



**The Homophobe**  
**Essays on Henry Labouchere**  
By Andrew Lumsden



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## 1<sup>st</sup> Essay – We Are Born



In which in 1831 twenty-two-year-old Charles Darwin listens to a would-be suicide and twenty-three-year-old Mary Louisa Labouchere gives birth to Henry Labouchere, the homophobe of this story.

Before we join the young pair at their different addresses in England, I'd like to share some quotations and then describe where the term 'homophobia' comes from - the answer may surprise.

### Six Quotations

6 August 1885 - A law forever after known as the Labouchere Amendment is successfully proposed in the House of Commons by Mr Henry Labouchere MP:

“Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is party to the commission of, procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.”

1895 - A straight male journalist, W T Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and subsequently of the *Review of Reviews*, speaks about the Labouchere Amendment after Oscar Wilde is jailed under its provisions:

“A few more cases like Oscar Wilde's and we should find the freedom of comradeship now possible to men seriously impaired to the permanent detriment of the race.”

14 January 1912 - Algar Thorold, a nephew of Henry *Labouchere*, describing his last meeting with him which was in Florence:

“On the afternoon of the day before he died, as I was sitting at his bedside, the spirit lamp that kept the fumes of eucalyptus in constant movement about his room, through some awkwardness of mine, was overturned.

Mr Labouchere, who was dozing, opened his eyes at the sound of the little commotion caused by the accident, and perceived the flare-up. ‘Flames?’ he murmured interrogatively, ‘not yet, I think.’ He Laughed quizzically and went off to sleep again.”

July 1969 - The poet Allen Ginsberg attends the first meetings of the Gay Liberation Front in New York in July 1969 just before his 43<sup>rd</sup> birthday and was awed:

“The guys there are so beautiful. They’ve lost that wounded look that fags all had ten years ago.”

20 October 2016 - A BBC news item.

“Gay and bisexual men convicted of now abolished sexual offences in England and Wales are to receive posthumous Pardons, the British Government has announced.

Thousands of living men convicted of consensual same sex relationships will also be eligible for the Pardon. Lord Sharkey (Liberal Democrat, b. 1947) proposing the Pardon as an Amendment to the Policing & Crimes Act 2017, calls the occasion ‘momentous.’

2017 - George Montague, a retired businessman and Scout leader born in 1923, says in advance of Lord Sharkey’s Amendment:

“I don’t want a government Pardon. I want an apology.”

## Who Is It That's Unwell?

The term homophobia is recent by the standards of some of us. It was invented in 1965 by the American statistician and clinical psychologist George Weinberg (1929-2017). A married man, and straight in his longings, he described it as:

“A fear of homosexuals which seems to be associated with a fear of contagion, a fear of reducing the things one fought for home and family, a religious fear which led to great brutality as fear always does.”

This was quiet revolution. Instead of the gays being mentally unwell, as American psychiatry taught, sometimes with deliberate hostility, sometimes in a well-meaning attempt to keep gays out of jail, it was the fervently hostile who were unwell.

Wikipedia explains that Weinberg's word is a blend of the Greek homo (same), as in homosexual, and phobos (fear).

People asked Weinberg what made him think it up. His answer was that he was preparing one day in 1965 to respond to an invitation to deliver a speech on clinical psychiatry to gay activists at the East Coast Homophile Organization of America.

“I began thinking about a recent incident. A group of colleagues, learning that a friend he was bringing to a party was a lesbian, asked that he disinvite her. He sensed not just dislike, he said, but also fear; a fear so extreme that it suggested some of the characteristics of a phobia.”

As a second-generation German Jewish American born in New York he must have heard plenty about persecutions in Europe and recognised who, in a given situation, was the perp and who was the victim.

In the Ashkenazi German of the Rhineland his family came from ‘weinberg’ means vineyard. As in a good growth of vines his word began to put out tendrils: new words:

- *homophobic*: an action or language based on homophobia
- *homophobe*: a person inclined to homophobia

Increasing numbers of gay, that is, LGBT, American organisations of the 1960s and 1970s asked Weinberg to come and talk to them about his new word. At first, he didn't write it up academically, so it appeared in print for the first known time on 5 May 1969 after such a talk.

The authors were two gay activists who wrote a regular column for *Screw* magazine ('jerk-off entertainment for men') about the fear some straight men had that they might be gay. They heard Weinberg use the term in a talk and borrowed it for one of their columns.

Eight weeks later a group of lesbian, trans, gay and Puerto Rican dancers rebelled against the homophobia of the police and the mafia controlling the bars of New York and continued the battle for six days. It was the Stonewall Inn revolution, occurring at the Stonewall Inn, Christopher Street, New York.

At the end of it, Gay Liberation Front New York was formed by veteran gay campaigners in imitation of the Vietnamese Liberation Front and the Algerian Liberation Front.

*Time* magazine of New York, with a readership in millions, used the term editorially. Weinberg began to use it in print for himself, most notably and influentially in January 1972 in his best-selling book *Society and the Healthy Homosexual*. Activists meanwhile invited themselves to annual meetings of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) (Weinberg was a member) and invited those present to end their definition of homosexuality as an illness. Jack Drescher, an American psychiatrist and psychoanalyst born in 1951 who works on sexual orientation and gender identity, described what happened next:

"In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed the diagnosis of 'homosexuality' from the second edition of its

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual” i.e., they ended their definition of homosexuality as a mental illness.”

(Jack Drescher, *De-pathologizing Homosexuality*, US National Library of Medicine, 2015).

The New York Times ran a tribute to Weinberg when he died in 2017:

“The invention of the term (homophobia) was a milestone. It crystallised the experiences of rejection, hostility and invisibility that homosexual men and women in mid-20th century North America had experienced throughout their lives. The term stood a central assumption of heterosexual society on its head by locating the ‘problem’ of homosexuality not in homosexual people, but in heterosexuals who were intolerant of gay men and lesbians.”

The tribute cited Dr Gregory M Herek of Nebraska, an out gay professor of psychology at the University of California. That’s a CV that would have been unthinkable anywhere in academia in the 1960s. Here’s Weinberg five years before he died, writing in the Huffington Post on 6 December 2012:

“Those who harbour prejudice against homosexuals, and not homosexuals themselves, are suffering from a psychological malady, an irrational state of mind. As long as homophobia exists, as long as gay people suffer from homophobic acts, the word will remain crucial to our humanity.”

