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## INTERSECTIONS

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# Historicizing (Bi)Sexuality: A Rejoinder for Gay/Lesbian Studies, Feminism, and Queer Theory

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**SUMMARY.** One of the principal aims of queer theory has been to challenge heteronormative constructions of sexuality and to work the hetero/homosexual structure to the point of critical collapse. Despite an epistemic location *within* this very structure, however, the category of

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bisexuality has been largely marginalized and even erased from the deconstructive field of queer theory. This article explores some of the factors behind this treatment of bisexuality and suggests that bisexuality's marginalization and erasure brings into relief the strained relationship between the fields of gay/lesbian history, feminism, and queer theory. In exploring some early influential queer deconstructionist texts, it argues that in overlooking the role the category of bisexuality has played in the formation of the hetero/homosexual structure, the project of queer deconstruction has in important ways fallen short of its goals. The author concludes with a call to rethink conventional deconstructive reading practices. doi:10.1300/J082v52n01\_06 [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2006 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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Any discourse that is based on the questioning of boundary lines must never stop questioning its own.

–Barbara Johnson (1987, p.14)

The field of queer deconstructive theory is heavily indebted to Lacanian psychoanalysis, Foucauldian theory, poststructuralism, and Derridean deconstruction. One of its primary principles is the claim that all identities, sexual or otherwise, are only ever constructed relationally. The central paradigm of analysis has been the axis of sexuality in general and the hetero/homosexual opposition in particular. Queer theorists such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Diana Fuss, and Lee Edelman, among others, have produced many useful studies that serve to challenge heteronormative constructions of sexuality and work the hetero/homosexual opposition, as Fuss (1991, p.1) puts it, to the “point of critical exhaustion.” Despite an epistemic location *within* this very opposition, however, the category of bisexuality has been curiously marginalized and erased from some of the founding texts of queer deconstructive theory. It is an analysis of this phenomenon that concerns me in this article. I am going to suggest that the marginalization and erasure of bisexuality brings into relief the strained relationship between the fields of gay/lesbian history, feminism, and queer theory.

While many bisexual theorists have identified this marginalization and erasure of bisexuality (e.g., Eadie, 1993; Hemmings, 1993; James, 1996; Young, 1997), none has yet provided an adequate explanation of how and why it has occurred. This article attempts to do this by subjecting some of the early foundational works of queer deconstructive theory to historical and deconstructive critique. I will argue that the failure to account for bisexuality is the effect of two interrelated factors. First, contrary to stated aims, one of the tendencies of many queer theorists has been to think the two axes of gender and sexuality vertically or hierarchically rather than relationally and obliquely. Second, interrogations of the axes of gender and sexuality have been subsumed within poorly historicized deconstructive frameworks. What this means, I will contend, is that efforts to deconstruct the hetero/homosexual structure have foundered, on the one hand, because of a failure to address the history of (bi)sexuality and on the other, because of the methodological tensions between gay/lesbian history, feminism, and queer theory.

### ***REREADING THE HISTORY OF (BI)SEXUALITY***

In what might appear at first sight to be a statement of the obvious, Jo Eadie (1993, p.139) begins her article on bisexual politics with the claim that “[l]ike all sexualities, ‘bisexuality’ has a history.” Yet as Eadie herself is fully aware, this history has scarcely even begun to be told. Histories of homosexuality, and increasingly of heterosexuality, abound. Yet bisexuality scarcely figures within the historiography of sexuality in general. It is certainly true that the study of bisexuality has received much greater attention in recent years. A history of bisexuality in the ancient world has been written by Eva Cantarella (1992), and a number of articles on aspects of bisexuality in the history of modern sexuality have been produced (e.g., Storr, 1997; Udis-Kessler, 1996). A number of edited collections that contain articles concerned with theorizing bisexuality and bisexual politics have also appeared in recent years (Beemyn & Eliason, 1996; Bristow & Wilson, 1993; Hall & Pramaggiore, 1996; Hemmings, 2002). Merl Storr’s edited collection, *Bisexuality: A Critical Reader* (1999), has collated a number of significant historical documents that were pivotal to modern theorizations of bisexuality. In spite of a flurry of publications on the subject of bisexuality in the last decade or so, however, the epistemological category of bisexuality has not been historicized in relation to those of homo- and heterosexuality. Marjorie Garber (1995) has offered the most compre-

hensive study on bisexuality, demonstrating the centrality of bisexuality to manifestations and meanings of human eroticism. While she traces bisexuality in a wide range of cultural, historical, and literary texts, she is less concerned with historicizing bisexuality as an epistemological category. Garber's book, like most of the texts on bisexuality cited above, is motivated by questions of visibility and representation, and of providing concepts and models for thinking about how we might better understand, theorize, and represent bisexual identities and desires in history and culture.<sup>1</sup> This is a very different enterprise than one concerned with historicizing (and deconstructing) the epistemological conditions of possibility of the very category of bisexuality (and thus of homo- and heterosexuality). Yet it is a diachronic historical analysis of bisexuality in relation to categories of hetero- and homosexuality that is missing in the historiography of sexuality.

It seems to me that there are at least two reasons for the erasure of bisexuality from the historiographical field of sexuality. Dominated by the field of gay and lesbian history, the historiography of sexuality has been marked by a methodological reliance on an identity paradigm. Central to this paradigm has been a distinction between sexual behavior and sexual identity. Constructionist historians, cautious of conflating homosexuality and homosexual identity, have found it useful to examine the history of sexuality through this distinction. This approach has been effective, as Jeffrey Weeks (1990, p. 3) has observed, as a way of distinguishing "between homosexual behaviour, which is universal, and a homosexual identity, which is historically specific." However, this introduces conceptual problems of its own. While homosexual identity is not universalized, a homosexual act is, and this only defers and displaces the problem of identity. The result is that bisexuality is completely erased from the historical record.<sup>2</sup> Chris Cagle (1996, p. 236) describes this approach as "monosexual gay historiography." The "claim that homosexual behavior is universal," he quite rightly points out, "ignores the monosexual presumption of that 'universal.'" Neither an act nor a palpable identity—at least until the late 1960s in the case of the latter—bisexuality merely vanishes into the categories of hetero- or homosexuality.

The second reason for bisexuality's disappearance in the historiography of sexuality is the assumption that bisexuality is merely a by-product or after-effect of the hetero/homosexual opposition. There has been tendency to assume that bisexuality is merely determined by the two poles of this opposition, and that it has no role in the diachronic formation of the opposition and of the identity categories of hetero- and ho-

mosexuality. As George Chauncey (1994) declares, “Even the third category of ‘bisexuality’ depends for its meaning on its intermediate position on the axis *defined by those two poles*” (p.13, emphasis added). In the anthology *Bisexualities* (Haeberle & Gindorf, 1998), Erwin Haeberle argues something similar, stating that the category of bisexuality “did not arise,” indeed, “*could not come into existence*,” until after “the simple opposition of homo/heterosexuality had been invented” (p. 14). Embedded in these claims of Chauncey and Haeberle is both a historical question, about the actual invention and formation of the category of bisexuality, and a theoretical, or epistemological, question, about the relationship between the three terms heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality. I am not convinced that either of the fields of gay/lesbian history or queer theory have fully grasped the extent to which these historical and theoretical questions are mutually informing and, indeed, indissociable. This speaks, I will argue, to the fraught nature of the disciplinary relationship between the two enterprises.

