

*Chapter 1*

Blatantly Bisexual;  
or, Unthinking Queer Theory

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Not Half Gay, Not Half Straight, But Totally Bisexual!

—Sticker, Queer Terrorist Network, c.1993

*Unthinking Bisexuality*

Given the highly contradictory accounts to which it has been subject, bisexuality may well seem fated to confusion. We have been told that bisexuality veers between homosexuality and heterosexuality as two distinct sexual orientations, without ever becoming an orientation in its own right; we have also been informed that it oscillates between two genders because it already androgynously contains masculine and feminine within itself. Experts and laypersons alike have wondered in a variety of ways whether it might be some rare fusion of sexuality, gender, and object choice. But we have also heard, over and over again, that bisexuality is merely a behavior which is fairly common but does not have an identity to back it up. To make matters worse, bisexuality seems to lend itself to exaggeration—all or nothing: everyone is bisexual or no one is. Bisexuality carries extreme values, so that it can be extolled as progressive, “chic,” as a panacea, a fantasy, a promised land, mythologized

as origin of all desires, or vituperated as reactionary, infantile, regressive, a red herring, a cop-out, a lie, a dead-end street. "Bisexuality" can even be many or all of these things at once: there has never been, it seems, one single bisexuality, but only more or less incoherent *versions* of bisexuality.

Given this state of affairs, what is the critical task for people who identify, against all odds, as bisexual? (And what, one may also ask, does it mean, socially and critically, to identify as "bisexual"?) We could adjudicate among the various fantasies of bisexuality, such as those sketched above, as we try to spell out what real bisexuality, devoid of myth and stereotype, would be. And, in time perhaps, we could even sobriety come out with the plain truth about bisexuality. But these options always run the risk of making bisexuality be only a single thing and therefore simply promoting one of the many well-worn versions of bisexuality as the only one that all bisexuals should embrace. Whatever we do, we should, I think, avoid the temptation to have the last word on bisexuality, but without throwing caution to the wind and uncritically embracing every stereotype of bisexuality that has ever existed. We can, instead, painstakingly identify and elaborate the models of bisexuality that have had currency at particular places and times, all the while understanding that those "bisexualities" necessarily have some strategic import. Why *this* bisexuality, and not that? What does a particular model of bisexuality *do* in a given place and time?

In coming up with a theory of what all "bisexuality" is, without regard to the bisexualities available in precise situations, we risk generalization, no matter how generous or accommodating our conceptual model might be, or how persuasive its effects. For example, overgeneralization seems an inherent danger of Marjorie Garber's *Vice Versa*, an exhaustive account of bisexuality that is part tabloid and part encyclopedia.<sup>1</sup> She shows again and again (and very convincingly) that there are links between bisexuality, the stories people make of their sexual lives, and what the subtitle of *Vice Versa* calls "the eroticism of everyday life." But Garber does not clarify or even consider why, more than any other sexuality, bisexuality should have such an affinity for both "narrative" and a fluid and almost indefinable "eroticism" (as Garber appears to see the latter). Indeed, "sexuality," "narrative," and "eroticism" are terms that Garber simply takes for granted. *Vice Versa* undoubtedly opens many conceptual possibilities for reading bisexuality (sometimes for reading bisexuality in, as well), but it does so only by promoting one, highly tendentious, version of bisexuality which makes the latter the equivalent of "eroticism" and "narrative" (all eroticism, all narrative).<sup>2</sup> Because *Vice Versa* turns on sweeping statements, it tends to disregard history, which, after all, concerns specific meanings in specific situations.

While her book is amply filled with detail, the detail always amounts to the same thing: a link between narrative, the everyday, and bisexuality, all of which are then

understood as entities characterized by their fluid natures. Garber's neglect of historical precision and specificity leads her to dismiss "politics" in contemptuous, quite ahistorical terms. Thus, she uses the loaded term "politically correct," which is particular to a very well-defined right-wing political agenda in the North America of the late 1980s, to celebrate bohemian bisexuality in Bloomsbury and Harlem during the 1920s. "And lives, it turns out, are no more politically correct than art," she claims, setting "life" and "art" against "politics" and "political correctness."<sup>3</sup> The epigrams which show up in *Vice Versa* generalize beyond any usefulness. For example, Garber can confidently assure the reader: "Politics is always belated."<sup>4</sup>

The shortcomings of *Vice Versa* can be traced to a desire to have that last word, or, in the colloquial expression, to write the book on bisexuality, and to state, once and for all, what bisexuality is. (To say, repeatedly, that the essence of bisexuality is fluid, as Garber does, by no means makes this attempt to fix essences less sure of itself or less essentialist.) Perhaps analyzing what bisexuality is *not*, rather than insisting on what it is, could help in understanding bisexuality historically. We need to look at the ways in which various bisexualities have been constructed, interpreted, or excluded. And we would need to do so, again, in specific situations. We may well insist on our visibility by working through the conditions of our invisibility. To insist on the social viability of our present bisexual identities, as "blatant" rather than shady or latent, we may need to turn the tables on high- or low-brow, recondite or popular, models of sexuality that appear unthinking when it comes to bisexuality. Such models have omitted, denied, disavowed, and even appropriated bisexuality. Now is the time, actively and critically, to unthink them.<sup>5</sup>

In this essay, I examine the ways in which something called "bisexuality" has been made to play in a specific set of writings, namely, those texts that academics recognize under the label of "theory." Such an examination may be one way of beginning the task that is crucial to bisexual politics: understanding how we have come to be unthought, made invisible, trivial, insubstantial, irrelevant. While this theory may seem far from the urgencies of bisexual politics, theory itself is a practice, and a practice which reaches far beyond its own confines. For example, the ways in which the self-declared theory of psychoanalysis has spelled out definitions of "bisexuality" continues to inform just how we are understood; much more recent forms of theory, such as "queer theory," have repercussions far beyond the simply academic in their treatment of bisexuality. The greater part of my paper is devoted to outlining what theory has said about us and how we might speak back to its pronouncements on our own terms.

We can begin naming ourselves and our various bisexual identities by, paradoxically, negation: we can scrutinize the pronouncements of which we have been either

the objects or the missing others in order to spell out the process of erasure that has taken place. In my readings of various forms of “theory,” I do not mean to suggest ill intentions and individual malice; on the contrary, I wish to highlight an ideologically bound inability to imagine bisexuality concretely which is common to various “theories,” from the apparently radical to the politically reticent, from Freudian to “French feminist” to Anglophone film theory, from popular sexology to queer theory. In order to name ourselves not once-and-for-all but tactically, through the very utterances that would un-name us, bisexuals have drawn on what I call and analyze as a politics of *para*-naming, or a naming which is in, through, and alongside the misnaming to which we are subject. (According to Webster’s, *para*, as a prefix, means “beside, alongside of, beyond, aside from, or closely related to.”) Such *para*-naming provides one way in which we can assert ourselves as “totally bisexual.” A brief example: the sticker that I quote as a motto comes up with the slogan, “Not half gay, not half straight, but totally bisexual,” in which “bisexual” achieves its meaning through its refusal of both adjacent terms, “straight” and “gay.” However, the politics of naming or *para*-naming *alone* is not enough, as our ongoing battles over health care, citizenship and immigration, family structures, multiple or single partnerships, housing, employment, social services, and survival all testify.

Through *para*-naming “bisexuality” can work in ways not unlike the “oppositional consciousness” of which Chela Sandoval writes in relation to the contradictions of “U.S. third world feminism.” Sandoval describes how “differential consciousness represents the variant, emerging out of correlations, intensities, junctures, crises. What is differential functions through hierarchy, location, and value—enacting the recovery, revenge, or reparation.”<sup>6</sup> For Sandoval, location, place, and hierarchy produce differences, out of which resistance can come, precisely as the effect of those differences.

As bisexuals we can enact a “recovery, revenge, or reparation” across a number of terrains, which would be similar to that envisaged by Sandoval for all forms of oppositional consciousness, once we come out of the interstices of theories and speak back to, and through, the systems and groups that have tried to think us away. An entry in an entire series of “ultimate bisexual comebacks” offered by the bisexual fanzine *Anything That Moves* puts it best: “Well, I don’t think you exist either.”<sup>7</sup> This is un-thinking with a vengeance.

Place is crucial to both oppositional consciousness and to the tactical recovery of bisexuality as something adjacent or alongside, a *para*-identity. Accordingly, this essay ends by reimagining the place of bisexuality. The commonplace of bisexuality as some “middle ground” between other entities, whether sexualities, genders, or social groups, has often been the only place to which bisexuality gets relegated.

Perhaps that middle ground can lose some of its commonplaceness and be made radical as the site for a new bisexual activism. Yet I do not want to impose anew the cliché of bisexuality as a borderline or borderland that affirms two, and only two, other identities that are understood to be securely in place. Instead, I wish to suggest that, ideally, bisexuality would make for an identity politics that involves, unavoidably, an identity-in-coalition politics. The *topos* of “middle ground” occurs frequently in discussions that link bisexuality to what has come to be called “multiculturalism” in the United States, and this frequency seems to be more than coincidental and bears investigation. While the model of multiculturalism is itself highly time- and place-bound, I want to suggest that such a situation of bisexuality in and through the issues of multiculturalism can offer the hope of identity politics beyond identity politics, a site on which bisexuals can stand, firmly, in coalition and solidarity with many other groups and identities.<sup>8</sup>

### Why Bi Theory?

It’s 1991, and two other queer graduate students and I are talking about the upcoming Rutgers Lesbian and Gay Conference. To reiterate: *Lesbian and Gay*, for its soon turns out that I’m the only bisexual in our group, and that I’m also (not surprisingly) the only one who knows about the conference organizers’ decision to drop “Bisexual” from the official title. I’ve heard a great deal of gossip about this decision, including one rumor that intrigues and infuriates me: supposedly, a reason given for the noninclusion of bisexuals is that *bisexuals have not produced good theory*. (Like all veritable rumors, this one has remained unverified.)<sup>9</sup> “The organizers certainly aren’t giving bisexuals a chance to produce theory,” muses the more sympathetic of my two interlocutors, before adding, “What would a bisexual theory look like?” Suddenly angry, I respond, “We don’t need a bisexual theory. We need bisexual *bodies*.” The conversation, then, turns to other things.