## **Young People of 1831**

That there’s no single beginning to anything is generally agreed, but I think Charles Darwin sitting in Plymouth in 1831 aged twenty-two trying to get on board HMS Beagle, and twenty-three-year-old Mary Louisa Labouchere standing speechless in her bedroom in London about to give birth to Henry Labouchere, is as good a way as I can find to start this story.

Mary Louisa stands on much-darned and therefore disposable sheets supported on one side by her elderly female housekeeper and on the other by a strong-armed housemaid or possibly by a man-midwife. The carpet that normally covers the floor is rolled up in a corner. She's in the second stage of labour.

She doesn't yet know the sex of the infant she'll be delivering. No mother will know for sure either way for another one hundred and seventy years. If she has a girl, we can be sure there'll be no Labouchere Amendment. A woman born in 1831 couldn't, by a custom enforced since the emergence of the English and Welsh House of Commons in 1265, seek election to the British and Irish House of Commons at Westminster or take part in its debates.

In 1832, during the babyhood of Mary Louisa's girl if she has a little girl instead of Henry, the custom will become law. A small provision of the otherwise "Great" Parliamentary Reform Bill of 1832 that part-way modernised the Parliamentary constituencies and the male entitlement to vote, will legislate a ban on women's voices during the making of laws.

And that mean-spirited confirmation of medieval custom by an otherwise daringly radical body of men during 19th century Reform Bill debates in the House of Commons will start the "Votes for Women" campaign, at first under the direction of Millicent Fawcett (1847-1929), now with her own statue in Parliament Square.

If a girl had been within Mary Louisa in 1831 instead of a boy, the girl would have had to reach eighty-seven years of age before she'd have been allowed to run for the British Parliament (December 1918). A 50-year-old Irish revolutionary, Constance Gore-Booth, whose father had a 32,000-acre estate in County Sligo, was instead the first woman to win a seat.

Seated like a small Parliament in Mary Louisa's marital bedroom in Portland Place London on 8 November 1831 as she stands



supported on either side, gasping for air and speechless, her baby's sex as yet unknown, are women who've already survived childbearing.

They are females of her family on her husband's side in London and from her own side in Buckinghamshire. They watch her carefully as the muscles of her uterus under the shift tighten like a fist, then unclose, tighten, and unclose. The middle-aged ladies with lace on their heads whisper and nod, exchanging in low murmurs memories of women they once knew who suffered fatal injuries during delivery.

It's not ill-wishing, far from it. It's a way of confronting fear, like putting gargoyles on cathedrals. And there's fear in the room. Always fear during childbirth. Mary Louisa is doing well: has had her 'bloody show', the descent of the mucus plug sealing the cervix, opening the way for baby. And she's been assured again and again that all is well, which in itself is terrifying.

The labour pains may have come upon Mary Louisa a little before the due date, women of the family rushing from their own houses in London or from Buckinghamshire. She pushes out her lips, expelling breath in puffs like an exhausted athlete falling on all four hours after a footrace. She's way past all but the shortest of conversations.

She has sent her husband downstairs to while away the hours in the drawing-room until she can call him back and show him a child. Except for royal births another old custom demands that in respectable and disreputable families alike, men stay out of any room commandeered for a birth.

MEANWHILE, twenty-two-year-old Charles Darwin, sitting in a pub on a military base two hundred and forty miles away, isn't that comfortable either.

He's in the Minerva pub along Looe St near the Barbican docks in Plymouth in Devon, live music three times a week and jam night

every Thursday for budding musicians to sharpen their strings, whistles and vocal chords.

Well, that's the Minerva pre-lockdown in the 2020s according to [visitplymouth.co.uk/food-and-drink/Minerva inn](http://visitplymouth.co.uk/food-and-drink/Minerva%20inn). The pleasures will have been much the same in 1831 if differently worded, though the discomforts will have been greater, including the uncertain light of extremely cheap candles, rushes not mattresses on sleep-over floors, and a 'crapping ken' or communal privy along the street.

Flush toilets won't be available from Mr Crapper until the 1860s, then a communal crapping ken for a group of houses, then a crapping ken – a hut – at the foot of the garden for each individual house where houses had back gardens, then ensuite indoor crapping kens oh the bliss of it!

They say the Minerva is the oldest pub in Plymouth, reckoned to have been built in about 1540, which would be sixty years before Mayflower sailed from Plymouth for America to be rescued during their first winter in Cape Cod by moccasin-wearing Algonquin.

The sailing was presumably unnoticed on 15 August 1620 for the inhabitants of Plymouth in old England would have been in their weekly panic turning round a mass of incoming and outgoing vessels. It was the Yankees who made the sailing of the Mayflower famous, resulting in the Mayflower Steps near the old Minerva Inn.

The Minerva Inn – correctly called an 'inn' because it seems it offered low-rent overnight accommodation, men and boys bunking together in one space and women and girls in another – was built for customers 2½ inches shorter on average than their ancestors. The peoples of Europe had shrunk on average since about 1000 AD owing apparently to an episode of global cooling, resultant bad crops, and malnutrition.

The chill of the world, with some intermissions, hadn't yet ended its most recent long phase in November 1831, as the rains beating

on the windowpanes of Maty Louisa's bedroom in Portland Place London, and on the rougher glass panes on the pubs and ships of Plymouth two hundred miles south-west of her, well testified.

Not that anybody in the Minerva, pub, neither Robert FitzRoy captain of HMS Beagle nor Charles Darwin future author of *The Origin of Species*, nor the sailors, carpenters, riveters and serving women, knew that people walked taller once. It's 21st century research which has shown it by skeletal analysis.

APPARENTLY, the European glaciers lengthened after 900 CE or so and by 1300 European farms, including those of the British Isles and Ireland, were less productive and people crowded into towns and disease increased and the average height of male Britons and the Irish and most nations of Atlantic Europe shortened from just under 5ft 7 ins to just under 5ft 5 ins.

Women too dwindled by 1831 in comparison with their ancestors. By the 1830s girls' growth tended to stop at under 5ft. Queen Victoria was 4ft 11 ins. Average heights for men and women are going to creep up again during Henry Labouchere of the Amendment's lifetime - somewhat mysteriously, for the weather didn't much improve.