The queer intervention in critical theory and cultural studies has held out enormous promise in its deconstructive critique of identitarian frameworks and of the hetero/homosexual opposition. As Lisa Duggan (1995, p. 197) has suggested, these “critiques, applied to lesbian and gay history texts, might produce a fascinating discussion—but so far, they have not.” Outlining the “strained relations” between the fields of queer theory and lesbian and gay history, Duggan goes on to argue that the former have too often failed to acknowledge their debt to the latter; while the latter “have largely ignored the critical implications of queer theory for their scholarly practice.” I would like to go some way in initiating a productive exchange between the two fields. While my focus in what follows is the terrain of queer deconstructive theories and not specific lesbian and gay history texts, it is through a queer deconstructive rereading of the historiography of sexuality produced in large part by these texts that has enabled me to mount an historical critique of queer theory itself. My aim in this article is not to ascribe any positive ontological or epistemological meaning to the categories of hetero-, homo-, and bisexuality, but rather to insist on the impossibility of ever finally delimiting their meaning. Hence, my goal is to further the project of deconstruction.<sup>3</sup> I aim, therefore, not to produce yet another theory of sexuality, but rather, to demonstrate the epistemological consequences for anyone attempting such a project. I hope to show how the category of bisexuality, contrary to its marginalization and erasure, is implicated in any attempt to conceptualize hetero- and homosexuality as distinct categories. And this, as I will argue in the conclusion, has profound

implications for deconstructive reading practices. However, before I embark on an analysis of some of the early influential works of queer deconstructive theory, and to lay the groundwork for my argument, it is necessary to provide a brief but rather differently oriented examination of some influential moments in the early history of modern categories of sexuality. I shall do this by tracing the important, and largely ignored, role of bisexuality in the epistemological formation of the hetero/homosexual opposition.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Invention of (Bi)Sexuality*

The second half of the nineteenth century was a time of enormous social contestation. Movements for racial and sexual equality, and the proliferation of categories of 'effeminate' men, 'masculine' women and New Women, served to challenge patriarchal boundaries of race, gender and sexuality (Chauncey, 1982-83; Cohen, 1993; Duggan, 1993; Newton, 1990; Smith-Rosenberg, 1990). A new discursive economy for the organization of the sexes and their pleasures was in the making. I call this *the economy of (hetero)sexuality*, the creation of two distinct but interrelated epistemic registers, sex/gender and sexuality. Through a historically strategic alliance, this newly emerging western economy began at the turn of the century to subsume human subjects under a new and more complex ontological order. That is to say that there emerged during this period a significant distinction between sex role (active/passive, masculine/feminine behavior) and sexual object choice (Chauncey, 1982-83). In response to the crisis of gender boundaries and in order contain and codify deviations of sex role behavior, the category of sexuality was individuated and produced as a somewhat distinct but additional component of individual ontology (Davidson, 1987). To qualify as a human being, therefore, an individual was not only bestowed with a distinct sex and gender, but as well, with a sexuality; the latter, if all goes to 'nature's' plan presumed to be the consequence of the former. One was thereby conceptualized as both a man, *and* a heterosexual or homosexual, a woman, *and* a heterosexual or lesbian.

The newly emerging registers of sex/gender and sexuality were inextricably entwined through the hegemonic discourse of evolutionary theory. Determined to reorder dominant social hierarchies, scientists explained deviations of normative being and behavior in terms of a hetero-teleological scale of evolutionary development. Blacks, homosexuals, children, and women were situated at lower points on this scale than

white heterosexual men, not able (or not yet able) to reach the highest stage of (hu)man evolution. The category of bisexuality played a central role in this linear model, and thus in the epistemological configuration of the category of sexuality (Angelides, 2001). The human differences of race, age, gender and sexuality were thought to be the effect of a specific temporal and spatial relation to what evolutionists and sexologists referred to as primordial hermaphroditism or embryological bisexuality. Believed to be the earliest form of human ancestry, primordial hermaphroditism, or bisexuality, as Frank Sulloway (1979, p. 179) points out, became the evolutionists “missing bisexual link.” This was confirmed by recapitulation theory, which posited that the human embryo repeated “in its own life history the life history of the race, passing through the lower forms of its ancestors on its way to maturity” (Russett, 1989, p. 50). In other words, as Charles Darwin (1927 [1871], p. 525) posited, every individual “bears rudiments of various accessory parts, appertaining to the reproductive system, which properly belong[s] to the opposite sex.” This meant that blacks, women, children and homosexuals were thought to be the effect of an unsuccessful evolution, closer to, or retaining many more elements of, the originary (pre-historic) bisexuality of the human race and individual embryo. Put differently, an individual’s distance from this state of primordial bisexuality dictated the degree of one’s evolutionary advancement. Within this framework, therefore, the axes of race, age, gender and sexuality were defined and aligned by their very *relation* to bisexuality.

However, bisexuality posed a problem for sexological discourse. In the attempt to catalogue human sexual behavior, sexologists were confronted with the dilemma of containing its variant forms within the nascent and rigid oppositional categories of hetero- and homosexuality. After all, even in his 1897 publication, *Sexual Inversion*, Havelock Ellis (1897, p. 133) acknowledged the “person who is organically twisted into a shape that is more fitted for the exercise of the inverted than of the normal sexual impulse, *or else equally fitted for both*” (emphasis added). Similarly, Krafft-Ebing (1965, pp. 373-385) had identified what he called “psychical hermaphroditism.” Yet, sexology was unable to account for bisexuality as a form of sexuality. For instance, on the one hand, Ellis (1928 [1901], p. 88) claimed that “[t]here would seem to be a broad and simple grouping of all sexually functioning persons into three comprehensive divisions: the heterosexual, the bisexual, and the homosexual.” Yet, on the other hand, he affirmed like Krafft-Ebing, that “[m]ost of the bisexual prefer their own sex . . . [and that this] would seem to indicate that the bisexuals may really be inverts.” “In any case,”

stated Ellis (1928 [1901], p. 278), “bisexuality merges imperceptibly into simple inversion.”

The difficulty for sexologists constrained by a linear logic of temporal succession was how to reconcile bisexuality as at one and the same time a biological cause (embryological bisexuality) *and* a psychological effect (bisexual identity). Ultimately, bisexuality as a form of sexuality or identity had to be refused in the present tense.<sup>5</sup> That is to say that bisexuality always had to be somewhere else—in the embryo, the sphere of human prehistory—or something else—either really heterosexual or homosexual. It could never be a stable sexual identity in the here and now otherwise the epistemological integrity of the very categories of man, woman, heterosexual and homosexual would be thrown into doubt (Angelides, 2001). For, on the one hand, it was not possible to define the precise meaning of maleness and femaleness, as all that existed were gradations and combinations of both according to the original bisexuality of human beings. Inherent to this notion of universal bisexuality was the physiological fact, accepted by Ellis and other sexologists, that “there is no such thing as a pure male or female.”<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, if all individuals are physiologically bisexual to one degree or another then there is no reason why they might not be also potentially bisexual in psychological orientation. Within sexological discourse, therefore, it was less a case of “bisexuality merg[ing] imperceptibly into simple inversion” (homosexuality), as Ellis (1928 [1901], p. 278) had put it, than it was the inverse: *the category of homosexuality, and indeed those of heterosexuality, man and woman, merged imperceptibly into bisexuality*. In this way bisexuality can be seen as an important historical and epistemological regulator of the axes of sex/gender and sexuality.

