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***PERVERSION, PURITY SOCIETIES AND DISCURSIVE  
CONTROL IN FIN DE SIÈCLE ENGLAND***

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**Abstract:** The moral and sexual supervision of boys and young men became formalized in the purity movements which proliferated at the end of the century. Perhaps the most notable example was the Church of England Purity Society which was formed in 1880. The Church of England Purity Society was one part of the discursive controls which represented responses to continued calls for an attempt to redefine masculine ideology. Most importantly, it was a way of aligning the male body with the body of Christ. Moral authority was vested in the Purity Society, which provided exemplars for young men but responsibility for careful supervision was placed with middle-class parents. This paper will address the effectiveness of these discursive controls, arguing that rather than improving the morality of the middle classes, they succeeded only in foregrounding and intensifying preoccupation with perverse sexuality. It argues that the writings and actions of moral campaigners, clergy and sexologists show an awareness of a society in transition and a sense of anxiety of sexual order turning into sexual disorder. The purity societies mobilized confession and surveillance as devices of sexual normalization, yet a reading of nineteenth-century textual evidence shows complex reactions to these devices, and suggests their own transition from devices of normalization to sites of resistance.