

to deal with a man who complains that he has no interest in adult women but that he is strongly attracted sexually to little girls and that he feels he may yield to temptation if he is not helped. May we not decide that his psychopathic disorder should be more conveniently classified as "mental illness", that he is a danger to others, that out-patient treatment would be too risky, that he might abscond if admitted informally to a hospital, that indeed an ordinary mental hospital might not adequately contain him, and should we not thereon have him clapped straight into a special security hospital? I suggest that we should not, if only because this does not seem to be the intention of the Law. In this situation we are no worse off than the police. It may perhaps be argued that a psychiatrist is more reliable than a detective inspector, but the Law in its ignorance or wisdom seems to be shy of handing over the liberty of the subject to the expert, be he never so expert, and I think we have to keep within it. Were it otherwise, an expert could deliver a life sentence (to be served in a State Hospital) without the commission of an offence and without trial.

I am aware that my outlook may be too limited, and therefore beg the courtesy of your columns for my correction.

Yours faithfully,  
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#### CASTRATION PHANTASIES

DEAR SIR,

What one believes oneself to have written and what a reader perceives one to have written are often surprisingly discrepant. Dr. Barton (May issue, p. 440) focuses on one finding for which he can provide a plausible alternative explanation, and mistakes that for the whole, or, at least, the most important of the findings. He has three objections:

1. It is reasonable to think that a man is more likely than a woman to cut off a dog's tail.
2. If a man is more likely to do it, a woman would be more frightening.
3. Questions 4 and 5 do not use the words "father" or "mother", but only "man" or "woman". The responses to questions 6 and 7, which do use the words "father" and "mother", might then be accounted for by a halo effect.

To the first of these, we agree that the cultural expectations might well be such as to account for the fact that the dog's tail is seen as more likely cut off by a male figure (questions 4 and 6).

The second objection, however, does not follow.

Why should the less likely aggressor automatically be more frightening, except by looking at the findings? Indeed, why cannot the more likely aggressor be the more frightening? Clearly he can be, since for some subjects this was the case. On questions 4 and 5, there were seven subjects who replied that the male was both more likely and more frightening as the aggressor. On questions 6 and 7, there were four subjects who saw the male as both more likely and more frightening as the aggressor, and three subjects who saw the female as both more likely and more frightening as the aggressor. It is particularly striking that three out of the four subjects who spontaneously remarked that they were answering with their own parents in mind described the same parent as both more likely and more frightening as the aggressor. The tendency to shift is clearly not universal.

The important conclusion was that typically a male aggressor was seen as more likely and a female as more frightening.

A somewhat subtler interpretation of Dr. Barton's second objection might be that while one does not have to see the less likely aggressor as more frightening, nonetheless, if one does shift sexes from the more likely to the more frightening aggressor, the shift will appear to be from the male, as more likely, to the female, as more frightening, simply because males are preponderantly seen as more likely.

Even this argument can be dispelled by examining the data. Of the 49 instances where a male is seen as the more likely aggressor (on question 4 or 6), 33 times (or 67 per cent.) the female is seen as more frightening. But of the eight instances where the female is seen as the more likely aggressor, in only 3 (or 38 per cent.) is the male seen as more frightening. Thus the tendency to see the male as more likely and to shift to the female as more frightening really is the major finding of the study. Within psychoanalytic theories, this suggests that an easily elicited father fantasy serves as a defence against a more frightening mother fantasy.

As for the third objection, one can eliminate the possibility of a "halo" accounting for the answers to questions 6 and 7 by looking only at questions 4 and 5, which in themselves sufficiently clearly demonstrate the modal finding of a male aggressor as more likely and a female as more frightening. The use of the words "mother" and "father" in the questions are not necessary for resolving the issue in question in the context of the theories examined.

Yours faithfully,  
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