He himself was short, maybe 5ft 2 ins. People will grow a little bit taller all around him as he ages. Northern Europeans will get back to where they were a thousand or so years before in the 20th century, and indeed today we're on average higher than we ever were, so that I, who am nearly 6ft, often today share Labouchere's experience and find myself shorter than women or men in the streets, the tube, the buses.

At twenty-two Charles Darwin hustling Captain Robert FitzRoy in Plymouth for a secure berth on the Beagle is 6ft. Almost astounding anywhere in 1831, certainly uncommon in a port city for able seamen tended to be from ancestrally undernourished

families. Like 7ft tall men today he doesn't find the built environment, arranged by shorter folk, at all comfortable.

If he attempts to stand fully upright in the Minerva on the evening of 8 November 1831 his face will disappear through the plasterwork ceiling. Instead, he contracts that long body of his and like a cormorant on a rock hoping for a fish, hunches, wings folded, listening to Captain FitzRoy.

The squeeze of people in the Minerva and the low ceilings in the Minerva are only a foretaste of what he'll endure between decks if he succeeds in getting a place aboard Beagle for the coming voyage. He bends his neck sideways listening as FitzRoy talks of suicide and waits for his supper. He'll have a crick in the neck in the morning.

Minerva... the name of the pub is surprising. It's so grand and pagan a title for a dockside joint. Who on earth gave the name to this old heap in Looe St? Like every young gentleman Darwin has had compulsory training in the Classics and taken some it aboard. Minerva is the name of ancient Rome's most senior goddess, considered by Marcus Terentius Varro, scholar of old Rome, to be 'the plan for the universe personified'.

Her skills were wisdom, and invention, and the arts in general, and defensive war. The Romans teased the Greeks by claiming that actually she was the goddess Athena of Athens come to live by the Tiber to encourage invention of the Roman Empire.

Captain FitzRoy's not inconvenienced by low ceilings in pubs or warships because he's of average height. We can deduce that, because if his height had been out of the ordinary like Darwin's somebody would have mentioned it. A forensic scientist could check his grave in Upper Norwood, Crystal Palace, but it would be discourteous and unkind.

Every so often as he re-interviews Darwin, though he's already for heavens' sake he's already made Darwin an offer in principle of a place on Beagle as his gentleman companion for the south Atlantic (making Darwin rather like a civilian equivalent of the Admiral's 'flag' that FitzRoy had been in 1828) FitzRoy falls silent and looks at tall Darwin with an odd and endearing shyness.

The captain is, after all, only four years older than Darwin. Full of confidence in the details of his command, splendid in blue cloth with some of his buttons gleaming gold in the candlelight as he moves about on the bench, FitzRoy is nonetheless resentfully somewhat in awe of the youthful scientist with the big eyes smiling relentlessly at him over pig's face.

And so he babbles of suicide, and how prevalent it is among Naval captains on long voyages, and how he feels such an urge may one day fall upon himself if he goes on with these long voyages.

### **The Masses and The Classes**

But at the moment Captain Robert FitzRoy of Suffolk, now of the Beagle, sitting in his twenties in the Minerva pub shouting at Charles Darwin to be heard over the racket, isn't quite what a shipboard valet or a Lord of the Admiralty might wish. The blue-gold blaze of the plenipotentiary is dimmed.

There's mud on the wide cuffs and skirts of the sea-blue coat, drying admittedly, and the blue is black with damp. They're so near topping-out the new high deck of HMS Beagle that he has spent today in the November rain among the ship's carpenters and the ship's riveters.

Only a few of the buttons on his coat, so beautifully finished in gold, catch at the pub's cheap candles, darting light into other patrons' eyes. Most have temporarily subsided, gone out beneath scattered mud like suns behind a crag.

For the weather is filthy in Plymouth on 8 November 1831. It falls like tears on the town. It falls all over England. It pelts Mary Louisa's windows in London as she stands trying to give birth and it falls on the King's house at Brighton and on miserable farmers everywhere.

It falls on other ship-repairers in Plymouth and on the hats and skins of customers for pubs around the Barbican where men squeeze in and out as if queuing at raves, watched by serving-men with arms like cudgels.

The same serving-men who find Captain FitzRoy at the Minerva front door seeking a meal for himself and a companion, shoulder him at once through the crowd with his adjunct Darwin, and by bumping low-spending old men away from a small table make the young men space against a wall.

They rescue FitzRoy's sodden tricorne hat from his head and carry it reverently away to be dried in the kitchens. They hang his sword from a peg as Russians hang an ikon. Not his best sword, which would be the one with a gilt sheath for display at a shipboard court-marshal or dining with fellow officers, but his third best, for tramping the shipyards waiting to sail.

A great parade of servility is made by the strong men for they know the latent power and authority ashore or afloat of an Admiralty blue coat, no matter how young its occupant or mud-spattered.

And they know the Captain of the Beagle in particular.

For he likes a good dinner and champagne when they can provide it or send out for it and he's been hanging around the Barbican, fussing about his toy of a ship for five months since June 1831, spending his George III half-sovereigns as if they grew on trees.

As to Darwin, grinning foolishly and walking on his toes like a landlubber, the heavies know at a glance that he's a silly youth of no account. They'd have denied him the pub on so wet and

therefore busy a night when there are ocean-going folk better entitled to be inside if it weren't that he's the captain's guest and will give everyone a good laugh and make them spend more on beer.

THE OLD MEN who've been ordered away from their table to make space for twenty-six-year-old Captain FitzRoy and his twenty-two-year-old oddball smile as they retreat and touch forefinger to forehead, as if aboard a ship.

They're co-operating of necessity with a saying about the social order in Darwin's day: that across Europe humanity is divided into 'The masses and the classes.'

The rhyming words of the saying to be pronounced with long or short vowel according to where you're from in England, Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

The masses are the women and men doing the hard labour of the world, afloat or ashore. The old men of the Minerva pub are of the masses. They're from the shamed male end - the washed-ashore, too injured or advanced in years to do anything but live on odd jobs, charity and their wives.

The classes are as you might say the 'suits'. Talking different from the masses, and in England called gentlemen (from French gentilhomme) and ladies (from German hlāf meaning possessor of the bread), they spend the nation's proceeds. Spend the national handbag, as gays say today.

In Labouchere's time, from the start to the finish of his 19th century life, gents and ladies are divided into two strands, 'the middle class' and 'the aristocracy'. He's a middle-class gent and firmly says so. An English gentleman and an English lady are always white and when the terms are used of people of colour there's nearly always a satirical edge.