Freud inherited this problematic relationship to the concept of bisexuality. Despite his attempts to move beyond the biologism of sexology, he retained the theory of primordial bisexuality and made it the bedrock of his psychoanalytic framework. Yet he aimed to erect a psychological theory of gender and sexuality that would complement the biological foundations of psychoanalysis. In this way, psychological bisexuality was seen as a reflection of originary (biological) bisexuality. So according to Freud (1905, p. 141), just as primordial bisexuality manifests physically in every individual by “leaving behind only a few traces of the sex that has become atrophied,” so too does it manifest mentally such that each individual is “made up of masculine and feminine traits” and desires (Freud, 1925, p. 255). In a radical move, this meant that for Freud heterosexual and homosexual desires are to be found in each indi-

vidual. However, this profound challenge to the fixity and mutual exclusivity of hetero- and homosexuality was undermined by his erasure of bisexuality as a viable sexuality. With the dissolution of the Oedipus complex a child's father-identification (masculine) or mother-identification (feminine) is determined by a mutually exclusive structuring of the Freudian axes of identification and object-choice (desire). As the child cannot wish to take the mother as a sexual object and identify with her simultaneously—and vice versa regarding the child and the father—the adult cannot have a feminine identification and take a female sexual object (e.g., Freud, 1923, p.34). As Judith Butler (1990, p. 61) puts it, in Freudian theory “only opposites attract.” Bisexuality was thus not an end point but a point of human beginnings. It was that which belonged to the sphere of the precultural, the archaic, the uncivilized, that which had to be repressed for normative and desirable individual and social functioning (e.g., Freud, 1919, p. 261; Freud, 1930).

A number of points require underlining here regarding both sexology and Freudian psychoanalysis. First, the evolutionary concept of biological bisexuality was that which inextricably fused together the axes of gender and sexuality. Second, this teleological model could not accommodate a biological *and* a psychological notion of bisexuality. In other words, bisexuality could not be both origin and effect. Therefore, third, to reinforce the oppositions of *both* man and woman, heterosexual and homosexual, bisexuality as a sexuality or psychological identity had to be refused, or erased in the present tense. As Ellis (1928 [1901], p. 88) himself revealed regarding the trinary taxonomy of heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual, the latter “is found to introduce uncertainty and doubt.” Or as Freud (1940, p. 188) put it more frustratingly in relation to gender (identification) and sexuality (object-choice), this “fact of psychological bisexuality . . . embarrasses all our enquiries into the subject and makes them harder to describe.” Bisexuality was not just a conceptual sponge used to absorb the contradictions inherent to the oppositional framing of gender and sexuality. Bisexuality was in fact the repudiated internal *Other* to gender, to sexuality, indeed, to binary logic.

That bisexuality represented a danger to the stability of oppositional notions of gender and sexuality was nowhere more apparent than in the discourse of post-Freudian psychoanalysis. In the three decades following Freud's death the concept of bisexuality was almost unilaterally repudiated as a scientific falsehood within the domains of psychoanalysis and psychiatry. As I have argued in detail elsewhere, the repudiation of bisexuality and the pathologization of homosexuality went hand in

hand. The only way for psychoanalysts to circumvent the collapse, into one another, of the boundaries of man, woman, hetero- and homosexuality was to repudiate both the biological and psychological residue of bisexuality. At the level of biology this was initiated by Sandor Rado (1940). At the level of psychology it was initiated by Freud himself and unapologetically completed by Edmund Bergler (e.g., 1962 [1956]) and the dominant American form of post-Freudian, oral-centered psychoanalysis (Angelides, 2001).<sup>7</sup> Refused a referent and rendered a misnomer, bisexuality was elided not only in the present tense but also in any temporal sense at all. This was captured in its most extreme form in the work of Edmund Bergler (1962 [1956]). In his chapter entitled, “Does ‘Bisexuality’ Exist?” he declared,

BISEXUALITY—a state that has no existence beyond the word itself—is an out-and-out fraud, involuntarily maintained by some naïve homosexuals, and voluntarily perpetrated by some who are not so naïve. The theory claims that a man can be—alternately or concomitantly—homo and heterosexual. The statement is as rational as one declaring that a man can at the same time have cancer and perfect health. (Bergler, 1962 [1956], p. 80)

The genealogical roots of this mode of thinking can be traced to Freud, for whom the possibility of desiring and identifying with the same (gendered) object is precluded. In various forms this principle has inflected almost all of the influential psychoanalytic theorizations of sexuality in the twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> This was most explicitly captured by Bergler’s statement that “[n]obody can dance at two weddings at the same time” (1962 [1956], p. 81). It is also apparent in the pervasive use of the categories of *pseudo*-homo- and heterosexuality, and “spurious” and “overt” homosexuality. Each of these categories was constituted through the law of contradiction. Therefore, as long as no individual could at any given moment occupy two opposing camps, psychological bisexuality was to remain a catachresis. For if all bisexuals are either homosexual or heterosexual, and all homosexuals latent heterosexuals—as post-Freudian psychoanalysis largely maintained—then in order for a state of psychological bisexuality to exist, heterosexuality would no longer be latent at all. Instead, homosexuality, as Freud had argued, would exist somewhere *within* heterosexuality, as one of its structuring elements. And this was too unstable a basis for a discourse attempting to lay claim to a therapeutic cure for homosexuality.

The complete erasure of bisexuality effectively undid Freud's disarticulation of the sex drive from the reproductive aim and object. It meant that the axes of gender and sexuality could be once again conflated (harking back to nineteenth-century sexology) to represent sexual deviation as a deviation of gender development. In spite of this erasure, however, the category of bisexuality was firmly installed from its inception as the third term in the hetero/homosexual opposition. Yet it always functioned as the repudiated third term, the internal *Other* to sexuality's logic of binary opposition. Moreover, this negation of bisexuality—or what I have called the erasure of bisexuality in the present tense—has structured almost every influential model of sexuality in the twentieth century. The primary reason for this is that our modern, Western epistemology of sexuality has been powered by a binary logic that has as its *modus operandi* the law of non-contradiction.

Despite its brevity, I hope that the preceding historical précis has gone some way in demonstrating how crucial the category of bisexuality has been to the founding epistemological construction of a mutually exclusive hetero/homosexual opposition and to the maintenance of a discursive alliance of gender and sexuality. As I have demonstrated elsewhere (Angelides, 2001), the hetero/homosexual opposition is less a binary than it is a trinary structure. Of course, from poststructuralism and deconstruction we have learned how the two poles in a binary opposition are mutually constituting. One pole thus requires the other for its meaning. In suggesting that the hetero/homosexual opposition is a trinary structure, I am arguing that instead of two terms, there are in fact three interlocking terms in this epistemological structure. The effect of such an all-pervasive structure means that when a theory or model or text of sexuality posits either one of the terms hetero-, homo-, or bisexuality then the other two terms are unfailingly posited by default. Each of the three terms cannot be posited without the others (even if this means through their negation) precisely because each requires the other two for its self-definition (Angelides, 2001). Therefore, if a theorist is inventing a theory of homosexuality, let's say the gay gene theory, even if the author makes no corresponding claims about heterosexuality or bisexuality, I am arguing that the (binary) logical structure of the hetero/homosexual opposition dictates that s/he will make some kind of corresponding claims whether or not s/he intends to or realizes it. What this means, therefore, is that the hetero/homosexual opposition is epistemologically unthinkable without bisexuality. Each of the three terms has been historically and epistemologically constituted through the logic of binary opposition. This is not to suggest that the meanings

of hetero-, homo-, and bisexuality are fixed—far from it; the meanings our theories of sexuality ascribe to these terms are dependent upon the context in which they are invoked. What it does mean, however, is that while there will be multiple meanings of these terms, any shifts of meaning in any one of them will produce shifts of meaning in the others.

It is at this point that I would like to turn to some of the recent attempts within the field of queer theory to *deconstruct* the opposition of hetero/homosexuality and its epistemic fusion with that of gender. Exposing the assumptions made about bisexuality within this work will then enable me to demonstrate my argument about queer theory's deconstructive ahistoricism, and the methodological and political tensions between gay/lesbian history, feminism, and queer theory.