Robyn Ochs and Pam Ellis tell the story of the conference in more detail in a short article, “Conference Organizers ‘Confused’” from *Anything That Moves*. They note that when the conference was held at Harvard the previous year, “bisexual” did feature in the conference title, which was “The Fourth National Lesbian, Bisexual, and Gay Studies Conference: ‘Pleasure and Politics’” (Harvard, 26–28 October 1990).<sup>10</sup> Conference organizers at Rutgers, however, told Ochs and Ellis that their decision to drop the word—that word—from the conference title was “unanimous”: the organizers felt justified that, by leaving “bisexual” out, they were being “more inclusive.” Confused conference organizers indeed! Ochs and Ellis comment, “Categorizing all sexual behavior which cannot be categorized as heterosexual as

'lesbian and gay' is an oppressive act in language"<sup>11</sup>—oppressive in more than just language, just as language is always more than "just" language.<sup>12</sup> Ochs and Ellis called for a letter-writing zap, but the situation seems to have been "resolved," not entirely satisfactorily, by giving a few panels to bisexuals without "bisexual" as such making its way back into the conference title.<sup>13</sup> The ad hoc "Stick It Back In" committee also busied itself with protests against the Rutgers committee's paternalistic assumption that we would feel happy to be reclassified as "lesbian and gay" without our consent and to be included, according to the committee's double-talk by being left out.<sup>14</sup>

A simple appeal to bisexual bodies (like my call for bodies as opposed to theories) risks the presumption that bodies can somehow be enough, that is, self-evident, or outside a world of already existing meanings.<sup>15</sup> The relations between bisexual bodies and theories of bisexuality become even more vexed when we realize that bisexuality is very often only apprehended as something "in theory," that is, as a speculation or hypothesis which does not, in fact, exist "in reality" (wherever that may be). In the instance of the Rutgers conference, we were expelled because, supposedly, we had not done enough good theory, but bisexuals may very well be only good *in theory*—hence, perhaps, the reluctance even to name us as such. Also, a simple "commonsense" appeal to the body can serve the ends of heterosexism, for which anatomy, relentlessly, is destiny. Yet the bland belief that "theory" itself does not *do* a politics and does not produce an immediate practice can have very particular—if implicit—political goals, as the rumor about bisexuals not making good enough "theory" evidences.<sup>16</sup> Whatever the reasons for the disappearance of "bisexual" from the title of the 1991 Rutgers conference, "theory" can be read as a pretext for biphobia and may operate in many situations as a straightforward act of elitism and exclusion.<sup>17</sup>

Since we have already been faulted for our theoretical failures, bisexuals may gain something by keeping our distance from the thriving scene of queer theory. From our critical distance—perhaps from our very position on the fence on which we are so often accused of sitting—we can raise a different set of issues. For example, we might ask why and how "theory" rather than "queerness" has become the credit card—indeed, the credibility card—of "cultural capital" inside the Anglo-American academy?<sup>18</sup> In ways that a nascent bisexual criticism can find useful, one critic, Donald Morton, has begun to question the spectacular success of "queer theory" and its self-sustaining "narrative of break and break-through . . . as if from within [the academy itself]."<sup>19</sup> Morton astutely reveals the commodification process by which the same old theory can be given a make-over, and he claims that what is really going on in "queer theory" amounts to an uncritical and

ubiquitous reassertion of a liberal-humanist appeal to "experience."<sup>20</sup> In the end, it is less "theory" *queered* (or even defamiliarized) than the usual business of theorizing "queerness."<sup>21</sup>

Persuasive as Morton is, he does not tell the full story. The rise of queer theory in the United States may be linked to an increased loss of political force and direction inside the United States academy. The past decade and a half have witnessed Republican dominance; neglect and cruelty in the AIDS crisis; assaults on immigrants, welfare, and affirmative action; and, in the academy, cuts in educational budgets, an ever-weakening liberal understanding of the role of the university (that understanding limited from the start); the debacles of deconstruction; the attacks on what came to be denounced as "political correctness"; and all of this along with the still tentative institutionalization of women's studies. In such a context, joining "theory" to some almost all-purpose "queerness" seems to promise a kind of magical resolution to conflicts over the social role of the university by granting whoever purveys "queer theory" the illusion of direct action *via* theory. Academic decorum and protocols tend to work as class-based constraints and to minister to class interests.

Given all these considerations, the question becomes not so much why bi theory as why buy theory (or who buys which theory), but that question has to be taken up elsewhere. I can only suggest that as bisexuals, our interests might be served better if we begin with historical and social analyses. At issue is not whether we can find our place in queer theory but the way in which our asserted presence can transform the problematic of sexuality and gender as it has been posed in the academy. Take the ubiquity of the concept "homophobia" in the work of queer theory. We may well ask if "homophobia" *alone* can explain the complicated oppressions to which everyone living outside a normative sex-gender system is subject. As a critical concept "homophobia" tends to suggest psychological, hence individualized, explanations for social oppression, regardless of whether that psychology is personal or collective. Despite the formation of the term "biphobia" by analogy with "homophobia," it is useful to insist that "biphobia" is a specific term which has a political, if not linguistic, closeness to "heterosexism." Indeed, "heterosexism" may name our oppression far more effectively than "homophobia" does, and using "heterosexism" to name a structure of oppression can lead to considerably more powerful ways of thinking against it.<sup>22</sup>

Heterosexism may have much to do with many bisexuals: take, for example, the couple culture that makes itself an institution everywhere, even in the ostensibly liberal movement by which partnership benefits are extended from one set of couples ("opposite-sex") to another ("same-sex"). Such heterosexism understands

the two-partner model of heterosexuality as the only acceptable basis for relationships, and denies the full and urgent complexities of lived social networks of support, affection, and lust. On the issue of multiple partners, the AIDS crisis might be understood very differently by insisting on the validity, rather than the guilt, of bisexuality.

In terms of gay culture, as bisexuals we have many reasons to be skeptical of the way in which the story of the Stonewall riots is now told. "Stonewall" has come to be canonized (and amply commercialized) as the point of origin of contemporary queer culture in a master narrative which relies on the even grander master narrative of "American" nationalism and the onward and upward progress of "American democracy." Given that bisexuals have always been in lesbian and gay communities, whether acknowledged or not, perhaps we can help lesbians and gay men tell history in less rigid and damagingly nationalistic ways. What about the models of "polymorphous perversity" that were available at the time of Stonewall? What about the initial transnational, coalitionist, and anti-imperialist politics of the various groups identified with Gay Lib?<sup>23</sup> What about earlier moments, such as Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin prior to World War II? To assume bisexuality as a point of departure rather than as an afterthought can prevent some of the mistaken presumptions of lesbian and gay history/theory, which has tended to understand all same-sex and cross-sex behaviors according to a contemporary lesbian and gay norm.<sup>24</sup>

#### *Unthinking Theory (Freud, French Feminism, Film, Queer . . .)*

##### *Freud's "Innate Disposition"*

The relation of "bisexuality" to "theory" has the air of a dangerous liaison. "Theory" seems always to be attempting to make "bisexuality" merely "theoretical," that is, masterable and knowable, an object for which it can finally account and which it can ultimately explain away. In its turn, "bisexuality" threatens to undo, if not throw into crisis, some of the certainties of theory. Their dangerous liaison, moreover, appears to consist of a series of missed encounters and broken dates, in which "theory" continues to postpone its engagement with the "bisexuality" that "theory" either relegates to some distant anterior time or anticipates in an unspecified future. The end result is that bisexuality can always be held off, never to interrupt the present moment.<sup>25</sup>

The empiricism of the early sexologists found evidence of bisexual behavior everywhere, a ubiquity which led them to invent all kinds of names for the sexu-

ality they believed they were discovering.<sup>26</sup> But the links, missing and otherwise, between "theory" and "bisexuality" can be traced back to Sigmund Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* [1905]). As Freud's title makes clear, "sexuality" and "theory" are henceforth to run in tandem. (And this pairing takes place before queer theory, although queer theory continues to give priority to psychoanalysis, often over other more obviously socially based theories.) In *Three Essays*, Freud carefully distinguishes his own "science"<sup>27</sup> from "the theory of bisexuality [which] has been expressed in its crudest form by a spokesman of the male invert."<sup>28</sup> He further warns against the untheoretical understandings of "the lay circles" in which Otto Weininger is credited with "the hypothesis of human bisexuality," a hypothesis which, according to Freud, Weininger made "the basis of a somewhat unbalanced book."<sup>29</sup> Freud thus salvages his version of bisexuality for science and theory, precisely *against* lay circles, crude forms, unbalanced books, and popular misconceptions. Moreover, he guarantees a proprietorship over a bisexuality which almost becomes his patent, and it is this (his) bisexuality which his theory will call up only to expel time and time again.

Freud has indeed made a *theory* of bisexuality completely his own: in his famous never-delivered lecture of 1933 on "Femininity," he declares roundly that his science and he "are standing on the *ground* of bisexuality" when making their irrefutable claims about the "riddle of femininity."<sup>30</sup> Simply put, bisexuality is entirely Freud's turf by the early 1930s.<sup>31</sup> In a slightly earlier (1931) piece on "Female Sexuality," bisexuality again guarantees Freud's knowledge: "First of all, there can be no doubt that the bisexuality, which is present, as we believe, in the innate disposition of human beings, comes to the fore much more clearly in women than in men."<sup>32</sup>

His gendering of bisexuality as an attribute of "women" resolves an ongoing confusion in Freud's theory over whether bisexuality is to be comprehended as a form of hermaphroditism, "psychic" or otherwise, or as a primary sexual matrix for later homosexual or heterosexual object choice and sexual orientation. Freud had taken the word "bisexuality" from Wilhelm Fliess, for whom bisexuality was a physical rather than a psychic fact, and Freud never could decide once and for all if bisexuality designated the coincidence of two anatomical sexes in the same body or the conjunction of two—or more—kinds of desire in the same subject. The *Three Essays* begins with an allusion to Plato's myth of the division of an original hermaphrodite into two sexes, and both "anatomical" and "psychical hermaphroditism" stand as signs for such an originary bisexuality in Freud's work.<sup>33</sup>

His widely quoted remarks about the bisexual disposition of everyone, whether "homosexual" or "heterosexual," are made even earlier, in 1920, in "The

Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," which, as the title alone shows, concentrates on the gendering of sexualities other than heterosexual as *female*.

Such an achievement—the removal of genital inversion or homosexuality—is in my experience never an easy matter. On the contrary, I have found success possible only in specially favorable circumstances, and even then the success essentially consisted in making access to the opposite sex (which had hitherto been barred) possible to a person restricted to homosexuality, thus restoring his full bisexual functions. After that it lay with him to choose whether he wished to abandon the path that is banned by society, and in some cases he has done so.<sup>34</sup>

Freud goes on to warn his presumed-to-be-straight-and-male readers of the obvious, that, since bisexuality must ostensibly go both ways, heterosexuality, like homosexuality, can seem like a truncated or arrested bisexuality. "One must remember that normal sexuality too depends upon a restriction in the choice of object. In general, to undertake to convert a fully developed homosexual into a heterosexual does not offer much more prospect of success than the reverse, except that for good practical reasons the latter is never attempted."<sup>35</sup> With the rather jovial phrase "good practical reasons," Freud alludes to the entire institution of heterosexism, which his postulate of universal bisexuality does not shake. The theorization of a bisexuality, even a universal one, seems less than earth-shattering.<sup>36</sup>