The twin strands mingle socially but don't much intermarry. An aristocratic future Conservative Prime Minister of Labouchere's and Darwin's day will be temporarily pauperised by his father in 1857, forced to become a journalist, when he insists on marrying the daughter of a middle-class person, a judge.

The middle class run the professions or live idly on inheritances. Labouchere's father John Peter Labouchere, husband of Mary Louisa Labouchere, is typical. He began life working at a bank part owned by his father and then founded a bank of his own in 1825-1826, five years before he married Mary Louisa.

Darwin's father Robert is also typical. Born in 1766 as one of fourteen children of a highly successful Nottinghamshire doctor, Robert becomes an even more successful doctor than his father with a country practice ninety miles off in Shropshire.

The middle class buy educations for their sons alongside the sons of aristocrats at 'Public Schools', the deceptively named expensive independent schools of England made fashionable by titled families during the 18th century.

Sons of aristocrats get to know some of the ways of the middle class, and both - if they don't just walk past or deliberately sit elsewhere - may briefly get to know socially a few of the poor, gifted local boys helped into a few years at Public School by determined local teachers.

In the 1810s the Dutch-born Pierre-César Labouchère, a first-generation immigrant to London in 1816, sends his two sons, John Peter Labouchere and his elder brother Henry, to a Public School, Winchester, founded in 1382.

In the early 1840s John Peter Labouchere will send twelve-year-old Labouchere to Eton College, Windsor. While there, when he's sixteen, Labouchere will have an aristocrat for his 'fag', 'fag' meaning, at an English Public School, a gofer, derived from 'faggot-bearer', an old woman carrying a load of wood.



“Just run back to the boatshed, Hervey, I left my red jersey there.” Labouchere’s ‘fag’ will be the teenage Fred Hervey, d.1907, eldest son of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquess of Bristol and three years younger than Labouchere. Hervey will bear Labouchere no ill-will about the experience.

Hervey’s family ancestry famously included in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century an out gay, or to be more precise, an out bi, giving rise in the 1730s to a High Society joke certainly lasting into Labouchere’s and Fred’s day that there were three genders, men, women, and Herveys.

Whereby will hang another story.

All Labouchere’s life he’ll be acquainted with aristocrats. In 1885, the year of his Amendment, he’ll be a friend of Winston Churchill’s father Lord Randolph Churchill (1849-1895) though they’re rival politicians on opposite sides.

## Faces

At the small table fought for them by the doorkeepers of the *Minerva*, their clothes drying stiffly on them before they have to go out again and get rained on returning to their lodgings, FitzRoy and Darwin spoon in the pig’s face and drink beer while waiting for champagne.

The pub’s ex-warship cook has put forward his best efforts with his long knives and his oven for a Captain in the King’s Navy, and no less a Captain in blue with big cuffs than the open-pursed, free-spending FitzRoy of *HMS Bounty*.

No other ship’s captain is in the *Minerva* tonight. The gents from the *Beagle* can have the kitchen artist’s whole attention. They said they wanted pig’s face; they shall have pig’s face.

‘*Sisig*’ in Filipino, as every deep-sea Royal Navy sea-cook knows, ‘*Bath chap*’ in Somerset as everyone English-born knows, ‘*Guanciale*’

in Genoa as every Italian knows. Popular in every known country and every century except in the lands where pig is *haram*.

Tonight's face is from a Devon sow donated to the *Minerva's* owners by neighbours. The *Minerva* owners will in return donate one of their own sows, raised with other sows in a sty at the back, to the neighbours.

You don't eat your own pig. You grow too fond of the girls for that.

Patrons have enjoyed assessing her size and tickling her in her home before her bad day comes and now it's winter, have gradually been eating her from nose to tail.

Christians of 1831 do so without vegetarian qualms. The word, and the ethics protective of other creatures with faces, won't be known by more than a handful of English people until the 1840s, when devout Christians living at Ham Common in Surrey will form a "Vegetarian Society" and publicise it in Manchester.

Do skip the next bit and re-join me seven paragraphs further down if you don't want to hear more about animal husbandry in Labouchere's day and up to and beyond the Second World War. The facts of life and butchery were better known in the very centres of towns than they tend to be today.

I don't know that I want to know more myself, being rather squeamish, but the guide must go where the journey goes. *Old Foodie* website says:

'Our modern sensibilities prefer that the parts of the beast that might smile back at us be served up anonymously in sausages or meat pies: you didn't think all those snouts and ears and smiles were just sent for dog meat, did you?'

Oh dear... well, I find that the bible of English-language cooks for two hundred and seventy-five years, Hannah Glasse of Northumberland's *Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* published in

1747 and apparently still read by master chefs, says that the way to prepare a pig's face for a pie is to:

Cleanse your head very well, and boil it till it is tender.

Then carefully take off the flesh as whole as you can, take out the eyes and slice the tongue, make a good puff-pastry crust, cover the dish, lay in your meat, throw over it the tongue, lay the eyes cut in two at each corner, season with a very little pepper and salt, pour into it half a pint of the liquor it was boiled in, lay a thin top-crust on, and bake it in an hour in a quick oven.

Then take some sage chopped fine and half a small nutmeg grated, beat this and the pig's meat up with an egg and fry in little cakes of a fine light brown. Boil six eggs hard, taking only the yolks. When your pie comes out of the oven take off the lid, lay the eggs and cakes over the meat, and pour the sauce all over it.

Send it to dining-table hot without the lid.

And that's just what happens at the *Minerva* inn, whose cook we can imagine able to read aloud the recommendations of *The Art of Cookery* and luckily retains both his hands and both his thumbs despite active service, so can lick his fingers to turn the pages while stirring.

Serving-maids like figureheads on ships' prows breast the crowd, carrying the steaming open dishes to the captain's table past quivering noses.

FitzRoy and Darwin talk idly of accommodations on the *Beagle*, whose repairs and improvements are almost complete. She's soon to be moved from the indignity of having her bottom cleansed and new copper fitted and is to be berthed along the shoreline of the Rame peninsula across the water from the Barbican, waiting for permission to sail.

Meanwhile she sits on her reflection in her new paint and her new bottom while her Captain struggles to complete her crew. She can take between sixty and seventy men and to secure those Fitzroy is in competition up and down the docks with the biggest wooden warships repairing in Plymouth, who hire over six hundred.