### ***QUEER THEORY AND THE ERASURE OF BISEXUALITY***

The impetus for much queer theory has been Eve Sedgwick's claim that any analysis of "modern Western culture" requires a "critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition" (1990, p. 1). That bisexuality has been pivotal to the discursive construction of this opposition, however, has been completely overlooked by Sedgwick. This erasure, I would argue, is in part a structural effect of the central organizing principle of her work: the trope of the closet. For Sedgwick this trope is a useful metaphor for interrogating the "relations of the known and the unknown, the explicit and the inexplicit" (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 3) as they have served to structure modern hetero/homosexual definition. Sexual definition and, indeed, meaning in Western culture itself, she quite rightly argues, have been themselves structured around, among others, the oppositions secrecy/disclosure, knowledge/ignorance, masculine/feminine, natural/artificial, same/different, active/passive, in/out (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 11). However, what she fails to take into consideration is the fact that in the history of discourses of sexuality it is the force of these very oppositions that has served to elide bisexuality from the present tense.

Bisexuality has been rendered an artifact of our evolutionary prehistory, a state outside or prior to culture or civilization, a myth, a catachresis, and a (utopian) sexual impossibility. This is precisely because bisexuality cannot be represented through these binary formulations, blurring as it does any easy distinction of their terms (by in fact partaking of each of the polar terms). In order to secure its binary structure, one of the primary moves of the epistemology of the closet is to repudi-

ate bisexuality, or else render it consonant with its binary logic. In the former, bisexuality is set up as an interior exclusion; in the latter, it is subsumed either by hetero- or homosexuality. By failing to interrogate the interior exclusions and binary appropriations performed by the epistemology of the closet throughout the history of sexuality, Sedgwick's analysis thus falls short of analyzing its terms.

Sedgwick (1990, p. 11) exposes some of the ways the hetero/homosexual opposition inheres in and structures—through its “ineffaceable marking” of fundamental binarisms—modern Western thought. She also usefully traces the conceptual contradictions responsible for the (continuing) “crisis of modern [homo/hetero]sexual definition” (p. 1) since the turn of the century. By crisis Sedgwick is not celebrating the “self-corrosive efficacy of the contradictions inherent to these definitional binarisms” (p. 11). In other words, discourses concerned with securing sexual definition are not about to disappear as a result of an “incoherence of definition” (p. 11). Rather, what she is attempting to highlight is the way these contradictions drive discourses of sexuality on. In the history of sexuality, therefore, “contests for discursive power” can be seen as “competitions” to “set the terms of, and profit in some way, from the operations of such a an incoherence of definition” (p. 11). An analysis of the centrality of this definitional incoherence thus comprises the primary undertaking of *Epistemology of the Closet*. Yet despite her deconstructive labors, Sedgwick does not inquire into precisely *how* discourses of sexuality vie for “rhetorical leverage” (p. 11), that is, *how* modern homo/heterosexual definition is (in)coherently instantiated. As I have already mentioned, bisexuality is the third term in the hetero/homosexual binary that has absorbed and regulated the contradictions inherent to the (re)production of modern binarized sexual definition. What I would like to suggest, then, is that one important way discourses of sexuality have vied for “rhetorical leverage” and “set the terms” of reference for dominant meanings of sexuality is precisely through the erasure of bisexuality in the present tense. By ignoring bisexuality and, indeed, the metonymical association of bisexuality with binary contradiction, Sedgwick's deconstructive framework does not go far enough in *critically analyzing* modern hetero/homosexual definition. Doing this more effectively would require sustained attention, as I have suggested, to the interior exclusions constitutive of the epistemology of the closet. As it stands, therefore, Sedgwick, perhaps like Foucault, appears content with a description rather than explanation of the production of (hetero/homo) sexual definition. For historians and theorists of (bi)sexuality, however, such a rhe-

torical analysis only repeats the problematic erasure of bisexuality that is the closet's point of departure.

Diana Fuss's introduction to the edited collection *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* is another of the influential texts of queer deconstructive theory that effects a similar marginalization and erasure of bisexuality. Fuss (1991) follows Sedgwick's lead in analyzing the discursive mechanics of modern hetero/homosexual definition. In a brief theoretical analysis she argues that it is "another related opposition" (p. 1), that of inside/outside, which provides the structural foundations for the opposition of hetero- and homosexuality. Fuss raises a series of questions in order to foreground her analysis:

How do outsides and insides come about? What philosophical and critical operations or modes produce the specious distinction between a pure and natural heterosexual inside and an impure and unnatural homosexual outside? Where exactly, in this borderline sexual economy, does one identity leave off and the other begin? (p. 2)

Drawing more explicitly from Derridean deconstruction, it would seem that Fuss is asking questions from a position which cannot fail to explore the position of bisexuality in this binary economy. Firstly, she is alluding to the fallacy of a pure inside and a pure outside through which to distinguish hetero- from homosexuality. Secondly, she appears to be setting herself the task of inquiring into precisely *how* these homogeneous fallacies are epistemologically ("philosophical and critical operations") created. And thirdly, she is directly addressing the question of the very threshold between these two sexual identities, that is, the spatial, temporal and discursive points where the boundaries between hetero- and homosexuality are blurred. Bisexuality is unmistakably implicated in every one of these questions. Yet Fuss is confusing on this point, as is evidenced by the problematic parenthetical appearance of bisexuality in the following fourth question. She 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, transsexuality . . .) to its own polar logic? (p. 2)

There are a number of problems with this account. Firstly, as bisexual theorist Michael du Plessis (1996, p. 37) points out, 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.” Secondly, this rendering of bisexuality as excessive or *other* to hetero- and homosexuality implies, rather problematically, the existence of a mode of bisexuality that exists outside the economy of (hetero)sexuality and its binary logic. However, bisexuality *as a sexuality* is historically and epistemologically implicated in this binarized economy, unthinkable outside of its terms. Thirdly, and concomitantly, Fuss is suggesting that the appropriation of bisexuality by the inside/outside, heterosexual/homosexual binaries works *only*, therefore, to *secure* their “seemingly dialectical structure.” She appears to ignore the fact that not only is bisexuality internal to the dialectical structure of hetero- and homosexuality, but that bisexuality, in a different yet related definitional guise, preceded and conditioned its historical invention. That is, before its appearance in the economy of (hetero)sexuality—indeed, before the construction of this economy—bisexuality was an evolutionary concept (primordial hermaphroditism) constructed to explain the origins of male and female sex difference. Fuss is not referring to this sense of bisexuality however. Instead, she is referring to bisexuality *as a sexuality*. Had she historicized the dialectical structure of hetero- and homosexuality, therefore, she might have realized that bisexuality has served *both* to secure and, simultaneously, to disrupt its boundaries. For instance, within discourses of sexology, Freudian psychoanalysis and gay liberation, bisexuality has been invoked as an explanatory causal principle in the production of hetero- and homosexuality (Angelides, 2001). Yet within the very same discourses bisexuality has been obscured from the present tense and even repudiated at the very point when it threatens to blur the boundaries between the two.<sup>9</sup>

In fairness to Fuss, however, it is possible that I have misread the thrust of her claim that the hetero/homosexual opposition secures “its seemingly inviolable dialectical structure only by assimilating and internalizing other sexualities (bisexuality, transvestism, transsexualism . . .) to its own rigid polar logic.” A more “faithful” reading might be that, with respect to bisexuality at least, it can *only* be accommodated by the hetero/homosexual opposition if it is to conform to the inherent binary logic. On one hand I believe this is the case, and that my first reading interpreted this sentence by ignoring the term “only.” On the other hand, however, Fuss appears to diverge from my reading of bisexuality in a

way that I think justifies my original critique. To say that bisexuality is *assimilated* and *internalized* by the hetero/homosexual opposition is, as I noted above, to impute a kind of distinctness to bisexuality. This suggests that bisexuality undergoes a kind of ‘conversion’ by binary logic, and that it can exist as a mode of sexuality outside this oppositional framework. My argument, on the contrary, is that bisexuality is an epistemological part of this framework, *unthinkable outside of binary logic*.

