

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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C. A. Tripp

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

and parallel volumes of illustrations by the photographer Leonore Mau, who had been living and working with Fichte since 1963, are devoted (*Xango: Die afroamerikanischen Religionen: Bahia, Haiti, Trinidad, 1978/84, Petersilie: Die afroamerikanischen Religionen: Santo Domingo, Venezuela, Miami, Grenada, 1980/84*)—but also on traditions and phenomena of European culture with the same perspective of the ethnologist and anthropologist. In these works high culture (*Sappho, Homer, August von Platen, Genet*) is treated and depicted with the same attentiveness as the world of the Hamburg "Palais d'Amour." After Fichte's death there appeared *Homosexualität und Literatur: Polemiken*, vols. 1 and 2 (1987–88).

What is new, different, and rewarding in Hubert Fichte is more than his range. It is stimulating to observe how the new standpoint, which probably even without "gay consciousness," leads to new forms of verbalization and to open forms (even the format of Fichte's novels on the printed page—with much blank space—is open). His use of text collages at the macro and micro level can be read as the reflex of a process "of fragmentation and rebirth." In this process Fichte brought together a broadly conceived interpretation of "purity" and "religion."

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Marita Keilson-Lauritz

FICINO, MARSILIO (1433–1499)

Italian philosopher and humanist. The son of a physician, he preferred to take up the study of philosophy rather

than to follow in his father's footsteps. The arrival in Italy of learned Byzantines fleeing Constantinople after it had fallen to the Turks in 1453 gave Italian humanists the opportunity of studying Greek works which had been previously unknown to them. In this way the young Ficino discovered Platonism, learning Greek in order to study its texts.

Having gained the favor of the Medici family in Florence, Ficino was protected by them for the rest of his life; they presented him with a precious gift of Greek manuscripts, which he translated. Ficino quickly became a respected personality, attracting various pupils in a kind of Platonic Academy. In 1473 he took priestly orders, while continuing his philosophical speculations and taking on the responsibility of showing that the philosophy of Plato was in accord with Christian doctrine, as St. Thomas Aquinas had done earlier with Aristotle.

Among his most important works is the *Theologia platonica* (published in 1482), to which must be added strictly religious works (e.g., his Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul), and philosophical disquisitions (e.g., his Commentary on Plato's Symposium of 1469, in which he revived the form of the Platonic dialogue), as well as an impressive number of translations from the Greek of works of Plato and other ancient Greek thinkers. These translations made available to a scholarly public works that for the most part had been inaccessible up to that time in the West.

Marsilio Ficino is one of the most representative personalities of the Italian Renaissance. His fame is inseparable from his love and painstaking work of rediscovery, translation, commentary, and advocacy of the works of Plato.

Of special significance in this regard is his resurrection of the Platonic ideal of love, as it is known from the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. In the sixteenth century Ficino's version was elabo-