*Beagle* is *so* small. Darwin has been aboard, and he's terrified. Already she's heaving with people and goods and more of both arrive daily. He's going to be rolled and crushed between upper and nether millstones, between elbows and the corners of objects.

He who has been accustomed to finicking about Cambrian rocks and Caradoc sandstones under vast skies in his native Shropshire with other people specks far away, and at school accustomed to living in large colleges and beds that can manage his height.

He who, when not in Shropshire, but away at Edinburgh Medical School, has been accustomed to sharing a boat with one other person from the school on the river Forth, proving a point about oyster-shells and marine invertebrates and happily lonely under high Lothian skies below clouds driven by the North Sea winds.

He who, when neither in Shropshire nor at medical school but at Uni in Cambridgeshire, has recently been accustomed to wading in Dutch-style fens amid milk parsley and fen violet, noticed only by the soprano pipistrelle bat eating on the wing under colossal skies that will be painted by Robert Farren, about to be born in 1832.

If FitzRoy doesn't, even at this last moment, withdraw his September offer to Darwin of a place on *Beagle*, and Darwin senses he *might* no matter how great the insult to Darwin's excited and well-known teachers, Darwin is to share the 'poop cabin' at the stern behind the wheel.

It's 10ft by 11ft with a ceiling shorter than himself. As in the Plymouth pubs he'll never be able to stand upright.

He remembers a poem written by some anonymous type long ago in Shropshire:

‘The sunne yrisen hathe,  
The birdes bin singen clere,  
The larke with cheerie laye  
Awakes the blushing morne,  
Up, up mie love, nor longer staye  
But thro’ the verdaunte meades let’s straye  
‘Or by the babbling brooke,  
Or mid the forest danke,  
And gather as we go  
The gemmie flowers that growe,  
Nowe all besprente with dew...’  
Country-lovers at dawn in the lovers’ lanes outside every  
village.

They’ll be quoted one day in a book by a boyhood friend of Darwin’s, William Allport Leighton (1805-1889), born to an heiress in the Talbot hotel, Shrewsbury, still there today.

She marries the landlord. Her boy and Darwin are both sent to the local Unitarian school and at eight or thereabouts, as it seems, Darwin introduces the older boy to botany.

As in the old lovers’ song they through the verdant meadows straye. They learn that Unitarianism means disbelief in the Church of England doctrine of the Trinity, but Darwin’s friend Leighton will nonetheless grow up to become a Church of England clergyman.

*Exactly* the career which Darwin's father Robert, a single parent raising four daughters and two sons, decides should be Charles's. And *exactly* the career which Labouchere of the Amendment's father decides should be his also.

All three will disobey, Labouchere spectacularly.

Darwin is in 'fall-front' trousers with a flap at the front held up by buttons at the waist. You let the flap down for intimacies or a pee. Smart men of the 1830s strolling in Bond St in the most fashionable acres of the world's capital are beginning to wear something different: 'fly-front' trousers that you button and unbutton lower down the front.

But Darwin isn't remotely fashion-conscious. Fashion-unconscious would be more the word. Nor in private life would 'rurally raised' FitzRoy be fashion-conscious. But he doesn't need to be, he can be splendidly up to date without having to look into a magazine.

Like every Captain in the Royal Navy he wears what the Lords of the Admiralty say he must, both ashore when carrying out Admiralty business, and when afloat. The result is that he out-smarts Bond St civilians whatever shape of trousers they choose to wear, competitively eyeing each other.

As commanded by the Lords of the Admiralty in the name of the King Captain FitzRoy wears a coat as blue as your eye, as blue as the Mediterranean Sea in its kindest moods, as blue as the sky in a Titian oil-painting of the gods in heaven or as the eye of a lookout at the top of a mast, surveying the horizon shaded by one hand

Down the front of the knee-length coat there run two foot or more of buttons finished with real gold which shine out against the blue like so many descending suns in southern latitudes. That's the idea. Were he to amble down the Strand beside the Thames in London towards the ever-enlarging premises of the Admiralty in

his white breeches, white stockings and twinkling buckled shoes, and with a tricorne hat on his head or under his arm, he would be British power in a nutshell rolling by.

But at the moment Captain Robert FitzRoy of the *Beagle* isn't treading in stately magnificence through a central street of London momentarily crushing the self-conceit of every male civilian he passes on the King's business but sitting in his twenties in the *Minerva* pub shouting at Charles Darwin to be heard above the racket.

And his appearance, though he's in the theoretically eye-watering blue and gold as per Admiralty orders, isn't quite what a shipboard valet or a Lord of the Admiralty might wish. The blue-gold blaze of the plenipotentiary is dimmed. There's mud on the wide cuffs and skirts of his coat, drying admittedly, and patches of the blue coat are in fact black from rain.

He has spent the day, as he spends every day come rain or shine, but today it has been in the windy November rain sweeping all England, among the ship's carpenters and riveters doing the last fittings of a new and higher deck onto *HMS Beagle*. As a result she's going to handle better in rough seas. Every sea-captain his own ship's architect.

So this evening at the pub the glory of his buttons, so beautifully finished in gold over the curve of his growing tummy, is dimmed, only a few catching at the pub's cheap candles and darting light into other patrons' eyes. The buttons have temporarily gone out, like full sunlight temporarily hidden behind a crag.

OH the weather! It falls like tears on town and country alike. If she had room in her mind to pay it the slightest attention as its rattled and shoved against her expensive windows in London Mary Louisa would be concerned. It falls too on the King's house at Brighton whose oriental domes fascinate the local fisher-folk.

Generous gentleman and former Naval midshipman that he is, King William IV sends out invitations wholesale to other gentlemen and their wives who happen to be visiting Brighton whenever he himself happens is in residence.

He can't be doing with the excessive snobberies of rank, this amiable old king whose heir is a girl in Kensington. The rain also lashes the battlements of Windsor Castle, in whose Great Park the King's late father George III was found talking to trees, an activity of such sanity that it remains surprising that in 1820 he died mindless, unaware that notionally he ruled an Empire on which the sun 'never set'.

On 8 November 1831, the same weather falls on the ship-repairers in Plymouth, and on the hats and skins of all the customers for pubs around the Barbican. Men form wet crowds waiting to squeeze into the *Minerva* as if queuing at raves, kept out, then let in, by serving-men with arms like cudgels.

