



Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting

James R. Kincaid

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In *Erotic Innocence* James R. Kincaid explores contemporary America's preoccupation with stories about the sexual abuse of children. Claiming that our culture has yet to come to terms with the bungled legacy of Victorian sexuality, Kincaid examines how children and images of youth are idealized, fetishized, and eroticized in everyday culture. Evoking the cyclic elements of Gothic narrative, he thoughtfully and convincingly concludes that the only way to break this cycle is to acknowledge—and confront—not only the sensuality of children but the eroticism loaded onto them.

Drawing on a number of wide-ranging and well-publicized cases as well as scandals involving such celebrities as Michael Jackson and Woody Allen, Kincaid looks at issues surrounding children's testimonies, accusations against priests and day-care centers, and the horrifying yet persistently intriguing rumors of satanic cults and "kiddie porn" rings. In analyzing the particular form of popularity shared by such child stars such Shirley Temple and Macaulay Culkin, he exposes the strategies we have devised to deny our own role in the sexualization of children. Finally, Kincaid reminds us how other forms of abuse inflicted on children—neglect, abandonment, inadequate nutrition, poor education—are often overlooked in favor of the sensationalized sexual abuse coverage in the news, on daytime TV talk shows, and in the elevators and cafeterias of America each day.

This bold and critically enlightened book will interest readers across a wide range of disciplines as well as a larger general audience interested in American culture.

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