An obvious riposte might well be that Fuss is in fact implicitly referring to a notion of bisexuality that our binary logic refuses to acknowledge, and that this idea is scarcely different to what I refer to as the disavowal of bisexuality in the present tense. Even if this is the case, however, a concept of bisexuality in the present tense is also produced through the workings of binary logic. Any concept of bisexuality can only ever be one of the binary logic’s *effects*. By thus situating some version of bisexuality *outside* the hetero/homosexual binary, Fuss is in fact implying precisely what my original interpretation suggests: that all versions of bisexuality *inside* the hetero/homosexual binary *only* reinforce or “secure” its “dialectical structure.” Yet in the history of sexuality this is only part of the story. Another part is that bisexuality simultaneously *disrupts*, at every turn, and within the very terms of binary logic, the dialectical structure of hetero/homosexuality (Angelides, 2001).

The problem posed by bisexuality highlights a deeper problem with Fuss’s invocation of the inside/outside binary. Inscribed as *other* to the hetero/homosexual opposition, bisexuality is situated *outside* the monogamic and monosexual figuring of the very “couple” inside and outside. It is therefore only possible for Fuss to secure the dialectical structure of this binary *as an explanatory principle* by in turn deploying its self-constituting binary logic. The law of this logic is the law of non-contradiction. Each term in a binary, therefore, is either A or not-A. Any term that is both A and not-A, or, neither A nor not-A is excluded. Fuss relies on this law, however, by failing to consider that which it excludes: the logics of both/and, neither/nor. This effectively repudiates the möbius-like figure that is both inside and outside simultaneously, yet reducible to neither. In reading sexuality through this structure, Fuss aims to turn the categories of hetero- and homosexuality *inside/out*. However, this only demonstrates their logical interdependence. To go one step further in deconstructing the hetero/homosexual structure, Fuss would need to mobilize the repudiated logics and explore that which is undecidable within the terms of this dialectical structure. An analysis of bisexuality as undecidable, as both inside and outside, heterosexual and homosex-

ual (yet at the same time none of these), is one crucial way of doing this. However, bisexuality is bracketed out of the analysis. So rather than expose the workings of binary logic, she merely reinforces its modus operandi.<sup>10</sup>

Yet another startling example of this tendency to render bisexuality parenthetical to queer analysis is Lee Edelman's book *Homographesis*. It exhibits a striking similarity to the case of Fuss. One of the primary objectives of the book is to "explore the determining relation between 'homosexuality' and 'identity' as both have been constructed in modern Euro-American societies" (Edelman, 1994, p. xiv). Following Sedgwick's lead, therefore, he also locates homosexuality as central to any cultural "enterprise of . . . identity-determination" (p. xv). In yet another self-avowedly Derridean mode, this entails and aspires to a deconstruction of the heterosexual logic of identity. Edelman performs this analysis by tracing the rhetorical and contradictory operations of sameness and difference through which (homosexual) identity is instantiated. He suggests that homosexuality is constructed as an *anxious* effect of the very crisis of representation itself. Indeed, and more specifically, "'homosexuality,'" he argues, "is constructed to bear the cultural burden of the rhetoricity inherent in 'sexuality' itself" (p. xiv). Homosexuality thereby stands in for and serves "to contain . . . the unknowability of the sexual" (p. xv).

Interestingly, Edelman affirms his project as a "work of *gay* theory" (p. xvi). Despite this invocation, however, the nomination "gay" is not premised on the stability of a fixed referent. Instead, it is deployed as a "signifier of resistance," a deconstructive tool with which to challenge the logic of identity. In other words, homosexuality becomes the privileged deconstructive site for this project because it is "'gay sexuality' [that] functions in the modern West as the very agency of sexual meaningfulness, the construct without which sexual meaning, and therefore, in a larger sense, meaning itself, becomes virtually unthinkable" (p. xv). Scrutinizing a wide range of cultural productions, *Homographesis* is indicative of the queer deconstructive impulse determined to work the opposition of hetero/homosexuality to the point of epistemological frustration.

What is most startling about Edelman's work is not the almost complete absence of any discussion of bisexuality, although this is in itself rather astonishing (bisexuality does not even make it into the book's index). Rather, it is the fact that bisexuality is called forth in the preface by way of parenthetical reference only to be dismissed as antithetical to the theoretical project of deconstruction. Curiously, however, this

reference occurs in the context of locating his work under the rubric of gay theory. Like Fuss's parenthesizing of bisexuality, Edelman's takes place in one rather complex, ambiguous, and perhaps even contradictory sentence:

By retaining the signifier of a specific sexuality within the hetero/homo binarism (a binarism more effectively reinforced than disrupted by the "third term" of bisexuality) even as it challenges the ideology of that categorical dispensation, this enterprise intends to mark its avowal of the multiple sexualities, the various modes of interaction and relation, that the hierarchizing imperative of the hetero/homo binarism attempts to discredit . . . (p. xvi)

Why does bisexuality dis/appear in this context despite his claim to *avow* that which the "hetero/homo binarism attempts to discredit"? It seems that Edelman is attempting to reassure readers that the theoretical entity of "gay" need not be seen as simply reiterative of the logic of identity and the hetero/homosexual opposition. Is he here attempting to respond to, or reject in advance, the claim that the epistemic category of bisexuality might be equally or better positioned to expose the rhetorical operations of sameness and difference in the construction of sexual identity? If so, it would scarcely be different to an *anxious* gesture of containment. Is homosexuality the only category in the hetero/homosexual binary that provides deconstructive leverage for challenging and exposing the stability and fixity of sexual identity? What kind of reductive and essentializing labor is performed on the category of bisexuality to render it mere reinforcement to this binary?

Edelman purports to be undertaking, perhaps in Foucauldian fashion, an *observation* of "how 'homo' and 'hetero,' 'same' and 'different,' switch places" (pp. xviii-xix) in the rhetorical operations of hegemonic discourse. Yet nowhere does he consider how the category of bisexuality might be implicated in this economy. In fact, such an analysis appears to be wittingly foreclosed in advance by unwittingly performing, to use his words, a "metaphorizing totalization" (p. 11) on bisexuality. Yet in the history of discourses of sexuality bisexuality is both the stabilizing *and* destabilizing element in the epistemic construction of sexual identity: Its erasure in the present tense stabilizes the hetero/homosexual opposition whilst simultaneously and perpetually destabilizing the very terms of the opposition (Angelides, 2001). In fact, bisexuality has been the category through and against which modern sexual identity itself has been discursively constructed. Edelman's claim that bisexuality

only reinforces the hetero/homosexual binary thus ignores the historical and epistemological figuring of bisexuality. Like “homosexuality,” it cannot be represented as a fixed and stable category.

In addition, Edelman (1994) fails to interrogate the way in which the (absent) presence of bisexuality marks the play of sameness and difference. He quite rightly suggests that “homosexuality marks the otherness, the difference internal to ‘sexuality’ and sexual discourse itself” (p. xix). What he means is that the logic of identity has installed homosexuality in order to contain the internal crisis of meaning engendered by the *rhetoricity of sexuality*. However, he does not ask what the logic of identity must exclude or disavow in order to perform this operation. That is, how does the discourse of sexual identity ensure the mutual exclusivity of sameness and difference, hetero- and homosexuality? Clearly, bisexuality must be disavowed for these operations. For in relation to hetero- and homosexuality, bisexuality is both same and different. Edelman ignores the fact that it is the repudiation of bisexuality which makes possible, indeed makes coherent, the very switching of places between hetero and homo. His project of “locat[ing] the critical force of homosexuality at the very point of discrimination between sameness and difference” (p. 20) therefore repeats the gesture of bisexual disavowal that sustains the logic of (sexual) identity. So I suggest that it is not only homosexuality which, as Edelman argues, “bears the cultural burden of the rhetoricity inherent in ‘sexuality’”; nor is it simply a matter of homosexuality standing in for and serving “to contain . . . the unknowability of the sexual.” Historically, bisexuality has also had to bear much of this cultural burden. For in fact it is bisexuality that has had to ‘stand out’ in order for homosexuality to ‘stand in’ for the “unknowability of the sexual.” That is, it is bisexuality’s very *erasure in the present tense* that has accompanied and thus enabled homosexuality to mark the “otherness . . . to ‘sexuality.’”