No queuing for FitzRoy and Darwin when they arrived looking for supper. One sharp-eyed glimpse of the captain's blue coat in the street outside and the men with forearms like cudgels shouldered every other man in the pub queue backwards, bellowed for the attention of the indoor staff, and ushered the pair inside, obsequiously ducking their chins and grinning.

The *Minerva* already full to bursting? No matter. Without so much as a by-your-leave the serving-women who take no nonsense from any man bump low-spending unimportant infirm elderly local men long retired from the sea away from their habitual table and park the captain.

They whisk FitzRoy's sodden tricorne hat from his head and carry it as reverently as priests with the Host away to be dried in the kitchens. They hang the captain's sword from a peg as carefully as Russians hang an ikon. It's not even his best sword, the one for display at courts-marshal or when dining with fellow officers.



It's his third best, for tramping the shipyards in the interminable rain waiting to sail. The great parade of servility by the women, even as they mutter to each other what a mess the captain is looking and what a freakish long drink of water his companion is, acknowledges the latent power and authority of a blue coat in a port, no matter how young the coat's occupant.

Or how mud-spattered. Anyway, the pub knows the Captain of the *Beagle*. They know he likes a good dinner, profitable to the owners, and he likes champagne when they can provide it or send out for it. And he's been hanging around the Barbican, fussing about his toy of a ship for five months since June 1831, spending his George III half-sovereigns as if they grew on trees. Welcome, Captain FitzRoy!

As to Darwin, walking like a landlubber, you can't mistake him for a man who's been to sea and he's too tall and scarcely yet, you feel, in need of a shave, to be more than a boy to the women: more for taking to the bosom like a mother than for taking to bed. The heavies on the door clocked him at as of no account and would have denied him the pub on so wet and busy a night had he not been with Captain FitzRoy.

THE OLD MEN who've been ordered away from their usual table to make space for two fit kids, twenty-six-year-old Captain FitzRoy with his gently swelling stomach and skinny twenty-two-year-old Darwin smile as they retreat, and touch forefinger to forehead, as if aboard ship.

They're co-operating of necessity with a saying about the social order in Darwin's day: that across Europe humanity is divided into

‘The *masses* and the *classes*’

The rhyming words to be pronounced with a long or a short vowel according to where you're from in England, Ireland, Scotland, or Wales. The ‘masses’ are the populations of women and men doing

the hard labour of the British Isles and Ireland whether afloat or ashore.

The old men of the *Minerva* pub are of the masses. From the shamed male end, not the elite end: washed-ashore, too injured, or advanced in years to do anything but live on odd jobs, charity and if they have one back indoors, their wives.

The classes are, as you might say, the ‘suits’ of 1831 England. Talking different from the masses and called ‘gentlemen’ from French *gentilhomme*, and if female or a rare trans woman called ‘ladies’, which turns out to be from German *bläf*, meaning ‘possessor of the bread’, i.e. in charge of the family store of provisions.

‘The classes’, a mere fraction of the hands and souls inhabiting Europe, spend each nation’s proceeds after deductions for the manual ‘masses’ called wages. The classes spend the national handbag, as gays say today. In 1831, when Mary Louisa Labouchere’s child is born, ladies and gents are divided into kinds, two strands: the middle class and the aristocracy.

Henry Labouchere of the Amendment, a banker’s son as well as Mary Louisa’s son, will be middle-class and firmly say so at every opportunity. Charles Darwin, a doctor’s son seating himself for his dinner in a port-city in 1831, is middle-class but more than that he’s a scientist, which is as near to classless as a 19th century man can be.

Captain Robert FitzRoy, setting his mind to his dinner at the *Minerva* in 1831, isn’t ‘middle-class’ nor precisely ‘aristocratic’. There’s a special classification that hovers about him, as we’ll see, nothing to do with achievement, an aura that was felt in the European 19<sup>th</sup> century like the aura of a celeb today.

It means that among all the Captains in the Royal Navy who are coming and going with their commands and crew in the great military base and repair shop of Plymouth in Devon young

Captain FitzRoy, who after all is only there in November 1831 to outfit a very little ship, is watched and pointed out like an Admiral. The clue is in his name.

What else about the classes? Well, an English gentleman and an English lady are always white. When the terms are used by white people of people of a different colour there's a satirical edge in all but the rarest of larynxes.

The twin strands of the 'classes', the middle sort and the aristocratic (landed) sort, may mingle socially but don't much intermarry. Famously, an aristocratic future Conservative Prime Minister of Labouchere's and Darwin's day will temporarily be pauperised by his father in 1857, forced to become a journalist, when he insists on marrying the daughter of a middle-class person, a judge.

The middle class run the professions, or if there's a heap of money already made in the professions, live idly on their inheritances. They can be far richer than many an aristocrat. Labouchere's father John Peter Labouchere, husband of Mary Louisa Labouchere, is one of those. He began his grown-up life working at a bank already part-owned by his father and then founded a bank of his own in 1825-1826, five years before marrying Mary Louisa.

Darwin's father (another Robert, like Robert FitzRoy) is typical of those who are gents, are middle-class, but have no plentiful stack of cash. Robert Darwin was born in 1766, one of fourteen children of a highly successful Nottinghamshire doctor, and is even more successful than his father with a country practice ninety miles from Devon in Shropshire. But he has to work to keep his show on the road.

The middle-class strand of 'the classes' of England buy educations for their sons alongside the sons of English aristocrats at English

'Public Schools', the deceptively named, expensive, ancient schools for poor scholars of England co-opted and made fashionable by titled families during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### Urges Amid the Surges

In theory there's no sex on board His Majesty's warships, save along the quaysides during shore-leave, and then you paid for it. Twenty-two-year-old Darwin wandering Plymouth in driving rain in November 1831 while Mary Louisa Labouchere, personally unknown to him, grew heavy with Henry Labouchere of the Amendment in her London bedroom, is presumably suffering urges within sound of the Atlantic surges.

He writes a private note to himself concerning bachelor life, found among his private papers after his death: "My God, it is intolerable to think of spending one's whole life, like a neuter bee, working, working and nothing after all. No, no won't do." We know he liked women, as distinct from girls for whom the 'age of protection', as the age of consent was then called, was twelve in 1831 in continued accord with a statute of Westminster of 1275.

