

The Erotic Minorities: Break

Kerry Thornley

People whose sexual needs depart from established social norms have seldom gotten a fair shake. At best they have been pitied by clinicians as "sexually immature" or "emotionally ill." Popular lore has characterized them as dangerous or ridiculed them as absurd. Often the law treats them harshly.

Only recently has the injustice of this situation become a tolerated subject of public discussion. Lars Ullerstam's *The Erotic Minorities* started even the Swedes in 1964. When an English-language edition appeared in 1966, Americans found it outrageous. Dr. Ullerstam did insist that, whenever practicable, society should at least indirectly assist sexual eccentrics in attaining gratification. But his book was by no means a screaming manifesto; it adopted more the tone of a pathetic plea to the authorities.

Homophiles were among the sexual minorities discussed in detail by Dr. Ullerstam. So were incestites, exhibitionists, pedophiles and four other categories. But homophiles, "the most privileged of the erotic minorities," have also been the first to surpass Ullerstam's meek petitioning. Gay Liberation commands increasing respect as a truly revolutionary political and cultural force.

The implications for the remaining sexual minorities -- and for the society which oppresses them -- are very possibly awesome.

Meanwhile, more individuals than ever admit they find these

erotic minorities fascinating subjects of study, to say the least. My round-up of some of the major ones here is designed to convey a glimpse of the possible scope of a coalition for sexual minority rights. For I am now active in what, hopefully, will become a concerted campaign for the liberation of all victims of erotic discrimination.

Fetishists readily come to mind as exemplars of sexual nonconformity. They were the focus of many early studies in sexology.

Fetishism was, in those days, rather broadly defined to include any dependency on non-genital subjects or objects of arousal. Consequently, many cases of fetishism were found, including a large number centering on nongenital body parts -- breasts, legs, feet, etc. Later studies showed that a majority both of males and females are easily aroused by one or another nongenital body area. Modern experts have reacted by defining the fetishists so narrowly as to exclude all but the most extreme cases.

Somewhere in between those covered by the older definitions and those now diagnosed as fetishistic, are the people I would call fetishists.

They purchase the pornography of fetishism. They buy items of clothing for specific sexual purposes. They patronize merchandisers of leather or rubber erotic garments. They seek out others, through sex ads in the appropriate periodicals, who share "an interest in the biz-zare" and whatever. Some ad-

vertise themselves as "devotees of the female foot" and so forth. The range of fetishistic fascinations appears to be quite wide.

Gerontophiles comprise one of the more obscure minorities. According to Ullerstam, gerontophilia occurs when "old people are preferred to fresher partners. Considering this," he adds, "it is a little saddening to think of all the old-age pensioners who have retained their sexual urge and would like nothing better than to make the acquaintance of young people. How miserably we all arrange each others' lives."

So unthinkable is gerontophilia to many people, that they assume exploitation is involved when a young person pays romantic attention to someone elderly. She "married him for his money," we hear. Or he "must be a gigolo." If economic motives are obviously lacking, then there is a tendency to blame the oldster for psychologically dominating an "impressionable youngster."

Gerontophiles have much to gain and little to lose by "coming out" in the manner of their gay brothers and sisters. Let them state frankly and without shame that they prefer old people as sex partners. There is no law against it. And certainly it will clear the air of many misunderstandings which now cloud intergenerational erotic relationships. Finally it will give us some notion of how widespread gerontophilia might be.

Incestites come to official at-

tention at a ratio of between two and ten for each million members of the world population, per year. This can of course represent only the tiniest fraction of actual cases; those who commit incest generally have ample incentive to carefully avoid discovery.

Why the incest taboo is nearly universal is a matter of speculation among scholars. Most theories revolve around primitive family, clan, and tribal politics. The notion that incest leads to rampant genetic deterioration has been discredited by modern research. Moreover, incest is practiced among all other higher mammals without inhibition or ill effect.

Laws which punish voluntary sexual activity between blood relatives have no rational basis and exist in violation of individual rights. Until these are repealed or overturned, incestites will remain one of the most oppressed erotic minorities.

Necrophiles -- those who crave sexual contact with corpses -- continue to receive much abuse and little scientific study.

If necrophilia really does motivate some sex murders, as a few authorities have speculated, then we should find a better way of dealing with it.

One possibility would be to provide bona fide necrophiles with cadavers, just as we now supply them to medical students. Persons saddled with this compulsion could then be registered by the government, and research-

ers would have an opportunity to examine them.

It might well be discovered that the majority of necrophiles are harmless souls who have spent most of their lives in fantasy and frustration.

Pedophiles are definitely a misunderstood group. "Our bigoted and ill-considered attitude to sexual matters," writes Ullerstam, "hardly ever achieves a ripper expression than when the subject is infantile sexuality and 'dirty old men.'"

Fondling the victim, mouth-genital contact, exposing, and masturbation are far and away the most common activities in so-called child molestations. The offender is often someone known to, and on good terms with, the child or child's family. In recent years, cases have turned up in which parental consent was involved.

It is hard to imagine how gentle pedophilic attentions could be damaging to children in a social context free of hysteria about sex. Indeed, many cultures permit degrees of adult-child erotic interaction considered deviant in ours.

Pedophilia seems fairly common. Activities associated with it are involved in about a third of the cases of convicted male sex offenders.