It is clear from the foregoing analysis that, while on the one hand the queer theorists analyzed have sought to challenge the very oppositional terms through which modern sexuality has been historically constructed, on the other hand they have merely reproduced those terms within their own ahistorical deconstructive accounts. To put this another way, queer theorists have in some ways unwittingly reproduced as history the binary framework of sexuality as it has been constructed by (among others) the heteronormative discourses of sexology, Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalysis/psychiatry. By misrecognizing the epistemological function of bisexuality they have remained blind to one of the logic of (sexual) identity’s most telling ruses.

**GENDER TROUBLE IN QUEER THEORY**

How are we to understand the erasure of bisexuality in some of the fundamental works of queer deconstructive theory? One reason, as I have suggested, is that queer theories have ignored the role of bisexuality in the broader history of sexuality. Whether this is itself the outcome of a reliance on monosexual gay/lesbian historiography is unclear. For as Lisa Duggan (1995) has argued, queer theorists have largely repudiated their intellectual debt to lesbian/gay history. While I would suggest that an uncritical reliance on gay and lesbian historiography is tied up with a form of presentism that is less concerned with rereading history through queer frameworks, even that does not tell us enough regarding bisexuality's erasure.<sup>11</sup> So it is to an interrogation of queer theory's framing of gender that I now turn, for it is here that I suggest we might find some answers.

Within the burgeoning fields of gay/lesbian studies and queer theory the category of sexuality, and its disarticulation from gender, has opened up a promising discursive space for interrogating and deconstructing western discourses constituted through the hetero/homosexual binarism. As the editors to the *Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* point out, "[l]esbian/gay studies does for *sex* and *sexuality* approximately what women's studies does for gender" (Abelove, Barale, & Halperin, 1993, p. xv).<sup>12</sup> To say that the work of Foucault has been enormously influential in this development is at best an understatement. His genealogical account of the emergence of sexuality as coextensive with modern subjectivity has been absorbed as axiomatic to the field of queer theory (e.g., Sedgwick, 1990). It appears, however, that this productive deployment of Foucault's work has also brought with it a constraining limitation, namely, a problematic relationship to gender.<sup>13</sup>

Increasingly, there is a distinct concern, particularly among feminist theorists, that the category of sexuality has become reified to the point of exclusion in discourses of queer theory. Feminism and the category of gender, so the argument goes, are being cast as redundant explanatory principles as a result of queer theory's attempt to disarticulate gender and sexuality. In this section I will begin by tracing and extending these arguments in order to put forward an argument of my own in relation to bisexuality. I will argue that despite its productive potential, the disarticulation of gender and sexuality, and the Foucauldian-inflected reification of the latter, has proceeded in such a way as to occlude bisexuality from analytic view.

Judith Butler (1994) has problematized the above claim made by the editors of *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. She argues that it represents an unwitting, yet *aggressive* and *violent* discursive appropriation of sexuality as the “proper object” of gay/lesbian/queer studies over and against a feminism whose proper object is gender (Butler, 1994, pp. 5-6).<sup>14</sup> This appropriation effects, Butler suggests, more than a tendentious methodological distinction between feminism and gay/lesbian/queer studies. As well, it serves to make feminist inquiry into sexuality obsolete. In interrogating the terms of the analogy between feminism and gay/lesbian/queer, Butler claims that the analogy falls down around the editors’ invocation of a Foucauldian-inflected category of “sex”:

the editors lead us through analogy from a feminism in which gender and sex are conflated to a notion of lesbian and gay studies in which ‘sex’ encompasses and exceeds the purview of feminism: ‘sex’ in this second instance would include not only questions of identity and attribute (female or male), but discourses of sensation, acts, and sexual practice as well. (p. 2)

Butler argues that the category of ‘sex’ is common both to feminism and gay/lesbian/queer studies, yet this “commonality must be denied” (p. 2). The “implicit argument,” she suggests, “is that lesbian and gay studies does precisely what feminism is said to do, but does it in a more expansive and complex way” (p. 4).

Butler identifies the appropriation of Gayle Rubin’s essay “Thinking Sex” as the gesture serving to authorize the methodological founding of lesbian/gay/queer studies. However, she argues that a decontextualized appropriation of Rubin’s call for an analytic separation of gender and sexuality effects not only a significant “restriction of the scope of feminism” (p. 8), but breaks the long standing coalition between the two (p. 21). While I remain unconvinced of the mechanics of Butler’s argument as it pivots on and is extrapolated from the editors’ introduction to *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*—an argument made, I should add, with almost no reference to any texts of queer theory<sup>15</sup>—she has identified an emergent tendency that is perhaps more usefully explored through a grounded analysis of specific queer texts.

Biddy Martin (1994a) takes a first step in this direction in her essay “Sexualities Without Genders and Other Queer Utopias.” She provides the basis for a more productive and grounded analysis of some of the issues raised by Butler. Despite welcoming the possibilities opened up by

disarticulating gender and sexuality, like Butler, Martin is concerned also that this is taking place at the expense of feminism and important feminist destabilizations of the category of gender. Sexuality, she argues elsewhere, is too often being cast as that which “exceeds, transgresses, or supersedes gender” (Martin 1994b, p. 101). Gender, and indeed feminism, on the other hand, is increasingly being framed as fixed and constraining, hampering the celebration of queerness (Martin, 1994a, pp. 106-7).

Martin argues that Sedgwick’s work is indicative of this tendency. In “axiom 2” of *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick (1990) attempts to keep analytically distinct the two senses of the category of sex: chromosomal sex and sex as sexuality/act/fantasy/pleasure. She goes on to suggest that the latter is “virtually impossible to situate on a map delimited by the feminist-defined sex/gender distinction” (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 29). Instead, Sedgwick stresses that the development of an anti-homophobic discourse more suited to an analysis of sexuality “as an alternative analytic axis” is not just required, but “a particularly urgent project” (p. 32). In collapsing sex and gender “more simply under the rubric ‘gender’” (p. 29), she puts forward the claim that sexuality is inflected by a form of conceptual ambiguity in a way unknown to the category of gender. Rendered the more fixed, gender is considered the *proper object* of feminist discourse and less suited to deconstructive analysis. Sexuality, on other hand, is the more apt object of deconstruction, exceeding “the bare choreographies of procreation,” perhaps even situated as “the very opposite” to chromosomal sex, to gender (p. 29).

Martin (1994a, p. 107) argues that it is one thing to posit the irreducibility of sexuality and gender, but quite another to react to this, as does Sedgwick, “by making them more distinct, even opposed to one another.” She also objects to the way Sedgwick privileges sexuality and defines anti-homophobic analysis not just against but over and above monolithic and fixed notions of both feminism and gender. For example, sexuality, argues Sedgwick (1990, p. 29), “could occupy. . . even more than ‘gender’ the polar position of the relational, the social/symbolic, the constructed, the variable, the representational.” Moreover, sex (an “array of acts, expectations, narratives, pleasures”) and sexuality, unlike gender, “tend to represent the full spectrum of positions between the most intimate and the most social, the most predetermined and the most aleatory, the most physically rooted and the most symbolically infused, the most innate and the most learned, the most autonomous and the most relational traits of being” (p. 29). Sedgwick perhaps anticipates the kind of feminist objection raised by Martin with the reassurance that she is not calling for “any epistemological or ontological

privileging of an axis of sexuality over an axis of gender” (p. 34). However, in reifying sexuality as the analytically autonomous and “after deconstructive object” (p. 34), Sedgwick is thus able to install the hetero/homosexual opposition as *the* pivotal organizing principle of western thought over and above that of male/female. Sexuality thereby becomes the *proper object* not of feminist but of anti-homophobic inquiry (as though the two are not overlapping).

