will never fully stop imagination. This recalls again Holland’s view that “childhood can only remain an impossible concept, always mediated by adulthood, its guileless innocence searched but never found”. (Holland, 2004, P.21) The concept of childhood goes round in circles. “Nostalgia tells it like it wasn’t.”(Chase 1989: P.18). Adults will always try to grasp bits of childhood and paedophilia seems to be one way to grab it.

3/ INFANTILISM AND CHILDHOOD RELATED FETISHISMS

Considering Infantilism and childhood related fetishes makes even clearer the links between the three types of paraphilia and nostalgia. This is facilitated both by the easier access to evidence in a context which is legally not reprehensible and by the fact that Internet is the revealing factor of such paraphilias.
a. Research

Infantilism or childhood related fetishes are relatively new subjects. Hence, there are no academic books written about it so far. Only a few articles in medical journals are available on this subject. Doctor Pate wrote in a clinical case conference about the Adult Baby Syndrome:

“Although our standard diagnostic nomenclature in psychiatry covers many conditions, patients still appear in psychiatrist’s offices who do not fit a well defined psychiatric disorder. Unusual behaviours may escape psychiatric classification (...). Entire subcultures related to these behaviour may exist outside of the awareness of psychiatrists and other mental health professionals” (Pate and Gabbard, 2003, P.1932)

Indeed such subcultures exist on the Internet. The Internet acts as a platform that reveals and highlights these new paraphilias by giving them a locus where to exchange thoughts and pictures. In particular, it is important to realize that almost everything we know on these paraphilia comes from the Internet and that without the Internet, we would either not know about these paraphilias, or if we did, we would see them as a set of individual medical cases, and not as paraphilic communities. “Perhaps the reason that it has not found much of a home in our psychiatric literature is that most people who fit this profile do not consider themselves as patients” (Pate and Gabbard, 2003, P. 1934) wrote Doctor Gabbard. However, there are 224 000 000 articles on Google that contain the phrase adult baby. Therefore, even though academics often give Wikipedia a lower rating than other sources for the quality of the evidence it offers, the analysis has to be based on Wikipedia, Wikifur, forums etc. “To quote Indiana jones, we are making this up as we go along” said Doctor Gabbard. (Pate and Gabbard, 2003, P.1933). One couldn’t agree more. Consequently, Internet references will mainly be used in this third part.
b. Infantilism

The adult baby syndrome is also called infantilism, autonepiophilia or paedophilic transvestism. As defined by Wikipedia, the adult baby syndrome is a sexual fetish that involves role-playing and a regression to an infant-like state. Adult babies share common symptoms like wearing diapers, drinking milk out of bottles, eating baby food and wanting to become a baby. Most adult babies love wearing diapers and call themselves ABDL (adult baby diapers lovers).

However, some diapers lovers do not see themselves as adult babies. Rather, they have a paraphilic fetishism that manifests itself as an erotic attraction to an article of clothing. Thus issues of overlap with paedophiliacs arise. When wearing diapers, adult babies may urinate, defecate or masturbate in them. But does masturbating in a diaper make a person a paedophile? Does wanting to impersonate a baby mean that you would like to have sex with a baby? Confusing infantilism and paedophilia is a common mistake. Adult babies, like to role-play with other adults. Being an adult baby is not reprehensible. As a result, Psychiatrist Jay Feireman considers infantilism a form of chronophilia in which the infantilist desires a sexual partner of the same biological age but for which the own "sexuorotic age" of the infantilist does not match his or her own biological age. (Malitz, 1966, P.12) Even though they dream of being babies, they would like to have sex with their "mommy", with another adult baby or, as having sex is not baby-like, may refuse to engage sex with another partner at all, and only enjoy masturbation. As a consequence, Dr John Money describes infantilism
as autoneopiophilia in which the individual desires to be and impersonate a baby and does not desire an infant as a sexual partner. (Money, 1986, cited in Freund, K.; Blanchard, R, 1993, P.558)