Sadomasochists, as we define them for liberation purposes, are all who attain erotic stimulation by inflicting and/or experiencing pain.

About five percent of the sex ads in a national swingers' magazine specifically mention

ing The Last Sex Taboos

sadomasochistic interests. Sexologists generally agree that few sadists are dangerous, popular notions notwithstanding. Masochism also occurs in varying degrees and seldom is so extreme as to become seriously self-destructive.

Dr. Harold Greenwald calls sadomasochism one of the most "puzzling aspects of human sexuality." Ullerstam cautions that on this subject "we know next to nothing, in actual fact, although a great deal has been written about it."

Saliromaniacs can be described as people who think sex is dirty and who, moreover, love it that way. They range from people who are aroused by off-color jokes to those who delight sexually in human excrement.

Mild saliromania must be popular. "This has been realized," according to Ullerstam, "by the manufacturers of pornographic magazines. The calculated tawdriness of the yellow press is a very salable commodity."

As for the eroticism of urine and feces, Dr. Paul J. Gillette says, "Probably less than one half of one percent of the total male population engages in or seeks to observe others engaging in urophagia, coprophagy and/or similar acts."

How many people, male or female, enjoy extreme saliromania strictly on a fantasy level cannot, of course, yet be estimated.

Telephiles derive unusual enjoyment from erotic communications, such as lascivious correspondence and/or obscene

phone calls.

Gebhard, Gagnon, Pomeroy, and Christenson said in their book, **Sex Offenders**: "It is our impression that any town of over say, 20,000 people having a dial telephone system has at least one obscene caller per year reported to the police."

Studying six convicted obscene communicators in prison, the authors of **Sex Offenders** found "evidence of compulsiveness."

They state that "these men continued their telephoning or other obscene communication after having been arrested for such behavior on one or more prior occasions." Also "five of the six had quite adequate (and in two cases abundant) heterosexual coital activity, at least from the viewpoint of frequency and number of partners." Finally "three of the six 'obscene telephoners' had also been convicted of exhibitionism."

The Erotic Minority Liberation Front has recently organized a free service called the "telephone fantasy forum." Its purpose is to put telephiles in touch with one another so that erotic communication based on mutual consent might result.

Transsexuals are individuals with mistaken gender identity. For perhaps biological and/or psychological reasons, the typical transsexual feels trapped in a body of the wrong sex. A sex-change operation is the common recourse.

At least thirty such operations have been performed at the John Hopkins Hospital gender identity clinic in the past seven

years. Since 1970, Dr. Stanley H. Biber of the Mount San Rafael Hospital in Trinidad, Colorado, has performed seventeen surgical sex changes. Usually the change is from male to female, but women have also received sex-change operations to become men.

A promising psychological treatment for the transsexual predicament is being developed at the University of Mississippi.

Transvestites are males, usually, who take erotic delight in dressing in women's clothes. They are not necessarily homosexual, but most are. They should not be confused with transsexuals.

Female impersonation -- both on and off the stage -- has lent transvestism, or "cross dressing," a sensational aura. Many transvestites, though, do not impersonate women, but merely wear concealed female undergarments or wear particular items of apparel privately.

Women who find it sexually exciting to wear men's clothing do exist, but they are rare.

Visualists are what I call those of us who are aroused sexually by means of the sense of sight, whether passively or actively.

Exhibitionists and voyeurs -- and those who combine both enjoyments -- comprise a fairly large erotic minority.

Indecent exposure convictions make up about a third of the sex offenses punished by our courts. But the proportion of exhibitionists in institutions run lower than pedophiles and some others because most self-ex-

posers are put on probation or fined.

Voyeurism is common enough among males to frequently escape classification as deviant behavior.

Recent experiments have indicated that a much larger sector of the female population, too, experiences voyeuristic excitement than was determined by Kinsey's research.

Commercial socially acceptable outlets for female exhibitionism make it a very unusual criminal offense among women, and difficult to measure in pure essence. Many women now ad-



mit, however, to finding sexual stimulation in appearing nude or partially naked in front of other people.

Visualists -- straight, gay and of both sexes -- create opportunities for gratification by identifying themselves and making contact with one another.

Zoophiles -- people who re-

late sexually with animals -- seem to vary in number according to the availability of suitable partners. They predominate in rural areas where, by Kinsey's estimate, about fifty percent of the males have some erotic animal contact. Zoophilic activity after puberty and resulting in orgasm, however, seems restricted to about seventeen percent of the rural males. Farm animals, as might be expected, are usually the partners in these pleasures.

In the case of women and of urban males, the animals involved are usually household pets, particularly dogs. Among middle-and upper-income women in the US about four percent reported some sexual activity with animals after puberty.

Ullerstam cites the **National Research Council Conference on Mammalian Sex Behavior** (New York, 1943) to make his point that copulation between members of different species is quite common in nature. Zoophilic acts which do not constitute cruelty to animals, he argues briefly but persuasively, ought to be legalized and socially respected.

At least a dozen other categories of sexual nonconformity can be classified among the erotic minorities. It is impossible to begin to estimate our total combined strength, but we must comprise a large fraction of the general population. By joining forces with each other and with our activist gay brothers and sisters, we cannot fail to have a significant impact.