Juliet Mitchell, a later feminist commentator on Freud, describes the vagaries of bisexuality in Freudian theory: he reaches bisexuality via his belief in the "polymorphous" character of the sexual drive.<sup>37</sup> The latter *has* to be polymorphous and thus potentially bisexual to save the Oedipus complex from simple gender determinism. Commenting on Freud, Mitchell notes that in this process of making meaning, bisexuality "[shifts] its meaning and [comes] to stand for the very uncertainty of sexual division itself."<sup>38</sup> Far from being shiftily, bisexuality can be put to work as an all-purpose theoretical stopgap: it now signifies, in Freud's writings, the "very uncertainty" of sexual division and sexuality, so that "bisexuality" itself signifies "uncertainty." This maneuver ensures that everyone has *some* of that original bisexual disposition left over in them, but the assertion of an actual "full bisexual disposition" in the present becomes impossible. Any bisexuality becomes a dangerous reversion to the "polymorphousness" of a sexuality *before* male/female and hetero/homo divisions. In the quotation from "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," given earlier, Freud makes it clear that a "[restoration of] . . . full bisexual functions" necessitates a choice between "homosexuality" ("the path that is banned by society") and "heterosexuality." Once more, he does not envisage "bisexuality" as a

choice so much as a return. He gives pride of place to a "bisexuality" that he puts outside the culturally possible, always *before*, *after*, or *outside* (rather than alongside) the imposition of cultural order.<sup>39</sup>

Bisexuality is always out of time in a Freudian scenario. Even in a very recent retelling of Freud's story of bisexuality, critic Jonathan Dollimore, not unlike Freud, places bisexuality in any time except the present:

In the attempt to remold deviant desire Freud discovers its obstinacy, even or especially in that incompleteness which it shares with normal desire; an incompleteness which, again in the case of both the deviant and the normal, bears their histories. . . . But it is also an incompleteness which in raising the possibility of a "full bisexuality," affirms a future potential beyond the normal, incorporating the latter in the act of displacing it. It is in such ways that the narrative of the polymorphous perverse may, as I say, be at once nostalgic and utopian, as in the remark of Freud, picked up by Marcuse: "the subsequent fulfillment of a prehistoric wish."<sup>40</sup>

I have quoted Dollimore at some length because he reiterates in such a clear way what temporal shifts occur in this particular version of "bisexuality." However "utopian" (forward-looking) or "nostalgic" (regressive) the account may be, it banishes the plenitude of "full bisexuality" to some (any) other time. Dollimore's own backward glance at the "sexual politics" associated with the 1960s (via Marcuse) leaves bisexuality at two removes: it appears to have existed solely in the past, but even then it was either too late or too early, as the "subsequent" realization of a "prehistoric" desire. As such, bisexuality must remain ever and only a theoretical wish.

#### *French Feminism and the "Two-In-One"*

Freud's version of bisexuality has continued to provoke theoretical responses. His gendered linkage of bisexuality to *women*, in particular, amply evident from the citations above, has engaged a number of feminist critics.<sup>41</sup> Two different accounts and critiques of Freudian bisexuality emerge from the work of "French feminist" critics, Hélène Cixous and Sarah Kofman, but, while they are overtly critical in their appropriations of Freud, in ways opposed but complementary, both Cixous and Kofman perpetuate problems for a political and social understanding of bisexuality.<sup>42</sup>

Cixous takes up bisexuality when she rewrites Freud's account of how the little "bisexual" human being (understood as polymorphous or androgynous) acquires its gender to become a girl and then grows up to be a woman. Like Marcuse, and

perhaps also Dollimore, Cixous makes "bisexuality" an origin and a utopian promised land.<sup>43</sup> She holds out for what she calls "the *other bisexuality*," both like and unlike Freud's, which would be in close proximity to woman's body and, hence, derived from what Cixous considers to be a specifically feminine economy of two-in-one.<sup>44</sup> She thus maintains Freud's gender scheme for bisexuality as that "innate disposition of human beings, [which] comes to the fore *much more clearly in women than in men*."<sup>45</sup> Even while Cixous sets out to controvert Freud's models of gender, she keeps bisexuality the province of women, and thus gendered (as female) in some way *before* gender.

Kofman, too, rewrites Freud, but in a manner quite the opposite of Cixous. Unlike Cixous, Kofman does not envisage a future paradise of bisexuality as the realization of a "prehistoric wish" for women. In *The Enigma of Woman: Woman in the Writings of Freud*, Kofman's wily tactic is to make Freud the analyst: she subjects him to his own analysis and tests exactly how shaky the "ground" of "bisexuality" can be for the (straight) male analyst. She argues that by shutting bisexuality up inside the figure of "woman," Freud manages to ward off bisexuality in men, and in himself in particular.<sup>46</sup> Kofman's rereading of Freud is richly ironic, as the tables are turned and the knife of "bisexuality" cuts the other way—cuts, to mix a metaphor, the very "ground" of bisexuality out from under Freud's feet.

In the mid-1990s neither Cixous nor Kofman receives much consideration in queer theory, even though Freud, Lacan, and Luce Irigaray are still widely discussed.<sup>47</sup> One reason for this may be that Cixous and Kofman deal with bisexuality, homosexuality, and heterosexuality *only* insofar as those relate to gender. What is difficult about both their versions of Freud—what is difficult, indeed, about the very Freud they revise and rewrite—is this *gendered* understanding of "bisexuality" as part and parcel of a generalized "femininity." Bisexuality becomes something like a metaphor or a synecdoche for an idealized "woman," which begs all manner of questions concerning sexuality and gender. Cixous, for example, may link bisexuality to homosexuality from time to time,<sup>48</sup> but the connection lacks social weight, since it is so obviously metaphorical and de-essentialized.<sup>49</sup>

Bisexual critics can still benefit from a consideration of Cixous and Kofman's critiques of Freud's phallogocentric assumptions, but what both theorists offer in the last analysis is another version of the fantasy that everyone is bisexual (*all* women are bisexual, Cixous reiterates). This is not an especially helpful fantasy in formulating a bisexual politics. If *everyone* is bisexual, "bisexuality" can no longer be a specific or a pertinent feature. At this point a deeply homophobic logic, which may appear as utopianism or nostalgia, emerges, according to which no one would *really* be bisexual. Or everyone was *once* bisexual, or will be bisexual *in the future*, yet no one is bisexual *here and now*. Thus, no one has to take responsibility for

bisexual identities, issues, or politics. Such theories work almost like the popular counselors who reassure nervous heterosexual correspondents to advice columns that bisexual fantasies are OK as long as they stay fantasies ("Everyone has them, but hardly anyone acts on them"). When all is said and done, these theories of "bisexuality" are themselves finally only fantasies, incapable of sustained social change and unable to confront heterosexism, genderphobia, or couple culture.

Bisexuality was also understood as a midpoint between genders in feminist film theory of the 1970s and 1980s, when it enjoyed a vogue as the way out of an apparent theoretical impasse that set male gaze against female spectacle.<sup>50</sup> This led to a flirtation with the notion of a bisexual spectator, which was a peculiar, but unfortunately not *queer*, fantasy of getting "that way" at the movies, as if the cinematic apparatus somehow really could turn out spectators. Again, such theories have fallen out of favor, because their "bisexuality" was *always* only potential, on screen, or somewhere between film and spectator, but never outside the theater. Academic writings can subject a term to a kind of conceptual exhaustion which then makes it hard to reopen a serious discussion of that term. This was the fate of "bisexuality" in film theory by the mid-1980s: hence the summary dismissal of "bisexuality" as nothing but a theoretical *and* social fantasy in Teresa de Lauretis's essay "Film and the Visible," when she writes, "For it seems to me that this notion of female bisexuality, with its emphasis on androgyny . . . is itself a fantasy. And a not very engaging fantasy for lesbians."<sup>51</sup> So off we go, airily banished from the "visible." In the same collection, Judith Mayne makes the point that "either you [as a film theoretician] end up affirming some notion of a wishy-washy bisexual human subject—'wishy-washy' in the sense that such a subject-position carries very little political impact in our society—or you are accused of essentialism."<sup>52</sup> Trends, academic or otherwise, bring the danger of turning issues into commodities to be discarded once a particular trend is over. Bisexuality is especially vulnerable to such trendiness, given the widespread fantasies about bisexuality as either a thing of the past or sign of the times. Perhaps the only response to the many appropriations and dismissals of bisexuality is to say, along with Lily Brandidrop, former editor of the queer fanzine *A Taste of Latex* and avowed "bisexualtress," "I'm a pervert, not a trend."<sup>53</sup>

*Queer Theory inside, outside, and around 1991*  
(*A Story of Parentheses, and All Kinds of Ellipses*)

While the title of this section alludes to Jane Gallop's *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Theory*,<sup>54</sup> the allusion is less than serious. Although I will be offering a very brief consideration of some texts, particularly anthologies, that

appeared around 1991, my goal is not to do for "queer theory" what Gallop does for the strangely depoliticized hybrid "academic feminist literary theory," namely, to defend an academic practice through an endlessly recursive rereading. Instead, I wish to examine the ways in which particular texts either crystallized or contained some of the symbolic force of a politics that had begun, around 1991, to call itself "queer."

What was this politics? Gayatri Spivak argues that moments of social change are best considered in their historical context when they are "pluralized and plotted as confrontation"; such moments are "signaled or marked by a functional change in sign-systems," she adds.<sup>55</sup> Thus, in 1991, the signifier "queer" marked such change and confrontation as it was mobilized across a range of social fields, from queer fanzines to club scenes, from Queer Nation to the officially delimited "gay" against which "queer" strove to define itself. This mobilization both registered and resulted in a switch in the public sign systems which had regulated *sexed/sexualized/gendered* identities in the United States in the 1980s. Unfortunately, the change that took place is now very often represented, after the fact, as some leap into a barely articulable new zone of sexuality and gender, where "queer" simultaneously means everything and nothing. Here Sedgwick's "T Times" (*sic*) and "Queer and Now" and Butler's "Critically Queer" come to mind.<sup>56</sup>

The "antiasimilationist" drive of Queer Nation and of "queer" in general has received much attention,<sup>57</sup> but the impetus of "queer" to name under one rubric "lesbian" and "gay" and "bisexual" and "transgender" has not. When, in Los Angeles in the spring of 1991, I saw a Queer Nation sticker that said "BI POWER/TRANS POWER/QUEER NATION" and another that announced tersely "... AND BISEXUAL/GET USED TO IT," I knew I could be, or was already, a Queer National. "Queer" named or misnamed a politics of coalition among bisexuals, transgenderists, lesbians and gay men, and any other person who refuses the dominant system of sex, gender, and sexuality. The work of the word "queer" was contextual and strategic, not permanent, and the coalition it established could also break down, as indeed it did some two years later.

Queer theory, unlike Queer Nation, has been far from the troubled world of actual coalition-building, and has, more often than not, treated bisexuality and transsexuality quite shabbily. Part of the difficulty that queer theory has with bisexuality (and indeed with any form of sexual or gender identity that does not, in the last analysis, translate into "lesbian" or "gay") comes from the way it conceives of the categories of "sexuality" and "gender" as wholly separate.<sup>58</sup> Instead of exploring the radical connections of gender and sexuality, queer theory commonly makes "sexuality" by extension stand for "homosexuality" or "heterosexuality," while "gender" comes to designate

"women" or "men." Although queer theory often sets up cross-dressing or drag as practices that ostensibly undo the categories of "sex," "sexuality," and "gender," cross-dressing is almost always treated from the outside, with vested indifference, to misquote the title of Garber's widely read book.<sup>59</sup> The fixation queer theory has on drag ends up seeming shallow, like the diversion of a tourist who can go home to the security of those very categories.<sup>60</sup>

Eve Sedgwick's early and influential piece, "Across Gender, across Sexuality: Willa Cather and Others," already makes the split between gender and sexuality clear.<sup>61</sup> Sedgwick provides much of the conceptual machinery of what has become queer theory by mapping what she calls "our culture's crystallization of *gay identities* over the past hundred years" (my emphasis) onto a chart of two separate columns, "gender" and "sexuality."<sup>62</sup> While her model has its uses, it keeps "gender" distinct from "sexuality" as one column from another and cannot accommodate people for whom sexuality and gender may match up differently. Quite revealingly, bisexuals only feature on Sedgwick's chart under the cliché of "bisexual potential" as a form of "sexuality" that makes universalizing claims. (This is hardly the only current image of bisexuality.) Transgender people do not show up at all, unless implicitly under the rubric of "gender" in its minoritizing forms.<sup>63</sup> (Sedgwick does not seem to be ready to imagine a "transsexual potential" here.)