However, paedophiles and adult babies sometimes do share the same fetishism: the diaper. Some pedophiles are attracted to baby wearing diapers; John Money calls this condition nepophilia. (Money, 1997, P. 255.) Moreover, on forums, it is not unusual to read that some adult babies were first really confused about their desire to be a baby and even ask themselves if it meant that they were pedophiles. This is consistent with the view put forward by, Ray Blanchard and Kurt Freud, according to whom infantilism would be an autoerotic form of paedophilia. (Ray Blanchard and Kurt Freud cited in Feierman, 1990, P. 455)

“The problem is though I would never even be tempted to harm a child, I’ve always considered it uncomfortably close to pedophilia, given that it involves childhood. Indeed I went through a nasty swathe of suicidal depression over the last few years,” wrote Divinoforum (Psyforums.com, 2011)

“The most important thing that I finally realized was that I was not a child molester. Was I very confused. I think about all the years I avoided being around children and babies, not knowing what was wrong with me. I never allowed myself to be alone with children for fear of what might happen. I just wasn’t sure of myself, I never read or heard anything about adult babies,” wrote T.P (cited by Bog G, understanding.infantilism.org, 2011)

The infantilist community is divided in two parts: the adult babies and the sissy babies. The adult babies role-play as infants, and the sissy babies role-play infants of the opposite gender. Adult babies might have multiplex paraphilias, and a number of paraphilias complement each other and some may coexist within the same person. (Lehne, 2009, P.19) Some adult babies are cross-dressers who like to dress up as
stereotypical little girls and their paraphilic infantilism is mixed with a transvestism paraphilia. Others like to be punished or humiliated. Infantilism often mixes with a sado-masochistic paraphilia, since infantilism can neatly overlap with the dominance/submission fetish. Sexologist William B. Arndt considers paraphilic infantilism to combine forms of fetishism, transvestism and masochism. (Arndt, 1991 P. 394.) When finding a partner, adult babies may engage in parent-baby role-play. In this case, should we considerer the adult playing the parent as having paedophilic thoughts?

Nostalgia is definitely one of the motivations of the adult baby. Adult babies are persons who wish they could return to the toddler stage; they wish they never grew up. “I feel so comforted in my soft, bulky diapers, and sucking on my bottle or pacifiers. I am really able to turn into the baby that lives inside me “ wrote R.K (Cited by Bog G, understanding.infantilism.org, 2011) Adult babies are the Peter Pan of modern times. They want to forget about being an adult. They seem to remember being a baby as something wonderful. Adult babies claim an ability to recapture this moment of simpler times. “We still live active, normal lives outside but sometimes it doesn’t hurt to revisit childhood. In other words, we take nostalgia to a whole new level.” wrote Thunderpeel. (Community.mtv.com, 2009)

Infantilism is the most literal expression of “childhood nostalgia”, but other fetishism using childhood symbols also exist. The activities of the adult babies, involves cuddling teddy bears. But like diapers, teddy bears can also be taken out of the context of infantilism and become another fetishism. This fetishism is called plushophilia and is situated in between infantilism and the furry subculture. “Plushophilia is the devoted love and appreciation for stuffed animals.” (Plushophilia, 2011) Some adults are sexually attracted to plush toys; these adults feel a very strong degree of affection or love for their stuffed animals. Some will cuddle and only rub themselves on them, or hug them to escort them during masturbation; others will go further and will cut an SPH (strategically placed hole) into the bottom or the mouth of the plush toy. On alt.sex.plushies one can read:
“Probably the most common thing plushophiles do with their plushie is to simply cuddle them. Concerning plush sex, two common methods are to hug a plushie while pleasuring oneself, and to rub against the fur of the plushie until achieving orgasm. Some people modify their plushies to form a space for penetration. People can also modify a plushie with a penis-like attachment.” (Alt.sex.plushies, 2003)

In order to know how to manipulate the toy, plushophiles looks at websites where tutorials on the process to create an orifice are shown. The world of plushophiliacs has its own vocabulary. When a plushophile talks about penetrating a plush toy, he uses the word yiffing. Topics discussed on plushophile networks are, for instance, what kinds of plushies people have, what they look like, where to buy them etc…As written on wikifur,“ Plushophiles are frequently collector of plush toys and may accumulate a large collection of all shapes and sizes. Plush collecting come out of childhood toys kept into adulthood or begin later in life.”(Plushophilia,2011)