The problems encountered with this reified account of sexuality and its disarticulation from gender are made even more palpable when we examine the figure of bisexuality. Recall that it is bisexuality that has in many ways regulated the axes of gender and sexuality as they were constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. And as I discussed earlier, Sedgwick’s epistemological mapping of the logic of the closet rests on a repudiation and erasure of bisexuality. Yet despite Sedgwick’s acknowledgment that these axes are “inextricable from one another” (Sedgwick 1990, p. 30), her analysis of modern hetero/homosexual definition ignores this very crucial space of overlap between gender and sexuality. Take, for example, her attempt to map the “models” of “gay/straight definition” through which homosexuality has been articulated historically. Sedgwick offers a table with two separate horizontal rows for sexuality and gender. Each row is then vertically divided by two columns, one representing “separatist” models, the other “integrative” or “transitive” ones. On the one hand, homosexuality has been defined *sexually*: as an essentialist minority (separatist); *and* as a universal and cultural potential (integrative). On the other hand, it has been defined in terms of *gender identification*: male and female homosexual desire as a natural effect of male and female gender identification respectively (separatist); *and* as a result of cross-gender identification (integrative) (Sedgwick, 1990, pp. 86-90, esp. p. 88).

While this model captures some of the contradictions and cross-identifications made possible within and between the separatist and integrative axes of homosexual definition, it remains in the end only a model, as she herself calls it, of “gay/straight definition” (p. 88). Bisexuality is incorporated at best only as a universalizing potential, at worst it is implicitly collapsed into hetero- and homosexualities. Sedgwick’s reliance on hegemonic constructions of sexual identity thereby repeats the exclusionary gesture necessary to sustain the workings of binary logic. Moreover, her unraveling of gender and sexuality as distinct axes has left her unable to accommodate, as du Plessis (1996, p. 33) points out, “people for whom sexuality and gender may match up differently.” This does “damage,” argues du Plessis, “to the realities of transgender

sexualities and bisexual genders.”<sup>16</sup> I would argue also that this kind of exclusionary mapping of sexuality does more than serve to sustain the analytic distance Sedgwick has installed between feminism and gay/lesbian/queer studies. In addition, bisexuality (and indeed transgenderism) is the pawn that is forced out in an act of methodological and disciplinary secessionism.

A similar tendency to privilege and reify sexuality over and against gender is apparent in Fuss’s work in *Inside/Out*. Fuss takes the hetero/homosexual binarism as her prioritized point of deconstructive departure. Her primary task is to expose only the interdependence of the hetero on the homo, that is, the homo as always already inside the hetero. However, rather than examine the inextricable enmeshment of the hetero/homo, inside/outside oppositions with that of male/female, Fuss (1991) follows a path similar to Sedgwick’s by separating too radically gender and sexuality. This move takes place in her discussion of what is “most urgently” needed in current “gay and lesbian theory”: that is, a “theory of sexual borders” which can take into account and promote organizational strategies required to address “the new cultural and sexual arrangements occasioned by the movements and transmutations of pleasure in the social field” (Fuss 1991, p. 5). This new theory, it would seem, is a queer theory of sexuality. In the next sentence she does invoke the opposition of gender but only to dethrone it as the primary paradigm through which to read sexuality:

Recent and past work on the question of sexual difference has yet to meet this pressing need, largely because, as Stephen Heath accurately targets the problem, our notion of sexual difference all too often subsumes sexual differences, upholding “a defining difference of man/woman at the expense of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and indeed *hetero* heterosexual reality.” (Fuss, 1991, p. 5)

This quote of Heath’s is also part of an argument that gender and sexuality “can and should be separated from one another” (Heath, 1990, pp. 140-1). However, like Rubin and Sedgwick, Heath is formulating such a claim against Catharine MacKinnon’s radical feminist collapsing of sexuality as a mere expression of gender. So by drawing on Heath in order to fault recent and past feminist work on sexual difference, Fuss (1991) is offering somewhat of a reductionist caricature of this diverse body of work. However, she is also suggesting that the vanguard position for this new *theory of sexual borders* is not feminism but gay/lesbian/queer studies. “[G]ay and lesbian readers of culture,” she suggests,

have a “responsibility . . . to reshape and to reorient the field of sexual difference to include sexual differences” (Fuss, 1990, p. 6). Curiously, this responsibility is conferred primarily, or perhaps only, to “gay and lesbian readers.” Where are anti-homophobic heterosexual, feminist, bisexual, or transgendered readers of culture situated in relation to this urgent political task?

I suggest that Fuss’s failure to incorporate these ‘others’ within the vanguard of this new sexual theory is the complex product of the problematic reification of sexuality over and above gender. Let us recall the opening statement of her introduction to *Inside/Out*: “The philosophical opposition between ‘heterosexual’ and ‘homosexual’ . . . has always been constructed on the foundations of . . . the couple ‘inside’ and ‘outside’” (Fuss, 1991, p. 1). Here Fuss has immediately elided or at the very least suspended a discussion of gender as an opposition which also fundamentally undergirds the hetero/homosexual opposition. She does invoke gender but only in order to foreground her deconstructive analysis of the hetero/homosexual, inside/outside binaries. Homosexuality, she quite rightly points out, “is produced inside the dominant discourse of sexual difference as its necessary outside, but this is not to say that the homo exerts no pressure on the hetero nor that this outside stands in any simple relation of exteriority to the inside” (p. 5). Fuss indeed seems to be acknowledging the inexplicable interlacing of gender (sexual difference) and sexuality, the latter seen as the expurgated inside of the former. However, she appears to effect a curious analytic slippage whereby gender, or sexual difference, is invoked only to be immediately subsumed or displaced by heterosexuality.<sup>17</sup> Homosexuality is then called forth as the internally erected border that works “to define and defend” the heterosexual inside. It is identified as the subversive element “occupying the frontier position of inside out” in the “discourse of sexual difference,” “neither completely outside” it “nor wholly inside it either” (pp. 5-6).

In representing (homo)sexuality as transgressive or excessive of sexual difference, Fuss is attempting to gesture towards a theory of sexuality not beholden to an analysis of gender. The axis of sexuality appears to be superimposed on top of the axis of gender, subsuming gender as a subsidiary component. Lee Edelman (1994) appears to perform a similar move. He suggests that

“[w]here heterosexuality . . . seeks to assure the sameness or purity internal to the categorical ‘opposites’ of anatomical ‘sex’ . . . homosexuality would multiply the differences that desire can appre-

hend in ways that menace the internal coherence of the sexed identities that the order of heterosexuality demands.” (p. 10)

Again, it is homosexuality that is identified as subversive agent. I would argue, following Butler (1994), however, that this maneuver performed by Fuss and Edelman reads as an allegory of the relationship being unwittingly instantiated between feminism and gay/lesbian/queer studies. Feminism is metonymically associated with gender, gay/lesbian/queer studies with (homo)sexuality, the latter in a relationship of subversive excess to the former. In other words, queer theory is that through which Fuss’s new theory of sexual borders and Edelman’s project of *Homographesis* can be advanced over a redundant feminism.

Fuss’s new theory of sexual borders, I would add, appears to be the exclusive domain not of anti-homophobic feminists, bisexuals, and transgenderists, but of ‘gays and lesbians.’ For it is they who are seen to occupy the subversive “frontier position” of homosexuality. In this way such a move evacuates the very self-reflexive mode—the critical queer reflex—that is, I would argue, the most significant and important force of this new (queer) theory of sexual borders.