The limits of Sedgwick's project reveal themselves immediately in her failure to put bisexuals and transgender people on the map. Her theory of gender and sexuality does damage to the realities of transgender sexualities and bisexual genders. Imagine for a moment if Sedgwick's piece had not been called "Across Gender, across Sexuality," where "across" presupposes a distance to be forged and traversed, but "Trans Gender, Trans Sexuality," or "Bi Gender, Bi Sexuality," or any and every mixture of the two.<sup>64</sup> To imagine that would be to think of the power of a renaming that would change Sedgwick's project.

Bisexual people often make productively contradictory assertions about our relation to genders in sexualities. Kathleen Bennett summarizes some of these statements in the bisexual feminist anthology *Closer to Home*, when she observes that both heterosexism and monosexism "are upheld by a sexist myth that the genders are mutually exclusive—thus, anything other than a clear preference for one or the other must be a phase or a pathology of identity confusion."<sup>65</sup> Bennett suggests that bisexuals resist the binarism of gender in ways that are different from either lesbians and gay men or heterosexuals: "[S]ome bisexuals say they are blind to the gender of their potential lovers and that they love people as people; others are aware of differences between their male and female partners but are able to be attracted to each in different (but overlapping) ways. For the first group, a dichotomy of genders

between which to choose doesn't seem to exist; the second group simply disregards the social obligation to choose."<sup>66</sup> This provides a useful point from which to begin a reconsideration of gender and sexuality together.

In her more recent work, Sedgwick continues to uphold the distinctions which bisexuals covert, and bisexuals are thus given short shrift in *Tendencies*. Bisexuals appear in the introduction to *Tendencies* in a particularly tortuous sentence which juxtaposes and contrasts "the moment of Queer (sic)" with "other moments" (Sedgwick's emphasis).<sup>67</sup> "[P]eople [who organize] around claiming the label bisexual, the steady increase in AIDS-related deaths, Clinton's impending presidency, and the massive participation by African Americans and Latinos" in the New York Gay Pride Parade" are all part of the "other moments" which are set off from the "Queer" moment by Sedgwick's use of parentheses and italics, almost as if the text needed to differentiate typographically between what is "Queer" and what is not.<sup>68</sup> Why are African Americans, Latinos, and bisexuals all shuffled off from the center of queerness here? Are there no people of color who are queers or bisexuals or even bisexual queers? This kind of putting-in-parenthesis has come to exemplify how queer theory deals with issues such as bisexuality and race.

While the year 1991 may have been crucial for Queer Nation and for the forging of links between bisexuals, transgenders, and lesbians and gay men, a very different understanding of the term "queer" operated in both academic circles and in some of the venues for "lesbian-and-gay" journalism. There the term "queer" functioned, as in *Tendencies*, to shut bisexuals either out or up. This is how an article in the *Village Voice* chose to represent the Rutgers conference:

[W]hen representatives of the bisexual caucus piped up, demanding to be named, they were often shrugged off—not for the old hardcore political reasons ("you're with us or against us, make up your mind"), but because they represented a theoretical throw-back. Just when the field starts calling itself *queer* theory, as a means of avoiding strict, oppositional boundaries, the insistence on bisexuality—suggesting that people are inhabited by two sexual orientations—reinscribes the very categories that bisexual identity claims to blur.<sup>69</sup>

Alisa Solomon's comments here may seem at first to be nothing more than *Village Voice* bi-bashing.<sup>70</sup> Unfortunately, Solomon's biases anticipate clearly what would happen to bisexuality under the regime of "the field [that started] calling itself *queer* theory" around 1991. Solomon omits any mention of the organizers' decision to drop "bisexual" from the title, which allows her, in some ways like Sedgwick in the passage from *Tendencies*, to reduce any bisexual politics or theorization to a squeaky (or shrill) "pip[ing] up, demanding to be named." The implication is clear: even in

a situation where we have been violently un-named, our demand for naming has no political dimensions.

Once bisexuality has been stripped of politics, Solomon can dismiss bisexuals, without bothering to spell out any explicitly "political" (or "hardcore," as she puts it) pretexes. Because we are out of fashion, *passé*, a phrase either passing or past, we are neither "theoretical" nor "queer" enough to be part of "queer theory." We may look deconstructive, but we "[reinscribe] the very categories that bisexual identity claims to blur." Our deconstruction, then, is a fake, an illusion, a lie, presumably like our sexualities and our identities, which are, in Solomon's view, a "throwback." Bisexuals must be discounted politically *and* theoretically: Solomon imagines politics and theory in separate realms at the very instant when "theory" is put to the political end of erasing bisexuality. Even stranger is Solomon's agentless, objectless oppositional phrase, "suggesting [by whom? to whom?] that people are inhabited by two sexual orientations." For want of a better subject, does the word "bisexuality" itself insinuate this? While "bisexuality" as a word-concept may perform a certain deconstructive labor on "homosexuality" and "heterosexuality" alike, to understand "bisexuality" simply as a term that veers dialectically between undoing and affirming the "homo/hetero" opposition seems to be a sure way of assigning blame to bisexuals when all is said and done.

For another example of how bisexuals can be vilified for being simultaneously "homosexual" and "heterosexual," we need only move to another institution, one which may seem far away from the *Village Voice's* cozy "gay-affirmative" liberalism but which operates according to Solomon's logic. The United States military has a definition of bisexuals which sounds disturbingly like Solomon's description of bisexuals as people illegitimately "inhabited by two sexual orientations": "Bisexual means a person who engages in, desires to engage in, or intends to engage in homosexual and heterosexual acts."<sup>71</sup> There are thus only homosexual and heterosexual acts; the person who enacts them (whether in desire or fact or fantasy) would be a "bisexual," one who has no identity except insofar as she or he behaves as a "homosexual" or a "heterosexual." Even a bisexual act as such does not exist within this biphobic schema. United States military policy specifically legislates bisexual identity out of existence, while nevertheless policing that same nonidentity with some ferocity.<sup>72</sup> In an extreme version of the two-in-one scenario on which Cixous draws, bisexuality becomes not an interzone but a nowhere. J

Such enforced binarism turns the bisexual into a kind of vanishing point where the apparently parallel lines of homosexuality and heterosexuality converge. Conceptually, the bisexual can then only be an antsubject. As bisexuals, for instance, we are denied specific safer-sex information, even though we continue to be reviled

in the AIDS crisis. In this matter Jan Zia Grover has reflected helpfully on how bisexuality appears in policies and representations concerning AIDS. She cites popular medical texts which claim that "because of their double lives, [bisexuals] may be the most difficult group to reach and counsel" (my emphasis).<sup>73</sup> Here we come across either another version of Solomon's two orientations that don't add up to another, separate one, or the frequent trope of double lives, or even the "dual attraction" of a recent text.<sup>74</sup> The medical authorities Grover cites also opine that "it takes only one bisexual to introduce the AIDS virus [sic] into the heterosexual community . . . The risk is easily hidden when they are having sex with women."<sup>75</sup> (In the last quotation, note the [hetero]sexist presumptions that "they," the bisexuals having sex with women, are men, or that bisexuals can only have homosexuals or heterosexuals as our partners.) For Grover, bisexuals, who are placed outside of earshot and reason in these discourses, bear the burden of symbolically maintaining the boundaries between "homosexuals" and "heterosexuals"; "sexual desire is parceled into two realms, the heterosexual and homosexual 'communities,' with the bisexual—understood as a homosexual posing as a heterosexual—acting as the secret conveyor of the diseases of the former to the healthy bodies of the latter."<sup>76</sup> Another presupposition is that bisexuals cannot have sexual relations between and among ourselves; for we can only prey on unsuspecting heterosexuals or homosexuals as their partners, while presumably concealing our own lack of identity under the cloak of either homosexuality or heterosexuality.<sup>77</sup>

Discussions of bisexuals and bisexuality are now inevitably framed, implicitly or explicitly, by the AIDS crisis; even though, as Alexis Danzig points out, "Safer-sex and drug use education rarely addresses those of us who are bisexually active."<sup>78</sup> Instead we are insistently blamed. Danzig amends Grover to note that public discussions of AIDS have made bisexual women as well as men visible in extremely threatening ways. She refers to the homophobic assumption that "bisexual women spread HIV to lesbians."<sup>79</sup> Bisexuals of all genders have been framed within the AIDS crisis time and time again.<sup>80</sup> But in response to the immense media energy devoted to vilifying bisexuality, bisexuals have found a reverse discourse to speak back, an oppositional consciousness with which to begin forming our own politics, coalitions, and agendas.<sup>81</sup>

The association of bisexuality with a deconstruction of sorts, which is explicitly forged in middlebrow journalism like Solomon's and tacitly at work in the military's definition of "bisexual" and public discourses on AIDS, leaves bisexuals at a disadvantage. It is ironic that the only reference, and a glancing one at that, to "bisexuals" in Cindy Patton's otherwise admirable *Inventing AIDS* should occur within the context of "the linguistic turn in current critical practice," or deconstruction.<sup>82</sup>

Race and sexuality function in structurally similar ways—both are cultural continua pressed into a socially constructed pair of opposites. In this context, the idea of passing (acquiring the signifiers of the normative category) of claiming "Black is beautiful" or "gay is good," and the increasing visibility of "racially mixed" persons and "bisexuals" constantly function to call into question the lines of demarcation between socially constructed opposites.<sup>83</sup>

As we will see, in passages from *Bi Any Other Name*, there are considerable links between cross-cultural and biracial identities and bisexuality or transsexuality, but Patton's summary view of some vague homology between "racially mixed" people and "bisexuals" (which Patton keeps, for whatever reason, in quotation) evens out common causes instead of analyzing them. This is all done in the service of calling "into question . . . socially constructed opposites," but again, for whom? Such glib commenting, not for but about bisexuals and/or people of mixed race descent and biracial heritage, reinforces the lines that divide inside from outside and leaves the very social subjects which the commentary calls upon to do its work stranded beyond both "inside" and "outside."

