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WE ♥ OUR READERS

SAVAGE LOVE
 GERMANE
 BY DAN SAVAGE

I am a twentysomething, straight, cis-female expat. How long do I have to wait to ask my German lover, who is über-sensitive about the Holocaust, to indulge me in my greatest—and, until now, unrealized—fantasy: Nazi role-play? He is very delicate around me because I am a secular Jew and the descendant of Holocaust survivors. (Even though I've instructed him to watch The Believer, starring Ryan Gosling as a Jewish neo-Nazi, to get a better grasp on my relationship with Judaism. To be clear, I am not actually a neo-Nazi—just your garden-variety self-hating Jew.) This persists even though we've spoken about my anti-Zionist politics. Evidently he was indoctrinated from a young age with a hyperapologetic history curriculum. I appreciate that he thinks it was wrong for the SS to slaughter my family, but it's not like he did it himself. I know it sounds really fucked up, but I promise this isn't coming from a place of deep-seated self-loathing. Even if it were, it's not like we'd be hurting anybody. We're both in good psychological working condition, and neither of us is an actual bigot. I would try to get to know him better, but we are so different (there's a big age difference) and I don't really see our relationship being much more than ze sex.

National Socialist Pretend Party

"Sex writers get all the really good religion questions," said Mark Oppenheimer. "Can we trade mailboxes sometime soon? I'm tired of dealing with all the questions about why evangelicals support a thrice-married misogynist reality-TV star who never goes to church."

Oppenheimer writes the Beliefs column for the *New York Times* and is cohost of *Unorthodox*, an "irreverent podcast about Jews and other people" (tabletmag.com/unorthodox). I invited Oppenheimer to weigh in because I am, sadly, not Jewish myself. (Jewishness is conferred through matrilineal descent, your mom—or, if you're Reform, either parent—has to be Jewish for you to be Jewish, so all those blowjobs I gave to my first Jewish boyfriend were for nothing. No birthright trip for me.)

"First off, I think that Die Fraulein should make her kinky proposal ASAP," said Oppenheimer. "Given the 'hyperapologetic' curriculum that her Teutonic stud has absorbed, he is probably going to freak out no matter when she asks him to incinerate—er, tie her up and fuck her. On the other hand, if he's open and kink-positive, he'll probably be down for whatever. But it's all or nothing in a case like this. She can't win him over by persuading him that she's not one of those uptight, unforgiving Jewesses who is still hung up on the destruction of *European Jewry*."

While your kink didn't really faze Oppenheimer (it's not exactly unheard of), NSPP, your discomfort with your own Judaism did.

"In her letter, she assures us that she is 'secular,' 'anti-Zionist,' and 'garden-variety self-hating'—then jokingly compares herself to the Jewish white supremacist (played by Ryan Gosling in that movie) who in real life killed himself after the *New York Times* outed him as a Jew," said Oppenheimer. "Now, all of us (especially homos and Yids) know something about self-loathing, and I think Jews are entitled to any and all views on Israel, and—again—I am not troubled by her kink. *That said*, I do think she needs to get to a happier place about her own heritage. Just as it's not good for black people to be uncomfortable with being black, or for queer people to wish they weren't queer, it's not healthy, or attractive, for Jews or Jewesses (we are taking back the term) to have such obvious discomfort with their Jewish heritage."

And finally, NSPP, I shared your letter with a German friend of mine, just to see how it might play with someone who benefited from a hyperapologetic history curriculum. Would he do something like this?

"Not in six million years."

I am fresh out of a gay relationship, which started monogamous, opened up, dabbled with polyamory, but ran out of steam. I'm heartbroken and I need you to weigh in on a disagreement we had about polyamory, which is one of the things that led to our expiration. I believe polyamory to be a small group of people all in love with each other, all sleeping together. He believes polyamory to be different pairings, where a relationship between two people would be lived and enjoyed separately from that couple's pairings with other people. He thinks my definition would be impossible to find and sustain. I think his definition sounds like child custody in a divorce dispute. Who is right?

Reexamining Relationship Remnants

"They're both right," said Allena Gabosch, a poly activist, educator, and podcaster (*The Relationship Anarchy Show*). "What the letter writer describes—a small group of people who love each other and all sleep together—is sometimes called 'polyfidelity.' It's less common, and yet I've seen it work. His ex's definition is more common: a primary couple with secondary and sometimes even tertiary partners. There is no 'one true way' to do poly, no matter what anyone says."

I've been in a fantastic monogamous relationship for almost eight years, but I used to be like a lot of your other readers. I had what I would consider an adventurous sex life, with lots of partners who were GGG, and I enjoyed continually pushing my sexual boundaries as long as everything was consensual and honest. Fast-forward to my current life: I'm now married to a wonderful vanilla woman. The transition to monogamous and vanilla was difficult at first, and I had fears about not being sexually content. As it turns out, it was a great move and I'm a better man for it. My desire to have every kind of sex under the sun has settled down considerably, and the benefit is that I have much more energy and mental focus for other areas of my life. I want your readers to know that the answer to their happiness may not be the pursuit of more outlandish sex—for some, it just might be less.

Monogamous In Montana

Your letter reminded me of Saint Augustine's prayer as a young man: "Lord, make me pure—but not yet!" You're pure now, MIM, but first, like Augustine of Hippo (354–430), you had yourself some impure fun. Perhaps you would be just as satisfied, happy, and smug if you'd been in a monogamous/vanilla relationship all along. But it's possible you wouldn't be satisfied and happy now if it weren't for the adventures and experiences you had *then*. To paraphrase St. Agnes Gooch of *Mame* (1966): *You lived! You lived! You lived!* You see all that living as time wasted, MIM, but it's possible—it may even rise to the level of probable—that the perspective and self-awareness you gained during the fuck-anything-that-moves stage of your life made you the man you are today, i.e., a guy who was ready to make a monogamous commitment and capable (so far) of honoring it.

Finally, monogamous/vanilla types routinely cross over into the ranks of the sexually adventurous/nonmonogamous and vice versa. (And monogamous/vanilla and sexually adventurous aren't necessarily mutually exclusive categories.) Instead of disparaging the choices others make—or disparaging the choices we once made—we're better off encouraging people to make the choices that are right for them. And choices that are right for someone *now* may not be right for them *always*—and that goes for you too, MIM, even now.

On the *Lovecast*, Dan chats with the filmmakers of the documentary *Give Me Sex Jesus*: savagelovecast.com.