

seeks analytic help for his problems, and also is promiscuous because of repeated disappointment with his love object. Subject and object homoeroticism, concluded Ferenczi, are different conditions; the former is a developmental anomaly, a true "sexual intermediate stage," while the second is suffering from an obsessional neurosis.

Besides these articles, in April 1906 Ferenczi presented to the Budapest Medical Association a paper entitled "Sexualis átmeneti fokozatokról" (On Sexual Intermediate Stages), which was his report, as a neuro-psychiatrist, on the 1905 volume of the *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* which the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee in Berlin had sent to the Association, asking it to take a stand against the penal sanctions to which homosexuals were subjected. In the report, published in *Gyógyászat* the same year, Ferenczi fully endorsed the position of Hirschfeld and his supporters, saying: "I consider the repression of the homosexuals profoundly unjust and utterly useless, and I think that we should give our firm support to the petition drafted by the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee and signed, since the beginning of 1905, by some 2800 German physicians." Thus Ferenczi was one of those who even at the turn of the century spoke out against the archaic penal statutes and in favor of legal and social toleration.

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## FETISHISM

A fetish is an object or, in fact, any focal point which has come to stir irrational reverence or obsessive devotion. A sexual fetish, unlike a mere preference, usually amounts to an exclusive demand, in that full arousal cannot occur in the absence of the fetish—be it a black shoe, a particular piece of underwear, or some partner-attribute such as perhaps broad shoulders, narrow or broad hips, large breasts in women or a large penis in men, an extreme presence or absence of fat, an abundance or absence of body hair, and the like.

Fetishistic demands usually stem from an early, particularly pleasurable experience, although it can perhaps never be precisely determined how one person's pleasurable experience is transformed into a lifelong fetishistic requirement, while a similar event for someone else may hardly stand out as exceptional, let alone as an ongoing fetish. And yet the basic mechanisms of strong preference-formations are known.

The pre-adolescent male's sexual response tends to be extremely diverse (polymorphous) and easily triggered by virtually any exciting event—anything from fast rides, big fires, and loud noises to being called on in class, seeing animals in coitus, or imagining close bodily contact with other children or adults. The onset of puberty quickly brings a narrowing down of sexual response to a much reduced number of specifically sexual items. The range is narrowed still further by the conditioning effects of a person's individual experience and basic disposition, until only a few strong preferences prevail—preferences that tend to become narrowed to ever fewer targets as a person builds up aversion reactions to "opposite" alternatives. At the extreme end of this whole conditioning process are the narrow, intense fetishistic preferences.

And yet all this work of conditioning applies almost exclusively to males. For reasons that are still not fully under-

stood, female sexual response is virtually non-conditionable (Kinsey, 1953, p. 642f.). Thus despite local, rewarding sex experiences of myriad kinds, women simply do not become "fixated" onto any one particular kind of sex practice or preference in the way that men do. (Nobody on record ever saw a female black-shoe fetishist and probably never will, although this and a host of equivalent male fetishes are commonplace.)

Male homosexuality affords uniquely useful insights into the whole problem of understanding fetishes. By its very nature, the male-male pairing affords a double chance of seeing a fetishistic demand revved up in intensity by being fed from both sides. By contrast, since fetishistic responses are very rare among women, they are virtually non-existent among lesbian couples.

In heterosexual couples the fetishistic male has to work out a compromise acceptable to his female partner; this may call for tact and other forms of inhibition on his part, and a degree of forbearance from her—a compromise on both sides that can greatly obscure the true reactions of each. However, there is no indication that heterosexual men, if given equally responsive partners, would be any less inclined toward fetishism than are homosexual men.

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### FICHTE, HUBERT (1935–1986)

German writer. One of the major (West) German authors of the postwar

period, Fichte is rare among German authors in that he not only treated the subject of homosexuality openly but even made it his starting point and guiding force.

Born the illegitimate child of a mother who was unable to realize a longed-for career as an actress and a Jewish father who seems to have disappeared after emigrating to Sweden, Hubert Fichte grew up an "outsider." After a career as a child actor in Hamburg theatres and in the movies (and an ambivalent relationship with Hans Henny Jahnn), Fichte set off for France with a traveling scholarship from the French government. In that country he served for a time as a leader in the camps of Abbé Pierre. Back in North Germany and in Sweden, Fichte devoted himself—and in a completely professional manner—to farming. At the same time he worked on translations (rendering *Simplizius Simplizissimus* into French, together with Jean Giono), and on his own writings.

His first publications (1959, 1961) brought him his first successes: writing fellowships and participation in the congresses of the influential Gruppe 47. From 1965 onward his strongly autobiographical novels, beginning with *Das Waisenhaus*, appeared. In the year in which the last novel in this series, *Versuch über die Pubertät*, was published (1974), Hubert Fichte began an ambitious project: "The History of Sensibility," planned for 19 volumes, novels and books containing "glosses," on which he labored almost obsessively until his death, and which is now being edited in a fragmentary form by the administrators of his literary heritage. Some of the volumes (so far as can be judged from the extant published work and the plans for publication) derive from the autobiographical world of the earlier novels; an additional section continues a project that Fichte had undertaken alongside his novels. Closely related to the novels is a "poetic anthropology/ethnology" that focuses not just on Afro-American religions—to which two large volumes of text