At any rate, full-grown women were his preference when he stopped being a bachelor in January 1839, two years, and three months after he returned to England, in fact to Cornwall, from five years aboard HMS Beagle. He married a woman nine months older than himself. She was thirty and he twenty-nine and he liked talking with her about his unpublished speculations concerning evolution of species by natural selection.

We can be certain his desires were for women as he paced Plymouth and rode Beagle, and we can be pretty sure he went virgin to sea and returned virgin and went virgin to his to his Emily when he married. And pretty sure that many another Englishman of his sort of background in 'the classes', including officers of the Royal Navy holding the King's and later the Queen's commission,

stayed virgin until promotion and an improved income allowed them to find a permanent partner outside or inside marriage.

We can be sure that his desires were for women from his energetic performances in bed once he got shot of his neuter bee condition and married (ten kids in seventeen years with Emma), despite his having a dicky heart and forever being unwell. Possibly this was all psychosomatic, a side-effect of his knowledge that churchgoing England wouldn't be pleased by his developing certainty that God, if God there were, didn't make the living world and oceans and mountains in six days.

Or possibly his temporary but repeated collapses into bed to be nursed by Emily from his thirties onwards were the result of a bite by the absurdly named Kissing Bug while he was ashore from the Beagle exploring Argentina in 1835. After long dormancy, so that no harm seems to have been done, a minuscule parasite carried by the Kidding Bug causes heart damage in humans, occasioning more deaths in South America, even now than any other parasitic disease, including malaria.

Going back to bachelor Darwin fearing and hoping to get a berth on HMS Beagle in November 1831, he'll presumably be wrestling with his own urges to reproduction as he studies sexual and natural selection in the birds and the bees. Pacing about disconsolately some really severe surges of desire perhaps. Those calls from the gametes, he won't answer them in any way, we can guess, won't even pleasure himself when and if he manages to be alone, though there must have been the occasional exquisite flood in the night as the excellent prostrate performed its function. Hey nonny-no!

I think it likely that Captain FitzRoy was as much a virgin as Charles Darwin when Beagle sailed away to South America with the pair of them from the green hills of the Rame Peninsula in Plymouth in the pouring cold rain of December 1831. There was a difference though in their sexual prospects. In 1830 when he was twenty-five, four years older than Darwin, FitzRoy had inherited a

fortune from his father. It was so much money that he was able to pay personally for some of the new safety measures aboard *Beagle* that the government wouldn't pay for.

No longer dependent on his father for any extra income beyond his Navy pay, FitzRoy could afford to offer marriage, and did so early in 1831, and was accepted. His choice, or maybe hers if she were the leader in the arrangement, was Mary Henrietta O'Brien, very much a lady for she could plausibly claim to be among descendants of the sometime 'high king' of Ireland, Brian Boru, anglicised as O'Brien. Several O'Brien menfolk joined the British Army in the 18th century in the ranks of officers and gentlemen rising, as did Mary Henrietta's father, to the rank of British General, holding the King's commission in Britain's wars.

Mary Henrietta's fiancé FitzRoy of the *Beagle* seems to have been as aroused by women as Darwin for he would have three daughters and a son with Mary Henrietta when they eventually married in 1836, immediately after the return of the *Beagle*, and after she died in 1854, he remarried, having a fourth daughter, so five children in all. Neither before *Beagle* sailed in 1831, nor at any point during her five-year voyage, did FitzRoy tell Darwin of his marriage plans.

I think I can offer an explanation of why FitzRoy was so reticent. He was devout, politically a Tory, a Conservative as Tories would later be named, looking on the Church of England as a divine dispensation for his nation and regarding its recommendations on marriage as holy. I think he would have looked on his wedding intentions and on the name of his intended as sacred, an arrangement solely between himself and Mary, their two families, and the God he so deeply believed in. The only way to stop any possibility of shipboard merriment involving Mary's name would therefore have been to remain absolutely silent on the subject among fellow-officers and passengers.

'Love and marriage, they go together like a horse and carriage'  
Jimmy van Heusen (1913-1990) of Syracuse, New York, a pianist-

composer for the Cotton Club in the 1930s, will sing in 1955, meaning 'sex' by the word 'love, and not himself sticking to his own rule. Have Darwin and FitzRoy heard of the alternative to relations with women, sex with other men? We can be sure they have (van Heusen too, centuries later) but in Darwin's case, what with Darwin's exceptional height from adolescence and his non-stop talk from the age of eight about rocks, plants, animals, birds, fossils and seas, the odds are that no other man or boy ever made a move on him. Or if they did, he didn't notice.

Meanwhile Captain FitzRoy, of ordinary size, never in a world of his own on the scale the young Dickens managed, though he did become much enamoured of clouds and meteorology, probably saw clear evidence of the alternative to sex with women. He'd been sent at twelve from his family home in Northamptonshire, away from two older brothers and a younger sister to board at the Royal Naval College in Portsmouth. By the time he was fourteen he was heading for South America on a 36-gun warship, HMS Owen Glendower.

A very small motherless midshipman with a lop-sided grin parked among older boys in Portsmouth at twelve, and then at fourteen put among older midshipmen and full-grown officers and crewmen on HMS Owen Glendower, I should think, unlike my guess about Darwin, that in his new floating family he immediately recognised any sexual appraisals of himself. But I doubt he'd have allowed anyone to cop a feel. He was God-fearing in his twenties, and so presumably he was God-fearing as a boy.

I guess that just about all the other officers on an English-built ship of the early 19th century would have been God-fearing. As court-martial records show, a few conventionally devout officers of 'the classes' did dare to find gay sex aboard warships, or to force it on someone junior. Among crewmen, and among younger midshipmen, when days at sea stretched into months at sea, there must surely have been the occasional agreed circle jerk, sweet

sessions of speechless mutual relief, each individual's hands working inside his own white drop-front trousers.

And I'd guess love-affairs were rare, and possibly quietly respected when known, provided there was no physical manifestation. After all, the difference between having a best mate in the Army and the Navy and being lovers was skin-thin. And I'd guess that contrary to land-dwellers' delighted speculations about the sex-life of men crammed within the wooden hulls of the Navy most Englishmen and other nationalities aboard HM Navy warships in the 1830s, whether of the 'masses' or the 'classes', kept their crotches and those of others at arm's length, so to speak.