On that subject, the figure of the "inside/out" has achieved considerable currency in "queer theory," largely through its use in a much-cited anthology from 1991, *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, edited by Diana Fuss.<sup>84</sup> Pondering the intricacies of the inside and the out, Fuss asks: "And what gets left out of the inside/outside, heterosexual/homosexual opposition, an opposition which could at least plausibly be said to secure its seemingly inviolable dialectical structure only by assimilating and internalizing other sexualities (bisexuality, transvestism, transsexualism . . .) to its own rigid polar logic?"<sup>85</sup>

What might escape the "seemingly inviolable dialectical structure" is called upon, in passing and in parentheses, only to be given no more than a glancing reference which trails off in an ellipsis. We are not very far from Solomon's view of bisexuality as a deconstruction that falls short. Given this introduction, as an anthology *Inside/Out* continues the process of making "bisexuality, transvestism, transsexualism . . ." marginal and parenthetical. In effect, Fuss does not so much describe as reinforce that process. The identities she lists as somehow in excess of "homosexuality" and "heterosexuality" are cordoned off by those parentheses from the body of her own text, taken into consideration only in order to be more insidiously expelled.<sup>86</sup>

Fuss's maneuver, which can be summarized as inside/out/outside, takes place again in Teresa de Lauretis's introduction to the self-styled "Queer Theory" issue of the journal *differences*, also from 1991.<sup>87</sup> This issue is subtitled "Lesbian and Gay Sexualities." "Theory" is qualified here as "queer" with "sexuality" in second billing,

its plural neatly lining up with gender as “Lesbian and Gay.” In a kind of diminishing return, in the special “Essays in Lesbian and Gay Studies” issue of *Discourse* a year later, bisexuals and transgenders have been entirely written out of Cheryl Kader and Thomas Piontek’s introduction, which takes de Lauretis to task for being too eager to embrace “queerness.”<sup>88</sup> Kader and Piontek caution ominously, “Lesbians and gay men have every reason to be suspicious of ‘queerness’ and its promise of an instant identity.”<sup>89</sup> An instant identity *other* than “lesbian” and “gay male”? Or *between* lesbian and gay man? Might “bisexuality” and “transsexuality” be here in their absence, as rhetorical ellipsis? Kader and Piontek call on (a sadly reduced) “feminism” as a (monocular) “gender-based perspective,”<sup>90</sup> presumably to help them restate those gender boundaries that the “instant identity” of “queerness” was about to snatch away. Once more, bisexuals and transgenders must remain nameless, lest the mere uttering of our identities jeopardize those ensconced monosexual non-transgenders that pontificate so comfortably about themselves as the sole arbiters of “queerness.”

### *Blatantly Bisexual: The Politics of Para-Naming*

An overt and necessary politics of naming and renaming emerges from the anthology of testimony edited by Loraine Hutchins and Lani Kāhūmannu, *Bi Any Other Name Bisexual People Speak Out*, which appeared in 1991 as well. In the epigraph to their text, Hutchins and Kāhūmannu quote the “rose by any other name” passage from *Romeo and Juliet* and then gloss it as follows: “Shakespeare’s tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, is about lovers whose warring families prevent their love. We bisexuals are also caught between our homosexual and heterosexual families. We’re called by *every* other name but bi, and still we dare attempt our love. Thus, the title for our book.”<sup>91</sup>

Hutchins and Kāhūmannu name bisexuality and a bisexual collectivity through a set of commonplaces of doomed heterosexual love (*Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo and Juliet, roses), but they do it in such a way that a new entity, a “differential consciousness,” as Sandoval might say, emerges between, in relation to, and in contrast to the terms “heterosexual” and “homosexual.”<sup>92</sup>

The rhetorical figure which Juliet invokes here is *prosonomasia*, or “calling by a name or nickname,” so that the generic name of the rose can become the place of “any other name.”<sup>93</sup> In his text on rhetorical terms, the critic Richard Lanham notes that *prosonomasia* (renaming) is often confused with another figure, *paronomasia*,<sup>94</sup> which involves “punning; playing on the sounds and meanings of words . . . [where] the words punned on are similar but not identical in sound.”<sup>95</sup> The confusion of

*prosonomasia* with *paronomasia* would itself be an instance of *paronomasia*. (Another rhetorical critic, Keir Elam, defines *paronomasia* literally as “change of name.”)<sup>96</sup> When Hutchins and Kāhūmannu substitute “bi” for the preposition “by,” they, perhaps unwittingly, use *paronomasia*. Both linguistically and socially, the title of their book and the space they open for bisexuals can be figured as a kind of *paronomasia*, or a naming *by/bi* any other name through which we can insist on our own names, identities, and loves. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2d ed.) gives “*paronomasia*” as a variant for “*paronomasia*,” and the sense of name which is alongside or adjacent to (*para*) another name which it renames conveys some of the transformative force of bisexuality. The Queer Nation sticker which reads, “. . . AND BISEXUAL/GET USED TO IT,” uses the ellipses which precede “AND BISEXUAL” to stand for all the contexts to which our name can be added. This is a politics of *paranaming*, of naming alongside, through, and by means of all kinds of other names to make our multiple proper identities stick.<sup>97</sup>

In *Bi Any Other Name*, among many other demonstrations of how such a politics might work, there is Obie Leyva’s piece, “*Que es un bisexual?*”;<sup>98</sup> Kei Uwano’s “*Bi-Lovable Japanese Feminist?*”;<sup>99</sup> and Shu Wei Chen-Andy’s “*A Man, a Woman, Attention?*”<sup>100</sup>—all of which place bisexuality in cross-cultural contexts. In Leyva’s account, in Chicano and Latino communities there is a “polarized view of male sexuality with the belief that a man is either macho or *joto*, leaving no room for bisexuality (sound familiar?).”<sup>101</sup> His answer to the question, “*Que es un bisexual?*” then works *paronomastically*, substituting himself, his own name, or the pronoun or shifter of *yo* for that untranslatable other word “bisexual”: “Now when people ask, ‘*Que es un bisexual?*’ I smile and proudly answer, ‘*Yo soy!*’”<sup>102</sup> Leyva shifts interrogatives as well, replacing the “what” of *que* with his own “who.”

Somewhat differently, by naming herself “bi-lovable,” Uwano has already substituted an adjacent term, “lovable,” for the available one, “sexual.” She writes, “When I was growing up in Japan there was no concept, no word for sexuality. When we say heterosexual, it translates to heterosexual-love. The word for gay or lesbian is *homosex-love*. Bisexual is only referred to in slang and translates as ‘one who uses both souls.’”<sup>103</sup> Uwano next goes on to ask what name to give herself in a series of semantic *paronomasias*, based on the simultaneous imperative and impossibility of translating a name, “bisexual,” as any other name. “I identify myself based on the structure of love. Technically, I am bi-lovable and monogamous. My soul is androgynous, which means I am fully human. Should I call myself a human lovable? A whole sexual?”<sup>104</sup>

Shu Wei Chen-Andy situates bisexuality within a relationship between a Filipina transsexual and an Asian bisexual-transgender: “I began telling her [Christina, the

Filipina transsexual] how difficult it was to be an Asian bisexual, and how disappointed I was by not being accepted by gays and straights when I crossed from male to female."<sup>105</sup> Together, Andy and Christina then "[understand their] double minority status and how [their] cross-gender lifestyle [is] not taken seriously."<sup>106</sup> The title of this piece, "A Man, a Woman, Attention," which appears to name the elements of heterosexual/heterosexual romance, instead turns out to name, once more—paronomastically—a double or multiple gender-cross. The ostensibly dualistic formula, "a man, a woman," now designates both bisexuality and transsexuality at one and the same time, as an identity of "a man, a woman," and as a simultaneous desire for "a man, a woman," and for the transgenders who are "men, women."<sup>107</sup> Another paronomasia is at play here too, namely, "attention," which can also be read or heard as "a tension," thus naming the attractions between, among, and across the categories "man" and "woman."

Another adjacent term by which bisexuality renames itself in *Bi Any Name* is "queer." Carol A. Queen (whose own name speaks volumes) writes, "I use my bisexual wits to cross boundaries, crack codes and bring back a store of information that society would like to use to keep us *all* in thrall. . . . It is the queer in me that empowers—that lets me see those lines and burn to cross them."<sup>108</sup> In her description, "bisexual wits" and "the queer in me" name one and the same entity, but without simply silently subsuming "bisexual" to "queer." The kind of double naming that runs throughout *Bi Any Other Name* is crucial, I would suggest, to marking a politically effective symbolic space for bisexuals. Unfortunately, various "theories" of bisexuality achieve the opposite and reach, consciously or inadvertently, the same end: they make that space impossible to occupy.

*Of Cunts, Cocks, Cloven Hooves, and Communities:  
Toward New Horizons and Middle Grounds Made Radical*

Bisexuality: Our Basic Instinct

—BIONIC (Bisexuals Organizing with Noise,  
Insurrection, and Confrontation), pamphlet

We want it ALL!!!

—Letter in response to "What Do Bisexuals Want?"  
*Outlook* 15 (Summer 1992): 9

So what *do* bisexuals want?<sup>109</sup> In a text that does not necessarily identify itself as "bi," Myrina Eliana nevertheless seems to speak to my (however idiosyncratic) bisexual

desire and identity. The text is called, self-reflexively, one might say, "Define 'Community': This Is a Test!":

If my lover had a cunt  
yet passed as a man  
and I had to explain

If my lover wore a dress  
but shaved and pissed standing up  
and I had  
to explain that  
to everyone

If my lover  
had a cloven hoof  
and a cunt and a penis  
and we went along  
the horizon line  
shouting about it

only the people who mattered  
would be left  
anywhere near us!<sup>110</sup>

Speaker and lover disappear along the horizon line in an ever-proliferating series of sexual and gender possibilities, with only "the people who [matter]" as part of their community. How large or how small would such a "community" be? Would it be a sexual/gender minority or an as yet unimaginable majority? We cannot know in advance who the "people who [matter]" and who are "near" (again, para) us would be.

The endlessly retreating horizon line which marks a different kind of community formation would also be something of a middle ground. Eliana's poem dares us to twist the commonplace of a middle ground so that it can be everywhere, somewhere altogether new, and perhaps, "on the fence" (as bisexuality is always supposed to be) all at once. Picture a middle ground that is not static but on the move, as we go shouting toward a horizon, like the lovers of Eliana's poem. That is the space for new bisexualities that can be exorbitant, eccentric, ecstatic, beside themselves.

Bisexuality challenges given notions of how sexual communities or so-called sexual "minorities" are formed. This challenge is especially important in the United States, since bisexuality runs counter to received notions about sexual identity as something in which the subject has no choice. Lesbian and gay communities in the

United States have sometimes tended to define their community with reference to a model of ethnicity, in order to claim civil rights.<sup>111</sup> This model implies that sexual identity is an immutable feature, just as race or ethnicity is, supposedly, fixed.<sup>111</sup> Clearly, the model is deeply flawed: it essentializes both race and sexual identity as somehow prepolitical "givens," and it draws its analogy between race and sexual identity only by separating the two, so that sexual identity appears somehow to be a *white* ethnicity.<sup>112</sup> Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people of *color* are not considered in this model except as additions to an already established white "gay community," which maintains the covert racism of that "community." By claiming civil rights on the basis of a kind of ethnicity, white lesbian and gay groups end up exacerbating a situation in the United States where ethnic and racial groups are constructed so as to be pitted against one another for a share of the rights and resources which the dominant white, middle-class order withholds or grants arbitrarily.<sup>112</sup> Bisexuality exposes the failures of such an ethnic identity model.

