Brit. J. Psychiat. (1978), **133**, 87–8

†*Reading about. . .*

A Neglected Source-book on Homosexuality

by Bernard Zuger

George W. Henry's *Sex Variants*, published in 1941, presents the frustrating problem of having a valuable body of data which is inaccessible because it is not extracted statistically. It was originally brought out in two volumes and contained close to two hundred pages. It consisted of extensive case histories on 40 male and 40 female homosexuals carefully studied psychiatrically and medically. Each history was accompanied by a chart of the family pedigree. The individuals comprising the study were volunteers, mostly from the professional classes, and in age varied from 20 to about 40 years. Interviews were open-ended as well as by questionnaire and were repeated two years later for validation.

Henry's studies are especially useful in providing data in three areas; frequencies of childhood effeminate and masculine behaviour in adult male and female homosexuals, occurrence of homosexuality in family members of index cases, and early nervous traits in homosexuals.

Gender Behaviour. Although long believed to be true, statistical evidence that homosexuality has its beginnings in early childhood was lacking in the English language literature until recently. Henry's cases provided ample information for compiling such evidence. This included very early cross-dressing, the expressed desire to have been born a member of the opposite sex, a dislike of games and sports of one's own sex and a preference for those of the opposite sex, and employing the latter's gestures and mannerisms and thus evoking epithets of 'sissy' and 'tomboy' from others.

Two-thirds of Henry's 40 male and 40 female homosexuals gave a history of early feminine- and masculine-type behaviour, respectively. Not until Saghir and Robin's 1973 study were comparable and similar figures available.

Since then prospective studies by Zuger (1966), Lebovitz (1972), and Green (1974) have shown that approximately 40 to 80 per cent of boys with early effeminate behaviour later developed deviant sexual orientations.

Familial Incidence. Homosexuality was present in 6 (15 per cent) of first degree relatives and in 4 (10 per cent) of second degree relatives of Henry's male group; the respective figures for the female group were 10 (25 per cent) and 5 (12.5 per cent). No similar study has been done on the relatives of male homosexuals; Kenyon (1968) did one on the relatives of female homosexuals. His postal inquiry yielded an incidence of 12.2 per cent for first degree relatives and 11.4 per cent for second degree relatives as against 0.8 per cent for both types of relatives of a comparison group. An unexpected and, possibly, important finding came to light in Henry's data. In the male group all 4 uncles and aunts came from the maternal side of the family; again, in the female group, 4 of the 5 uncles and aunts came from the maternal side.

Nervous Traits in Childhood. Henry found enuresis to have been a problem in the childhoods of 21 (52.5 per cent) of his male homosexuals and in 7 (17.5 per cent) of his female homosexuals. The average duration for the two groups was 9.2 years and 8.2 years, respectively. The frequency in the male group was at least three times that found by Lapouse and Monk (1969) in their representative sample of children 6 to 12 years of age; it was not much higher in the female group. In a prospective study of boys with effeminate behaviour Zuger (1974) found 15 out of 43 (34.9 per cent) to be enuretic with a duration similar to that of Henry's cases. Data on speech impairments, timidity, fears and other traits are also available in Henry's book.

The purpose of this note is not to discuss the significance of such data but to call attention to their existence in this book. *Sex Variants* continues to remain an excellent resource for students of homosexuality, written by a conscientious and compassionate scientist.

† An occasional feature in the Book Section where contributors give their personal choice of important, memorable or informative literature.

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.133.1.87 Published online by Cambridge University Press

References

GREEN, R. (1974) *Sexual Identity Conflict in Children and Adults*, p 243. New York: Basic Books.

HENRY, G. W. (1941) *Sex Variants. A Study of Homosexual Patterns*. New York: Paul B. Hoeber.

KENYON, F. E. (1968) Studies in female homosexuality. v. sexual development, attitudes and experience. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, **114**, 1337–50.

LAPOUSE, R. & MONK, M. A. (1959) Fears and worries in a representative sample of children. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, **29**, 803–18.

LEBOVITZ, P. S. (1972) Feminine behavior in boys: Aspects of its outcome. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, **128**, 1283–9.

SAGHIR, M. T. & ROBINS, E. (1973) *Male and Female Homosexuality. A Comprehensive Investigation*. pp 18 and 193. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins.

ZUGER, B. (1966) Effeminate behavior present in boys from early childhood. I. The clinical syndrome and follow-up studies. *Journal of Pediatrics*, **69**, 1098–107.

—— (1974) Effeminate behavior in boys. Parental age and other factors. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, **30**, 173–7.

Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, New York University School of Medicine, 550 First Avenue, New York, New York 10016, U.S.A.

Book Reviews

Fish's Outline of Psychiatry (Third Edition). Edited by MAX HAMILTON. Bristol: John Wright & Sons. 1978. Pp 243. £5.00.

I found the third edition of this book extraordinarily interesting, on a number of accounts so complex, and on other accounts so subtle, that I doubt whether the *Outline* is now best suited for the medical students and general practitioners for whom it was aimed. When read in conjunction with Fish's original text of 1964, the experienced psychiatrist will discover important features which will be lost on artless readers or those who study only the new edition. The developments of the past 14 years are of course inserted by Hamilton, and the seams are sometimes clearly visible. Some vintage Fish, very characteristic of him, is eliminated (e.g. his synonym for depression on p 101 of the first edition: *Autonomous Dysthymia*). There are now two different orientations in the book, not so much a marriage of minds as stylistic and doctrinal cohabitation between author and editor, which will be perceived only dimly or perhaps entirely overlooked by newcomers to psychiatry and by non-psychiatrists.

One of Fish's main aims was to state the phenomena and the syndromes of psychiatric illness in a system of precisely formulated definitions. He omitted Child Psychiatry and Mental Deficiency, so the book cannot claim to be comprehensive. The medical students and general practitioners for whom the book was written will need to augment it with other texts.

In his preface, Fish states that his orientation is 'neo-Meyerian', thereby indicating his understanding that although psychiatric patients are to be studied in terms of their directly observable attributes, the appropriate action taken by the doctor has to be based on grounds additional to and other than the clinical appearances. Fish advises that, for effective clinical action, empirical knowledge needs to be augmented by 'psychoanalytic theory, sociology and common sense'. In his original text Fish gave considerable emphasis and scope to psychoanalytic theory. Unfortunately these references are often so telegraphic as to produce mystification in the uninitiated. An entry (surviving on p 131 of the new edition) about the psychoanalytic view of *Paranoid Delusions* reads

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.133.1.87 Published online by Cambridge University Press