For the purpose of building or defending an Empire chastity in men, taming the raging chemicals, was a tacit policy of England's particular mix of Protestant State and religious ministers. Best if, for the youngest years of their lives, men, and boys under discipline in the Navy live in a similar chastity to that of housemaids in residential domestic service. What they did with women when ashore in a foreign port was of no concern, provided they were back on board for another round of chastity at the time ordered by the captain.

Many won't in fact have bought sex along the docks, is my guess, because their Bible-reading has made them ashamed about what goes on 'down there' in themselves and frightened or ashamed of what more mysteriously goes on 'down there' among women. And if fear of God doesn't keep them from the women of the docks, or the men and boys along the docks if their hidden tastes run that way, fear of syphilis may.

Many men want, no less than girls, to keep themselves 'tidy' for the wife and children they imagine lie ahead of them when sailing days are over and the day of marriage comes.

No twenty-two-year-old knows the early 19th century stories of the medical dangers of sex with female dockworkers and similar



workers in town-centres better than twenty-two-year-old Charles Darwin. As a sixteen-year-old he accompanied his father Dr Robert Darwin on rounds of medical patients in Shropshire. Admittedly the doctor's practice was an inland one and not a shoreline, but it seems unlikely that suspicions of the clap didn't arise among some of the male patients. Unlikely also, in so unusually frank an environment, that Dr Darwin didn't warn his younger son of the potential dangers were he to lose his virginity before marriage

Darwin's likely to have heard much more a year later. Becoming, at his father's insistence, a medical student with his elder brother in Edinburgh from the autumn of 1825 to 1827 he will have been shown terrifying text-book drawings of the facial and bodily disfigurements to which syphilis can lead a man, or more rarely a woman. He will have learned that mental deterioration too is possible if syphilis gets a hold down there.

Which would be a particularly awful prospect for all the youngsters who, like Charles Darwin since he was a schoolboy, have been awed by Nature and who is just beginning a lifetime devoting all his physical and mental facilities to studying the wonders of the flowers and the rocks and the animals and humankind. We know today, or we think we know from later research, that the peril of sexual disease to men of purchasing sex with women in port-cities and along city-streets was exaggerated in the 19th century by anti-vice campaigners as they petitioned Parliament to curb the sex-trade, or at least reduce its visibility.

Talk of the warfare waged on the male body by invisible organisms within the vestibules of the vaginas of women who didn't keep themselves to one man or none, added to the Protestant male's wariness of the female that he found was taught by God in parts of the Bible, would have been enough to scare Darwin and tens of thousands of his fellows in both 'the lasses' and 'the classes' to

avoid like the plague women who offered themselves for rent for cash down.

It's an awkwardness for human sexuality in England in 1831 when Labouchere is born to Mary Louisa Labouchere in Portland Place, London, and Darwin and Captain FitzRoy gossip in Plymouth pubs, that there are no longer officially sanctioned brothels in Britain. That is, houses with resident female sex-workers under the supervision of a madame who herself is a former sex-worker, haven't been allowed for years. There used to be plenty of them, most famously along the south bank of the Thames in the Southwark district where Papally-appointed bishops of Winchester were the ultimate landowners and reaped the ultimate profit.

Henry VIII stopped that with his Protestant Reformation in 1546. Famously, they survive in 1831 in predominantly Roman Catholic countries nearby, on the other side of the English Channel. There are over a hundred publicly licensed brothels or as the French say *maisons de tolerance* in Paris throughout the lifetimes of Charles Darwin and Robert FitzRoy and Henry Labouchere, and there are over a thousand more in the rest of France, and more in Belgium, their existence well-known not only to men in England but to 'self-respecting' married and unmarried women in England.

The unsuspecting male visitor might suppose from the importance of the madame in such places when, gorgeously dressed, she steps forward as allocator of business, caressing to the young male newcomers and presenting to embarrassed boys a choice of the stockinged Suzette, Joséphine, or Carmen, that she owns the place. And there's no reason in common sense why she shouldn't, calling on female physicians to make regular checks on the sexual health of the sex-workers, paying her taxes to the municipality and central government and tips to the local police, female, or male, to ensure a quick arrival on their part if there should be any violence by male clients.

Only, men won't allow women to train as doctors, won't allow women to join the police, won't allow them to seek election as mayors or local councillors, and where profits are large, won't allow them to control businesses. So in fact the brothels on the other side of the English Channel (the English word 'brothel' apparently being from middle English 'wretch' itself from Proto-Germanic 'to fall apart, to crumble', like meat in a broth) are owned only by men, are subject to supervision by male doctors only, and have to seek protection in the event of trouble from exclusively male law-enforcement.

In metropolitan and provincial France and Belgium the father of a son whose marriage will in due course be arranged for him by his parents may very respectably (as far as most well-to-do men are concerned) arrange with a madame at a nearby brothel for the son to be carefully inducted into sexual intercourse and its accompanying hygiene. The father may inform his wife of his careful decision, though she won't show consciousness of her knowledge to her son. If the father accompanies a shy son to meet madame he may himself vanish into a room, but if so, he won't tell his wife. Odds are she'll guess and sigh.

Meanwhile socially acceptable customs among the middle and professional classes of England have become different from provincial and metropolitan France and Belgium. Landed aristocrats of Britain and Ireland may perhaps, well able to afford it and acquainted with overseas nobility, take their sons to a brothel in Paris to let them have medically and environmentally safe sex-experiences. But a middle-class father in England is most unlikely, by the 1830s, to speak willingly of sex to a son in any circumstances whatever. And even when richer than any landed aristocrat, never for one instant consider taking a son to Europe for a sensual education.

The teachers in the boarding-schools to which a middle-class boy is likely to be sent are equally tongue-tied, equally mute, by the

19th century. For the educators of the young are mostly Church of England Protestant clergymen, or Protestant lay-preachers, and though they may be married are usually deeply unacquainted with cheerful sex-talk. They won't willingly talk of the 'private parts' of women or men, an odd term for the most public of parts. They speak, if they must, of sexual parts as pudenda, from Latin 'pudenda' (literally 'that whereof one ought to feel shame', or to be very pedantic from the substantive use of the neuter plural *gerundive* of *pudet* meaning 'it shames').

Schoolgirls exchange inaccurate information between themselves, away from the boys, and schoolboys 'talk dirty', also exchanging inaccurate information. Grown men exchange 'blue jokes', guffawing about women and men, out of their yearning to be conversationally grown-up and frank in a manner that convention forbids.