Bisexuality has been associated with race, however, in ways that depart from an ethnicity model in recent statements about the politics of multiculturalism as an anti-racist, anti-imperialist struggle within the United States. Even *Newsweek* has noticed that "multiculturalism has begun to embrace multisexuality."<sup>113</sup> Far more eloquently, activists June Jordan and Lani Ka'ahumanu have both redefined the notion of "middle ground" in a radical relation to bisexuals and our common cause with many other struggles.

Speaking at the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation, Lani Ka'ahumanu spoke of her identity as a "mixed race bisexual woman of color" and the relation between that identity and social transformation: "Like multiculturalism, mixed race heritage and bi-racial relationships, both the bisexual and transgender movements *expose and politicize* the middle ground. Each shows there is no separation: that each and everyone of us is part of a fluid social, sexual, and gender dynamic. Each signals a change, a fundamental change in the way our society is organized."<sup>114</sup> The middle ground of which Ka'ahumanu speaks so eloquently is the place for which as bisexual-transgender people we are fighting, most certainly not a neutral zone in between, but a highly politicized terrain, in which identities can nevertheless come together. Like Ka'ahumanu, Jordan evokes the middle ground to place bisexuality within urgent conflicts over race:

I need to speak on bisexuality: I do believe that the analogy is interracial or multiracial identity. I do believe that the analogy for bisexuality is a multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial world view. Bisexuality follows from such a perspective and leads to it as well... This emerging movement politicizes the so-called middle ground. Bisexuality inval-

idates either/or formulation, either/or analysis. Bisexuality means I am free and I am as likely to want and to love a woman as I am likely to want and to love a man, and what about that? . . . If you are free you are not predictable, and you are not controllable. To my mind, that is the keenly positive, politicizing significance of bisexuality.<sup>115</sup>

What do we want? We are not predictable; we are not uniform. We are women, transgenders, men. We run off to the horizon and leave behind the borders on which monosexual, non-transgender theories, edifices, and institutions have been built. We are of necessity an *identity-in-coalition*. Our middle ground may yet move the world.

There is, obviously, no last word in bisexual politics. We are often accused of being too fluid to form or to ground a material politics, an accusation to which Garber gives credence when she suggests that bisexual politics would be simply about a watery "eroticism."<sup>116</sup> Through our identity politics in coalition, we can begin to live out an ethics and a politics of connectedness in which our identities are not defined by fluidity, but by the quality of our closeness and the strength of our alliances. J

#### Notes

1. Marjorie Garber, *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995).
2. Garber's thesis, namely, that "bisexuality [has] something fundamental to teach us about the nature of human experience" (Garber, *Vice Versa*, 15), is repeated, with variation, a number of times in the course of her book. One example: "[T]he question of whether someone was 'really' straight or 'really' gay misrecognizes the nature of sexuality, which is fluid, not fixed, a narrative that changes over time, rather than a fixed identity, however complex. The erotic discovery of bisexuality is the fact that reveals sexuality to be a process of growth, transformation, and surprise, not a stable and knowable state of being" (66). According to Garber, we are dealing with the very "nature of sexuality" and the "fact" of sexuality as a "process of growth." The assumption that sexuality *has* a nature, albeit a fluid one, seems tendentious, just as the belief that sexuality somehow involves "growth" seems open to question.
3. Garber, *Vice Versa*, 134.
4. Garber, *Vice Versa*, 87.
5. I am alluding, of course, to Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality" in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (London: Routledge, 1984), 267-319.
6. See Cheia Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World," *Gender* 10 (Spring 1991): 14.
7. *Anything That Moves* 5 (1993): n. p.

8. For a carefully considered critique of multiculturalism, see Gayatri Spivak, "Extreme Eurocentrism," interview with Edward Bell, in *The Abject America*, ed. Catherine Liu (New York: Lusitania, n. d.), 55-60.
9. Rumors abounded during this time among bisexuals in and out of the academy; for a while, discussions of the erasure of "bisexual" functioned as a way of identifying other bisexuals (and biphobes). This seems a perfect example of Patricia Meyer Spacks's contention that gossip as a shared activity "demands a process of relatedness among its participants; its *Is* inevitably turn into *we*." Spacks, *Gossip* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 261.
10. Robyn Ochs and Pam Ellis, "Conference Organizers 'Confused,'" *Anything That Moves* 3 (1991): 15.
11. Ochs and Ellis, "Conference Organizers 'Confused,'" 15.
12. Pierre Bourdieu discusses "symbolic power" and "symbolic violence" in language as acts that are both determined by and determining of a host of material conditions: "linguistic relations are always relations of symbolic power through which relations of force between the speakers and their respective groups are actualized in transfused form." Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 142. It is through acts of symbolic power such as the refusal to name bisexuals and transgender people that lesbians and gay men can exercise social control without necessarily enjoying the same symbolic/material privileges as straight-identified white middle-class men, for example.
13. Thus, the Fifth Annual Lesbian and Gay Studies Conference took place at Rutgers University, 1-3 November 1991. A symposium was held with Pierre Saint-Armand, Pam Ellis, Elias Farajate-Jones, Cora Kaplan, Robyn Ochs, and Warren Blumenfeld, with the worrying title, "Lesbian, Gay . . . and Bisexual?" on 2 November 1991. Two other panels were held, both of which seemed to address, while in effect affirming, the marginalized status of "bisexuality": "Boundary Politics: Bisexuals in Lesbian and Gay Communities" and "(Re)Contextualizing Bisexuality," 2 November 1991 and 3 November 1991, respectively. I thank Nan Alamilla Boyd for this information.
14. I thank Ki Namaste for bringing the "Stick It Back In" campaign to my attention.
15. Judith Butler strikes a cautionary note about simple appeals to the matter of the body: "What about the materiality of the body?" she asks at the start of *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (Routledge: New York, 1993), ix. She explains that recourse to the body might be nothing more than a rhetorical move to reassert a bedrock of common sense, in the form of "a bodily life that [can] not be theorized away" (ix).
16. Consider Bourdieu's criticism of the "typically scholastic opposition" which contrasts an all-knowing "theory" with a practice somehow at a loss: "Those who treat [language] as an *object* of analysis rather than use it to think and speak with are led to constitute language as a *logos*, in opposition to a *praxis*, as a 'dead letter,' without practical purpose or no purpose other than that of being interpreted, in the manner of a work of art. . . . The illusion of autonomy of the 'purely' linguistic order which is asserted by the privilege granted to the internal logic of language, at the expense of the social conditions and the correlates of its usage, opens the way
17. Sandoval has shown in a different context that the opposition between what comes to count as "theory" proper and what is devalued as "description" can lead to the dismissal of work by feminists of color. Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism," 9.
18. Bourdieu explains that "cultural capital" is a form of "dissimulation, or more precisely, *euphemization*" of objectively economic practices in such a way that those practices cannot directly be recognized within the social field as economic. Cultural capital is thus "institutionalized in the form of academic qualifications, and is "convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital." Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, trans. Richard Nice, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 243. The opacity of "theory" itself to analysis or theorization—how did "theory" come to be this way?—signals a kind of accretion of specialized academic credentials, a stockpiling of cultural value, around the practice of theory.
19. Donald Morton, "The Politics of Queer Theory in the (Post)Modern Moment," *Genders* 17 (Fall 1993): 122.
20. Morton, "The Politics of Queer Theory in the (Post)Modern Moment," 128, 133-39. I am not at all sure, however, that Morton's own brand of "critique-al [sic] practice" (123) is the radical break which he seems to think it is and not just another brand name competing in the academic marketplace. Thus, Morton can claim that "critical cultural studies sees theory not as something to be resisted in general but as itself . . . a form of resistance" (126), a rather easy defense of Morton's own investment in a particular version of "theory." Moreover, Morton's genealogy of "liberal humanism" (his personal boogy) is so sweeping that it can encompass not only Eve Sedgwick, Judith Butler, and Teresa de Lauretis, but also Jacques Derrida, all of phenomenology, and Georges Bataille (139-41)! At this point, an historically specific ideology like Anglo-American liberal humanism loses whatever specificity it once might have had simply to include whatever Morton happens to dislike.
21. Thus, Sedgwick notes that 1992 may be "the queer moment" in what she designates rather un-self-consciously or -critically as "the American marketplace of images." Eve Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), xii. Sedgwick then goes on to provide "queer" with a pedigree that does not draw on the historically specific contexts of its use (semiotically, a pragmatics), so that she disregards, for example, Joan Nestle's important critical use of the term as far back as 1987, a use which in itself was a recollection of a previous particular context: Nestle describes "the first layer of my history: the memory of being a queer, my inheritance from the fifties." Joan Nestle, *A Restricted Country* (Ithaca: Firebrand, 1987), 111. Sedgwick gives "queer" a lineage by attempting to uncover the word's "Indo-European root" (xii): such a use of etymology to legitimate is, of course, a highly culture-bound maneuver.
22. See Ronald R. Butters, John M. Clum, and Michael Moon, eds. *Displacing Homophobia: Gay Male Perspectives in Literature and Culture*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), for an example of how central the concept of "homophobia" has