Regarding toy collecting, Wilson wrote:

“ Collecting antiques is often linked to memories of childhood. We are a culture that romanticizes childhood. As our lives and our society get more complex we sometimes wish we could retreat to those years when our biggest worries were things that we would laugh about today (…) Sometimes, what adults collect are objects they wish they would have had when they were young. In this way they might be making for a lack in their past. This is the case in some individual’s toy collections. (…) Some motives for collecting suggest that collecting helps individuals recreate a past that they did not experience. In this way, collecting antiques helps make up for something missing from one’s past. (Wilson, 2005, P.113).
Plushophilia is part of a broader community, the furry fandom. The term is assigned to an art movement that has its principal interest in anthropomorphic animals. It is about animals having human characteristics, physiological or behavioural— the same as the ones you see in cartoons. Some please themselves by drawing anthropomorphic animal art, inspired by classical animated movies such as Disney films. They like to draw Disney characters having sex. It is no surprise to see Ariel the little mermaid having sex with the Lion King. Some websites, as Disneypornland, or Cartoon Porn Valley even offer the possibility to buy one of this disneyporn cartoons.
Other members of the furry fandom, “Furries” create their own fursuits: costumes based on their “fursona” inspired by their favourite cartoons. Furries not only have their own fursona, they also develop a “fursonality.” On the Internet, two different types of furries exist and disagree about the nature of being a furry, there are ones that consider furry fandom as an art and there are the “furvets” who see furry fandom as fetishism. The furverts masturbate in the fursuits and become aroused by other fursonas. A man interviewed by Vanity Fair for a report on a furry convention said: “I don’t like the human form, I never really have. It does not please me. The body, the flesh, the general design, I don’t like it” (Gurley, 2001)

The most important furry convention takes place in Philadelphia where thousands of furries gather. Interviewed by George Gurley for Vanity Fair, a furry said: “You regress into a child when you come to a convention, because it’s that kind
of camaraderie, or childishness”. Another furry added” It’s like looking at it with baby eyes or cub eyes”. (Gurley, 2001)


The list of childhood-related fetishes could go on and on; for instance, some fetishists are sexually attracted to balloons, while others collect little girls socks. It's further evidence a person can be attracted to the world of childhood, you can desire to connect with your inner child without automatically falling into the box marked paedophile, even though paedophiles and these other childhood-related paraphiliacs all share the same nostalgia.
Conclusion

The main contribution of this essay was to present or show that sexuality is increasingly a medium to reflect childhood nostalgia through the observation of various paraphilia like Paedophilia, Infantilism and other childhood-related fetishisms. I also wanted to show that connecting childhood and sexuality is not necessarily synonymous of paedophilia, is not always reprehensible as there are many other non-harmful adult sexual behaviours linked to childhood.

More generally however, The Internet and all its weird content are not only changing the way a few paraphiliacs see sexuality. Reaching over to childhood does not only make some parts of that society adopt a more extreme, paraphilic sexual activity. The glorifying and the nostalgia of youth make the desire of youth increasingly acceptable in a normative sexuality: most pornographic websites offer videos of adult who look like teens or clips of adults having sex on a bed full of teddy bears. The Internet is thus a mirror of the inner thoughts of our society because, as argued by McClelland, “Counter publics are a supportive critical analysis of the mainstream.” (McClelland 2005, P.75)

Indeed, society is increasingly fostering the need to stay young. Fashion models starting careers at 14, are just evidence that Youth has become more and more synonymous with adult beauty. By the same logic, more and more anti-wrinkle creams and “re-juvenile” treatments are bought and sold each year, while more and
more seniors wish to dress and look like teenagers. People want to stay young, both in their bodies and in their minds.

Overall, the growing use of childhood symbols in sexuality indicates that society has increasingly caught itself at its own youth-obsessed game. By putting youth and especially childhood on a pedestal, youth has become so attractive, that it has acquired an erotic status contradicting the concept of romantic childhood or the “cuteness” that originally initiated this very trend.
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