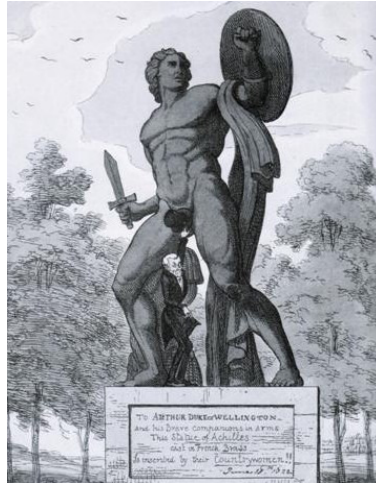


CALL FOR PAPERS

Guarding Innocence:

Moral Protectionism in Nineteenth Century Britain and America

3-4 SEPTEMBER 2010 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



This conference will seek to explore 19th century concerns about the power of 'negative' influences upon individuals and society. It will attempt not only to document the attention paid to the perceived dangers of moral corruption, but also to describe how 'innocence' was conceptualized as a moral category, and to understand its cultural, philosophical, and religious underpinnings. The keynote address will be given by Dr. Rochelle Gurstein, author of *The Repeal of Reticence: A History of America's Cultural and Legal Struggles over Free Speech, Obscenity, Sexual Liberation, and Modern Art* (Hill and Wang, 1996). Dr. Gurstein will be speaking on the 'reticent sensibility', and how its status was threatened from the new 'agents of exposure'.

It is hoped that the conference will shed light both on the conservative consolidation characteristic of the changes in public morality in the early part of the century, and also the way that this consolidation was reshaped and contested in the ensuing decades. While the conference will be grounded in a historical approach to the subject, relevant papers from other disciplines are encouraged, including literature, ethics, theology, and political theory.

Special consideration will be given to proposals addressing the following themes:

- changes in the extent and manner of moral protectionism over the period
- philosophical and religious roots of an 'ethic of innocence'
- perspectives on childhood 'innocence', character development, and the role of formative influences in education
- the role of the legal arena in upholding/challenging norms of public morality

Paper topics might address: eighteenth century and 'Enlightenment' influences on nineteenth century public morality; the role of evangelicals and moral reform efforts in changing moral codes in the early century; the impact of aestheticism; compared expectations of innocence for men and women; the Obscene Publications Act (1857) and efforts to 'purify' print culture; Anthony Comstock and the evolving role of vice societies in Britain and America; ideals of innocence as reflected and subverted in the novel; and progressivism's inner conflict between moral improvement and freedom.

Proposals for 20-minute papers, with a 250-word abstract, may be sent to David Sandifer at djs212@cam.ac.uk before 30 June 2010. *Travel bursaries will be available for speakers, contingent upon funding.*