- become. For brief, yet helpful, discussions of the terms "homophobia" and "heterosexism," see the glossary in Loraine Hutchins and Lani Ka'ahumanu, eds., *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out* (Boston: Alyson, 1991), 369.
23. For a reasonable account of the multitude of political groups associated with Gay Lib, see Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants* (New York: Stein and Teal, 1971).
24. Thus, Terry Castle: "In my opening paragraph I refer to Greia Garbo as a lesbian, despite the fact, as some readers will know, she occasionally had affairs with men as well as women. Why not refer to her, more properly, as a bisexual? Because I think it more meaningful to refer to her as a lesbian." Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 15, first emphasis mine. "Meaningful" for whom, one might wonder, since Castle's decision is arbitrary and all too clearly based on the exclusion of the nameless few readers who might know that Garbo was bisexual. Castle also supposes—incorrectly—that there was no context for bisexual self-understanding or subculture formation in Garbo's day.
25. Amanda Udis-Kessler, "Present Tense: Biphobia As a Crisis of Meaning," in *Bi Any Other Name*, ed. Hutchins and Ka'ahumanu, 350–58, has been very important in shaping my thoughts on this issue.
26. Jeffrey Weeks gives a very useful overview of sexology in his *Sexuality and Its Discontents: Meanings, Myths, and Modern Sexualities* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 61–95. Garber discusses Havelock Ellis, Freud and Wilhelm Fliess in *Vice Versa*, 237–48 and 169–206.
27. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1962), 7.
28. Freud, *Three Essays*, 8. Freud is referring to Karl Heinrich Ulrichs.
29. Freud, *Three Essays*, 9.
30. Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. 22, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), 117.
31. David T. Evans gives a good, if short, account of other sexologists, either predecessors or contemporaries of Freud, who mobilized notions of bisexuality: Ulrichs, Moll, Krafft-Ebing, Arduin, Havelock Ellis, Hirschfeld, Herman, Fliess, Moebius, and Bloch. David T. Evans, *Sexual Citizenship: The Material Construction of Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1994), 149.
32. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition*, vol. 21, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964), 227–28.
33. See the entry "Bisexuality" in Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), 49–51. See also Freud, *Three Essays*, 2 and 7–10. The phrases "psychic hermaphroditism" and "anatomical [hermaphroditism]" to designate bisexuality come from the latter.
34. Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition*, vol. 18, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1955), 151. Also of note is Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 38–57, in which de Lauretis asks about Freud's persistent identification of "bisexuality" with women.
35. Freud, *Standard Edition*, vol. 18, 151.
36. Interestingly, Weeks finds the postulate of universal bisexuality helpful in combating homophobia. Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents*, 150.
37. Juliet Mitchell, "Introduction-1," in Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, trans. Jacqueline Rose (New York: Norton, 1982), 12.
38. Mitchell, "Introduction-1," 12.
39. Judith Butler accurately and bi-affirmatively describes what Freud is up to as "the construction of an 'outside' that is nevertheless fully 'inside,' not a possibility beyond culture, but a concrete cultural possibility that is refused and re-described as impossible." Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 77.
40. Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 217.
41. Freud's essays "Female Sexuality" and "Femininity" have gathered a considerable number of feminist responses, including, but not limited to, Luce Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1974); Hélène Cixous, "Sortes: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays," in Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 61–132; Sarah Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman: Woman in Freud's Writings*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985 [1980]); Shoshana Felman, "Rereading Femininity," *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981): 19–44; and Teresa de Lauretis, "Desire in Narrative," in *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 103–57.
42. Spivak provides an excellently skeptical account of "French feminism" in "French Feminism in an International Frame," in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 134–53, although she falls into the trap of describing Hélène Cixous's version of "bisexuality" as a denial of sexual difference (here understood narrowly as the difference between "real"—genetic—women and "real"—genetic—men) (146–47). Spivak also goes on to link her discussion of "bisexuality" in Cixous to statements about "the impossibility of remaining in the in-between" (147), statements which cannot but have a biphobic ring.
43. One might remember here that the etymology of "utopia" is from the Greek *ou*, not, and *topos*, place; utopia is no-place.
44. See Cixous, "Sortes" 84, 85–86. Cixous reiterates this appeal to a bisexuality, "the one with which every subject, who is not shut up inside the spurious Phallogocentric Performing Theatre, sets up his or her erotic universe" (85), in a number of other texts. Many of these were translated and distributed in the United States and England at more or less the same time and became highly influential in "feminist literary theory," to the extent that the passages on this "other bisexuality" were cited with great theoretical, if somewhat uncritical, zeal.
- Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 14 (1976): 875–99, includes a very similar passage on "bisexuality" (883–84). In Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?" trans. Annette Kuhn, *Signs* 7.1 (1981): 41–55, there is a footnote in which Cixous includes a passage apparently excised from the body of the text: "Female sexuality is always at some point bisexual. *Bisexual doesn't mean, as many people think, that she can make love with a man and a woman, it doesn't mean she has two partners, even if it can at times mean this.* Bisexuality on an unconscious level is the possibility of extending into the other, of being in such a relation with the other that I move into the other without

- destroying the other" (55, first emphasis mine). So Cixous moves from one sort of "bisexuality"—its common sense—to a version of latency that figures an ethical relation to the Other. The inclusion of Cixous's "Laugh of the Medusa" in the widely heralded anthology *New French Feminisms*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), explicitly in the section "Utopias" and as the last entry in the anthology (245–64), also did much to disseminate the notion of "an other bisexuality" as the last word of the "new" French feminism.
45. Freud, *Standard Edition*, vol. 21, 227–28, my emphasis.
  46. Kolman, *The Enigma of Woman*, 134–35.
  47. Garber mentions Cixous a few times in passing in *Vice Versa*, without engaging with any of Cixous's points. See *Vice Versa*, 169, 174, 183, and 515. Garber neglects to mention Kolman.
  48. See, for example, Cixous, "Sortes," 85.
  49. Here one might observe that while appeals to "maternity" in Cixous have drawn a great deal of critical debate about whether they are "essentialist" or not, "bisexuality" has remained oddly underexamined, as though, unlike "maternity," everyone knows what *that* means. For an overview of debates on essentialism in Cixous (that once again tends to talk about "maternity"), see Katherine Binhammer, "Metaphor or Metonymy? The Question of Essentialism in Cixous," *Tessera* 10 (1991): 65–79.
  50. See, for example, Michelle Citron, Julia Lesage, Judith Mayne, B. Ruby Rich, and Anna Maria Taylor, "Women and Film: A Discussion of Feminist Aesthetics," *New German Critique* 13 (1978): 83–107; Janet Bergstrom, "Sexuality at a Loss: The Films of F. W. Murnau," *Poetics Today* 6.1–2 (1985): 185–203, especially 200–2, in which Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* is explicitly evoked as a way out of the rigid gender theorization of film, to "help us see new possibilities for the cinematic representation of sexual identities" (202).
  51. Teresa de Lauretis, "Film and the Visible," in *How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video*, ed. Bad Object Choices (Seattle: Bay, 1991), 237–38.
  52. Judith Mayne, "Lesbian Looks: Dorothy Arzner and Female Authorship," in *How Do I Look?* 136–37.
  53. Lily Braindrop, *A Taste of Latex* 9 (1993): 9.
  54. See Jane Gallop, *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1992). Gallop writes, "If feminist criticism is not just 'academic,' meaning of no practical or useful significance, then its greatest resources are its 'points of connection,' points where the research, teaching, and writing are attached to actual material life" (10). Of course, such a set of binaries sustains the simple 'academic'/material' opposition that Gallop seems to want to undo here. She notes that around 1981, "American feminist literary criticism entered the heart of a contradiction. It became secure and prospered in the academy while feminism as a social movement was encountering major setbacks in a climate of new conservatism. . . . [I]n the American academy feminism gets more and more respect while in the larger society women cannot call themselves feminist" (10). I am profoundly worried that "queer theory" will end up with the same relation to an "actual material life" which it will necessarily imagine as its opposite, while its chroniclers will be able to note, but not explain, what institutional forces brought about these divisions.
  55. Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," in *Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (Routledge: New York and London, 1977).
  56. See Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, xi–xvi, 1–20, and Butler's "Critically Queer," in *Bodies That Matter*, 223–42. Michael Warner, for example, writes: "I've heard people worry that the political experience of lesbians and gays is being trivialized [through the use of the word 'queer']. Through the rhetoric of queer, they say, straight people score coolness points without suffering. *It may very well be impossible for the sentence 'I am queer' to be false. I can't say this bolsters me.*" Michael Warner, "Something Queer about the Nation-State," *Alphabet City* 3 (1993): 14, my emphasis. "Queer" is here understood as an umbrella term for lesbians, gay men, and cool straights. Missing are "bisexuals" and "transgender": this does worry me, unlike Warner. Like Freud's unconscious, "queer," in this version, knows no "no."
  57. See Allan Barubé and Jeffrey Escoffier, "Queer/Nation," *Outlook: National Lesbian and Gay Quarterly* 11 (Winter 1991): 13–14, for an account of Queer Nation as "confrontational" and against "assimilation" to the point of supposedly practicing an incoherent politics which preaches total inclusivity and pure marginality at one and the same time. I disagree very strongly with this analysis, which has seriously distorted subsequent academic accounts of Queer Nation in particular and "queerness" in general: see Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, "Queer Nationality," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 193–229, in which Berlant and Freeman make the queer fanzines seen like the Frankfurt School's negative dialectics for a Xerox generation. In the *Outlook* article, Escoffier and Barubé write of how "the new generation [sic] calls itself queer, not lesbian, gay and bisexual," which they go on to suggest are "awkward, narrow, and perhaps compromised words" (13). Since the masthead of *Outlook* named its readership as exclusively "Lesbian and Gay," one has to wonder how "and bisexual" so conveniently slips out of the discussion: not right for *Outlook*, passé for "queer." It is significant that Barubé and Escoffier disregard how particular Queer Nationals articulate "queer" with transgender and bisexual politics—these comments are printed in the sidebars of the article but do not feature in its body. In the sidebar quotations both Jason Bishop and Rebecca Hensler's testimonies to why they are Queer Nationals involve much more than a simple preference of one term over another: Bishop talks about transgender people, as well as about AIDS and HIV, and Hensler mentions bisexual women specifically and nonconformist women in general (16–17). Through this tactical overlooking of "bisexual" along with "transgender," Escoffier and Barubé arrive at their picture of a politics void of everything except the glamor of the fringe. This account has, in a variety of ways, whether critical or celebratory, become the dominant version of Queer Nation.
  58. The conceptual divorce of "sexuality" from "gender" goes all the way back to Gayle Rubin's important essay "Thinking Sex," in which she tried to theorize a domain of "experience and practice, that is, 'sexuality,' distinct from the regulation of 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles in a patriarchal culture, that is, 'gender.'" See Rubin, "Thinking Sex" (267–319) and especially her comment, "Feminism is the theory of gender oppression. To automatically assume that this makes it the theory of sexual oppression is to fail to distinguish between gender, on the one hand, and erotic desire, on the other" (307). Rubin here suggested a strategic separation that

- responded to particular politics in the early 1980s and clearly never intended to separate sexuality from gender for all time, as if the two could be thought apart. Her most recent work has called for a renewed understanding of the category "gender" within theories and politics of "sexuality": "I have wanted to diversify conceptions of butchness, to promote a more nuanced conceptualization of gender variation among lesbians and bisexual women, and to forestall prejudice against individuals who use other modes of managing gender." See Rubin, "Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries," in *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*, ed. Joan Nestle (Boston: Alyson, 1992), 476.
59. See Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
60. For example, when Butler reiterates a variant of her much-criticized dictum that the theatrical is the political at the end of *Bodies That Matter*, it is telling that after a pious invocation of ACT UP and Queer Nation, she should refer to Lypsinka, a drag queen whose repertoire consists of overtly lip-synching the usual pantheon of divas (Judy Garland et al.) (233). It is clear that Butler prefers drag performance over transgender substance. Leslie Feinberg provides a strong and angry critique of the absence of both the word "transgender" and self-identified transgender criticism from recent academic work on "cross-dressing." Leslie Feinberg, "The Power of the Performance," *Lambda Book Report 4.4* (May/June 1994): 23–24.
61. Eve Sedgwick, "Across Gender," in *Displacing Homophobia*, ed. Butlers, Clum, and Moon, 53–72.
62. Sedgwick, "Across Gender," 57.
63. Sedgwick, "Across Gender," 58. The chart is repeated in Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 13.
64. Sedgwick is still stuck with "across" in *Tendencies*: "Titles and subtitles that at various times I've attached to the essays in *Tendencies* tend toward 'across' formulations: *across genders*, *across sexualities*, *across genres*, *across 'perversions'*" (xii). While she maintains that "the *queer* of these essays is transitive—multiply transitive" (i), the *across* substitutes or stands in for *trans/it* in a way that negates the latter two.
65. Kathleen Bennett, "Feminist Bisexuality: A Both/And Option for an Either/Or World," in *Closer to Home: Bisexuality and Feminism*, ed. Elizabeth Reba Weise (Seattle: Seal Press, 1992), 207.
66. Bennett, "Feminist Bisexuality," 207.
67. Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, xii.
68. Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, xii.
69. Alisa Solomon, "Strike A Pose," *Village Voice* (November 1991): 13–19.
70. After all, only a few weeks earlier in the *Village Voice* lesbian critic B. Ruby Rich wrote the following absurd generalization about bisexuals in an interview with Camille Paglia, whom Rich identified as "this alleged ex-lesbian, self-professed fag hag, proud bisexual, and resentfully *de facto* celibate." See B. Ruby Rich, "Like A Virgin," *Village Voice* (8 October 1991): 29. Rich mused about bisexuals: "Bisexuals, in my experience, are frequently the product of only-child families, caught in a double bind: included too completely in the mommy-daddy unit, they end up paralyzed, unable to fix an object choice of either male or female, alternating between the two in a replay of the childhood tangle. Paglia was an only child until she was

14" (29). Instead of any criticism of Paglia's work, her identification as "bisexual" is used to discredit and infantilize her. Note the recurrence of the commonplace of "bisexuality" as a temporality that does not occur in the present but is forever seeking in the future what it was in the past. Note also that Rich believes in "object choice" in its Freudian form (rather than as a matter of sex toy selection) and that such object choice is rigidly determined as "either male or female," and then over-determined by the derivation of these gender positions from the "mommy-daddy unit." What about bisexuals who make transgender "object choices"?

