

What Ever Happened to Sexual Freedom?

BY IREN SMOLARSKI

OITM (as well as other publications) has been devoting a lot of space to gay/lesbian legal battles for the right to marry. It feels like it has become the norm for GLBT activism. It may be all the news there is. Nevertheless when the media force us to pay so much attention to people's need for State recognition, validation and glorification of their love affairs it somehow steals attention from a far more important right.

I want to speak of the right to be who we are, true and free. Are not these aspirations of the gay and lesbian liberation movement - still? The right to be same and other at the same time, the right not to belong, not to make do, not to be put in a labeled box, is in fact no less than the right to keep on exploring the wide scope of human sexuality with all its potential for growth and enlightenment. Actually, to be married under the auspices of the State is like going back to the closet - the closet of conformity and sterile comfort. No institution can protect people's essential freedom. All institutions - and especially that of marriage - freeze the movement of life. They deaden the impulse to inquire constantly into the generosity of Nature and to discover who we are as human creatures.

In this respect, I find the concept of polyfidelity very relevant. The appellation itself is quite felicitous in so far as it captures the good old flavor of sexual freedom in its cleanest sense. It's surely not simple to carry on several genuine relationships at the same time. It requires being faithful to one's ever-expanding self, to one's innate sense of freedom while being equally true to the other's innate freedom. Sexual freedom is based on deep respect for oneself and for the other. And as long as we don't regard the other as a free being, we are not free. The practice of sexual freedom is quite different from promiscuous behavior. While often unaware, craving for self-gratification governs promiscuity, sexual freedom on the contrary implies a conscious, deliberate choice. It entails an honest and respectful responsiveness to one's

own sexual desire as well as honesty, respectfulness and responsibility toward every single other person. In *Lesbian Polyfidelity*, which Elizabeth Hansen and Karen Starr reviewed in OITM (August, 1997), Celeste West drives this point home with much panache.

We all grow up having several relationships at the same time. A child has a relationship with her/his mother, father, brothers and sisters, relatives, friends, teachers... Those relationships are all different from one another and when all goes well they all contribute to her/his development, all help her/him to become, thanks to this multitude of experiences, a richer person.

It is only when, later, new relationships start involving sex that they get complicated. Sex is funny that way: where it seeks to widen the scope and intensity of our relationships, it tends to muddle them up and narrow them down. It shouldn't have to though. When open and free, the sensual and soulful delight we take in another person brings us closer to ourselves. Like art, like meaningful work, like knowledge, sex expresses us, reveals us to ourselves. So what happens? We panic. When it finally gets really good, we regress. Instead of keeping the process of discovery alive, we grab, stall and settle. We get "married". And now just like Mother when she was only an extension of our instant-self which fulfilled all our needs for nourishment and warmth, when she was not yet the mother we have come to know as a person, the One, the Lover, the Hero, the god, is supposed to meet all of our desires, fantasies, and expectations. Tough luck. No one person can bring us back to paradise for ever and ever. But what if we wanted to rediscover and keep on discovering paradise here, now? What if we wanted a world worth living in?

I don't deny that long-lasting blissful monogamous relationships are out of this world. I believe in miracles, but I don't think we can afford to build our whole social structure on the hope of miracles. This is what's going on though. Consequently people are miserable for the most part. They are half alive; they adjust; "so what, nothing

is perfect," they say. And gay and straight alike work at lousy jobs and live badly. But it's good for the economy, for business and the perpetuation of the patriarchal model. Well, to make things work and keep the tradition of coupled and family alive, people become reasonable, resigned to limiting themselves. There is always comfort in limit. Or else, when married, if they refuse to give up to reason, they resort to cheating, thus cheating themselves and their partner. Or else, when single, they can keep on going in and out of relationships. This is exhausting and unfulfilling most of the time. A sense of failure may even creep in.

Let's come to our senses, we, simple mortals who just don't seem to have been graced and are missing out on the miracle eternal lover, can't pretend anymore that monogamy is the norm - unless we want to drive ourselves insane by believing there is something wrong with ourselves. Monogamy and Family as norms are the inventions of political and economic power structures and churches which profit plenty by them. It's our job to discover ourselves and to create ourselves if we want to make life good, as good as it can be. As we create ourselves, we create our social environment. We were not born with a self, just the potentiality for pleasure and fulfillment, just with a growth energy. And it's in sex that we get to know the essence of this energy, that it manifests itself in its most essential form. (Doesn't that make sex really worth it?) So then, self-discovery or self-creation is not a matter of exclusion, but of inclusion. We need a lot of people to grow and a lot of people need us. And each person can bring us something new, something we didn't know.

I always get sad when I hear of people getting married, but when gay/lesbian people speak about it proudly, it enrages me. Logic would dictate that if we have already shown the strength and courage to win the right to be regarded as normal human beings, as authentic sexual beings, it belongs to us to keep going in that direction and inquire into the ways of sexual freedom and authenticity of living.

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THE MOSTLY UNFABULOUS SOCIAL LIFE OF ETHAN GREEN

BY ERIC ORNER

Le Village Revisité

So you are moping at home after an argument with Doug about moving in together, when, a voice you hadn't expected to hear surprises you.

Apparently the Mounties have let Etienne out of prison.

He admits to having behaved unpleasantly last year, and offers to make it up to you by inviting you to the reopening of his Outremont bistro.

Well, Doug's on a fishing trip with his dad, and its not like you've gotta datebook full of engagements for the weekend. God knows you love Montreal. What the hell, you accept.

You aren't sleeping with him. You're not even attracted to him anymore, which allows you to relax and enjoy his company.

The opening is nice. Marvelous food, musicians, painters, people with day jobs who "write". A guy on the balcony talking up separation.

Leeza, his faghag, is all-of-a-sudden your best pal. She says she's going to be in "your neck of the woods next month". You're a little drunk, and offer to put her up when she comes.

She and he certainly are conspiratorial. Its nice that you couldn't care less what about, anymore...

Later...

To be Continued