71. The regulation is 32 C.F.R. pt. 41, app. A (1992) and is reprinted in William Rubenstein, ed., *Lesbians, Goy Men, and the Law* (New York: New, 1993), 335. I have not been able to ascertain whether the wording which defines "bisexual" has been substantially changed under the "new" policy of Clinton.

72. The United States school system, as another institution, has also dismissed bisexual teachers, while turning such bisexuality into a variant of "homosexuality." See the case of *Ronwald v. Mid River School District*, discussed, without perhaps an adequate consideration of bisexuality, in Janet E. Halley, "Misreading Sodomy: A Critique of the Classification of 'Homosexuals' in Federal Equal Protection Law," in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991), 371–72.

73. Jan Zita Grover, "AIDS Keywords," in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*, ed. Douglas Crimp (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 21.

74. See Martin S. Weinberg, Colin J. Williams, and Douglas W. Pryor, *Dual Attraction: Understanding Bisexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). See also Marcy Sheiner's perceptive criticism of the book in her review, "Either/Or Both," *San Francisco Bay Guardian Literary Supplement* 2.30 (27 April 1994): 1, 3, 4. Sheiner notes that the book postulates as theory that in bisexuality, "homosexuality is often an 'add-on' to heterosexuality" (3) and that bisexual and transsexual activists alike have attacked the work: "*Dual Attraction* has drawn comments from activists such as 'So are we 'add-ons' or what? Transsexuals have joined the fray, condemning the study for drawing conclusions about them based on 11—yes, 11—transsexual bisexuals, of whom only one was a female-to-male' (3). At least Weinberg, Williams, and Pryor recognize the existence of transsexual bisexuals.

75. Quoted in Grover, "AIDS Keywords," 21.

76. Grover, "AIDS Keywords," 21.

77. Garber also discusses Grover's analysis and the effects of the AIDS crisis and the scapegoating of bisexuals, although she turns toward proto-bisexual images of vampires and bodily fluids, at which point the political edge of her argument gets blunted. Garber, *Vice Versa*, 91–104.

78. Danzig, "Bisexual Women and AIDS," in *Women, AIDS, and Activism*, by ACT UP/NY/Women and AIDS Book Group (Boston: South End, 1990), 197.

79. Danzig, "Bisexual Women and AIDS," 197.

80. See Ki Namaste, "Le déplacement et la crise du réel: La socio-sémiotique et la biphoibie de *Basic Instinct*," *Cinéma* (Spring 1993): 223–38.

81. "Reverse" discourse" from Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume One*, 101. I would wager the hypothesis that the current rise of bisexual activism has happened in part in relation to the AIDS crisis and the double scapegoating of bisexuals as

- outsiders shadily inside "homosexual" and "heterosexual" communities alike. BiTen, the bi affinity group of Queer Nation/Los Angeles, for example, was founded out of a common need among bisexual Queer Nationals to educate other Queer Nationals about the specific needs of bisexuals in the AIDS crisis. There is a worried silence in works by self-identified lesbians and gay men about bisexuals and AIDS, as in Douglas Crimp and Adam Rolston, *AIDS Demol Graphics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990). Oblique but forceful links between bisexuals and AIDS can be established, as in Sarah Schulman's novel *People in Trouble*. It seems hardly incidental that Schulman should filter her novel about AIDS activism through the lens of a lesbian's relationship to a bisexual woman, in which the latter is presented as irresponsible, manipulative, unable to commit, deeply immersed in heterosexual privilege, and on and on. See Sarah Schulman, *People in Trouble* (New York: Penguin, 1991). Evans writes, on the issue of the AIDS crisis for bisexuals, "negative stereotypes [sic] of sexual deviations [sic] has always been formally discouraging whilst at the same time informally raising the profile and presence of the forbidden phenomena" Evans, *Sexual Citizenship*, 161.
82. Cindy Patton, *Inventing AIDS* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 121.
83. Cindy Patton, *Inventing AIDS*, 122.
84. Diana Fuss, *Inside/Out* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
85. Fuss, *Inside/Out*, 2.
86. "Bisexuality" is brought up only one more time in D. A. Miller's reading of Hitchcock's *Rope*, and it shows up in the margins of the text, in a footnote with the very word enclosed in supercilious scare quotes (*Inside/Out*, 140).
87. *differences* 3.2 (1991): iii–xviii.
88. Kader and Piontek, Introduction to *Discourse* 15.1 (1992): 7–9.
89. Kader and Piontek, Introduction, 9.
90. Kader and Piontek, Introduction, 9.
91. Hutchins and Ka'ahumana, *Bi Any Other Name*, vi.
92. By a curious coincidence, Julia Kristeva invokes Romeo and Juliet precisely as emblems for "transgression love, outlaw love" (209) in a chapter of her *Tales of Love* entitled "Romeo and Juliet: Love-Hatred in the Couple." *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon Roundez (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1987), 209–33. As in each of the other sections of *Tales of Love*, one of Kristeva's case histories from her practice as a psychiatrist is written up at the end. This particular one involves a woman who is involved with both a heterosexual and a homosexual man (228–33). Kristeva predictably fails to consider what dynamic bisexuality might have for any of the participants in the threesome and does not seem even to consider how the "homosexual" man must be bisexual. Bi any other name . . . Kristeva's psychoanalytic project is hardly antiheterosexist.
93. The definition of "prosonomastia" I have used here is from Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 2d ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 123.
94. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 121 and 123.
95. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 121.
96. See Elam, *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse: Language-Games in the Comedies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 314.
97. To be sure, this is not, in any way, to suggest that one single linguistic figure can answer all questions and resolve all conflicts. Instead, my reading of prosonomastia/paronomasia works somewhat like a figure itself, prosonomastically/paronomastically remaining a politics of bisexualities. Given the powerful quality of *Bi Any Other Name*, I am drawing out the theoretical/political force of what might be regarded only as "testimony." I am suggesting, in effect, that "theory" is where you find it, and that "theory" is what works.
98. Obie Leyva, "¿Que es un bisexual?" in *Bi Any Other Name*, ed. Hutchins and Ka'ahumana, 201–2.
99. Kei Uwano, "Bi-Lovable Japanese Feminist," in *Bi Any Other Name*, ed. Hutchins and Ka'ahumana, 155–87.
100. Shu Wei Chen-Andy, "A Man, a Woman, Attention," in *Bi Any Other Name*, ed. Hutchins and Ka'ahumana, 179–80.
101. Leyva, "¿Que es un bisexual?" 202.
102. Leyva, "¿Que es un bisexual?" 202.
103. Uwano, "Bi-Lovable Japanese Feminist," 185.
104. Uwano, "Bi-Lovable Japanese Feminist," 185.
105. Chen-Andy, "A Man, a Woman, Attention," 179.
106. Chen-Andy, "A Man, a Woman, Attention," 179.
107. I have devoted attention primarily to *Bi Any Other Name* instead of the anthology *Closer to Home* because *Bi Any Other Name* seems to move beyond the set of binaries that effectively holds *Closer to Home* in a particularly defensive position, namely, women = lesbianism = feminism and men = heterosexuality = patriarchy. I am not especially invested in salvaging the category of "men," but an ongoing assumption in *Closer to Home* seems to be that there are two genders, female and male, which translate into two sexes, women and men, and then into two sorts of sexualities, lesbianism and heterosexuality. (This is despite Kathleen Bennett's comments about genders, which I cited earlier.) Beyond a passing reference, *Closer to Home* does not place bisexuality as consistently in a transgender context as *Bi Any Other Name* does.
108. Carol A. Queen, "The Queer in Me," in *Bi Any Other Name*, ed. Hutchins and Ka'ahumana, 20.
109. Here I echo Freud's notorious question—"What does woman want?"—and the apparently unironic repetition of that question with regard to bisexuals in "What Do Bisexuals Want?" *Outlook* 4, no. 4 (Spring 1992).
110. Myrna Elians, "Define 'Community': This Is a Test," in *The Persistent Desire*, ed. Nestle, 440–41.
111. One of the first writers actively to advance this claim is Steven Epstein, who writes that "Just as blacks cannot fight the arbitrariness of racial classifications without organizing as blacks, so gays could not advocate the overthrow of the sexual order without making their gayness the very basis of their claims." "Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity: The Limits of Social Constructionism," *Socialist Review* 17. 3/4 (May/August 1987): 19.
112. For a useful criticism of the "ethnic identity model" in gay politics, see Steven Seidman, "Identity and Politics in a 'Postmodern' Gay Culture: Some Historical and Conceptual Notes," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 116–17.

113. David Gehman with Debra Rosenberg, "Tune in, Come Out," *Newsweek* (15 November 1993): 44.
114. Lani Ka'alamannu, "A 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Rights and Liberation Speech," *Anything That Moves* 5 (1993): 16.
115. June Jordan, "A New Politics of Sexuality," *Technical Difficulties* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 192-93, my emphasis.
116. Garber, *Vice Versa*, 90.

## Chapter 2

### Do Bats Eat Cats?

### Reading What Bisexuality Does

*Franz Michel*

In Aesop's fable of "The Bat, the Birds, and the Beasts," the Bat is the creature who refuses to take sides in the war between the birds and the beasts, and ends up exiled from both groups.<sup>1</sup> Why does this sound so familiar, this tale of someone who might belong to either group, or neither—the unreliable figure who abandons potential allies? And why is there only one Bat? Why not a slightly more naturalistic setting, with a community of bats, who might agitate for bat visibility? To be sure, the birds and the beasts make peace at the last moment, and no battle takes place; the indecisive Bat may be "poised . . . between . . . two mutually exclusive . . . cultures," but we never learn which of the two might have "the power to exercise violent repression against the other."<sup>2</sup>

Not so in our unfabulous world. The recent spate of anti-queer-rights measures proposed (and sometimes approved) across the United States makes abundantly clear that the birds and the beasts are at war, and the place of the bats has been subject to debate.

As an intervention in that debate, this essay argues that studying bisexuality is important because of the ways it has helped shape extant discourses of sexuality and the ways it reveals the limitations of our customary readings of sexuality. We can