Despite acknowledging the fact that homosexuality is constituted inside the discourse of gender or sexual difference, Fuss and Edelman tend to construct sexuality as synonymous with the hetero/homosexual opposition, distinct from and superimposed over the top of this discourse. Partially displacing gender, sexuality, or the hetero/homosexual opposition, is then identified as the privileged upper layer of deconstructive analysis. In other words, there is a sense in both Fuss’s and Edelman’s—and indeed in Sedgwick’s—work that sexuality must first be deconstructed in order to prize it away from, and thus render it autonomous of gender. However, this reification of a sexuality disarticulated from and epistemologically privileged over gender obfuscates an analysis of their mutual interrelation. As a result, an analysis of bisexuality as the figure shoring up binary sexual identity is occluded. For it is bisexuality which has not just traversed but historically and epistemologically regulated the axes of sexuality and gender in the production of modern hetero- and homosexual identities.

### CONCLUSION

Like Foucault (1980), and perhaps partly as a result of his enduring legacy, some of the prominent queer theorists have rendered gender “historically subordinate to sexuality” (Foucault 1980, p. 157).<sup>18</sup> As I

have argued, however, sexuality was constituted as an effect of a difference internal to phallogentric gender. That is to say, that sexuality was produced around crises or deviations of normative gender. So the axis of sexuality was never entirely, nor even nearly, separate from that of gender in the modern economy of (hetero)sexuality. The former was produced in and through the latter.

Queer theorists are certainly cognizant of this historical fact. Indeed, it is upon this knowledge that the call to separate sexuality from gender is predicated. In other words, it is because of this historical reduction of sexuality to gender dynamics that such a future-oriented project to disarticulate the two is undertaken. However, this future-oriented project of the present appears to have distorted the terms of a deconstructive project oriented to dismantling figurations of sexuality inherited from the past. That is, it is perhaps a presentist tendency in queer theory that has undermined more properly historicized deconstructive analyses. In subordinating gender to sexuality and insisting on a degree of analytic autonomy for the latter, many queer theorists have thought the two axes vertically or hierarchically rather than relationally and obliquely. As a result, bisexuality, an important historical regulator of the axes of gender and sexuality, has been elided in the present tense and, indeed, in almost any sense at all.

Here it is perhaps pertinent to offer as a reminder Fredric Jameson's infamous slogan: "Always historicize!" (1981, p. 9). Clearly, deconstructive critique of all kinds presupposes the historicity of identity categories. However, in the case of the queer deconstructive theory I have examined, a reliance on this presumption—a reliance on an unexamined historiography—has meant the evacuation of a significant part of the very history at the heart of sexuality's historicity. The historiography of modern sexuality has been remarkably inattentive to the discursive and epistemological function of bisexuality. Gay/lesbian constructionist history has been concerned primarily with tracing the emergence of homosexual identities, and rarely with tracing the epistemological processes informing their formation. One result of this is that bisexuality has made only a fleeting appearance in the historiography of sexuality. The emphasis on identity, and the fact that bisexuality has been barely (if at all) visible as a cultural identity until recent decades, have meant that in constructionist histories bisexuality's mention is limited for the most part to the ways it has cropped up in the particular theories of sexuality. It has also meant that the identity paradigm, and thus the hetero/homosexual opposition, has been unwittingly reproduced in a queer

deconstructive theory derivative of such historical accounts. So despite the assault on essentializing notions of identity, both queer theory and gay/lesbian history have failed to address important aspects of the relationality of identity within the very history and theory of (bi)sexuality.

It seems to me not unreasonable to suggest that *any* deconstruction of historically overdetermined identity concepts and categories must engage the history on whose behalf it speaks. Alternatively, it is equally as important for constructionist scholars to engage a deconstructive critique of the very terms through which their historical accounts are formulated. I propose, then, that historicization and deconstruction must always be seen as two sides of the same conceptual process. In suggesting this, it follows that social constructionist gay/lesbian studies and deconstructive queer theories ought not be framed as adversaries or wholly distinct methodologies; even less ought they disavow their epistemological intersection with feminism. Instead, we might facilitate the production of a deconstructive historicism more attentive to the workings of difference if we remember always to acknowledge the mutually implicating and mutually constituting nature of these seemingly distinct analytic models.

I have argued that one way of furthering the project of a deconstructive historicism is to rethink conventional binary-based representations of sexuality. While gay/lesbian constructionism and queer deconstructionism have correctly identified the hetero/homosexual structure as the epistemological linchpin of modern western concepts and representations of sexuality, what I have suggested is that they have misunderstood the workings of this seemingly binary structure. Instead of functioning as a binary of two mutually constituting poles, the hetero/homosexual structure has, both historically and epistemologically, functioned strictly speaking as a trinary. It is important to reiterate, however, that to argue that each of these terms are meaningful only in relation to the other two—that is, that each requires the other two for its self-definition—is not to argue that these terms are somehow truthful reflections of individual sexualities. It is simply to argue that, however ill-conceived or inadequate for the representation of the wide range of cultural forms of sexuality, this trinary structure has nonetheless been the primary organizing principle of modern western thought on sexuality. This has significant ramifications not just for queer theory and gay and lesbian history, but, indeed, for any research into modern western sexualities. Not only do our deconstructive analyses of the hetero/homosexual struc-

ture need recasting in order to unravel more accurately the workings of this structure in the myriad cultural texts and discourses in which it appears. In addition to this, any researcher who lays claim to any of these three terms is beholden to specify the trinary interrelationships contained therein. This is because any effort to invoke any one of the categories of hetero-, homo-, and bisexuality inevitably results in default claims about the other two terms—whether or not a researcher intends to make such claims. For queer theorists critical of any attempt to impose rigid and homogeneous definitions of sexuality and distinctions between hetero- and homosexuality, this trinary-based deconstructive reading practice promises to make researchers far more accountable in their use of such unstable terms as hetero-, homo-, and bisexuality. It might also help to undermine the continued production of spurious essentialist theories of sexuality.

Dean Hamer's (Hamer and Copeland, 1994) infamous 'gay gene' research provides a useful example to illustrate this last point. Hamer, like the vast bulk of scientists searching for the origins of (homo)sexuality, deliberately overlooked bisexuality, "because our first goal was to determine whether genes had any influence on sexual orientation, which meant it was important to study only those individuals whose orientation was unambiguous" (1994, p. 146). The problem with Hamer's methodology is that he fails to appreciate how the very term 'homosexuality' can only gain meaning by way of distinctions between both hetero- and bisexuality. His claim to be dealing only with homosexuality is therefore patently false, for in order to define homosexuality at all he must draw boundaries around each of the three terms—although this boundary marking is most often unintentionally rather than intentionally achieved. The point I wish to underscore is that the trinary-based deconstructive method I am advocating is far more effective in exposing the flaws in Hamer's methodology than the usual poststructuralist binary-based method that merely repeats the erasure of bisexuality and unwittingly reinforces a dualistic reading of the hetero/homosexual structure.

I share the deconstructive view that any attempt to provide definitive meanings and to draw strict boundaries around the categories of hetero-, homo-, and bisexuality is doomed to failure. I am also of the view that the hetero/homosexual structure ought not to be presumed as an uncritical point of departure for thinking about sexualities. I just hope that in delineating the trinary-based deconstructive in this article, I have gone some small way towards furthering the interminable project of deconstructive criticism.

## NOTES

1. What I am arguing is that the bulk of the work on bisexuality has been driven largely, or even implicitly, by the desire to somehow represent that which goes by the name of bisexual identities and bisexualities. For instance, in suggesting that bisexuality is “neither the ‘inside’ nor the ‘outside’ but rather that which creates both [homosexuality and heterosexuality]” (1995, p. 526), Garber is attempting to provide a theory of bisexuality. Similarly, the editorial objective of Storr’s (1999) collection is an interrogation of the question of “what bisexuality is” (p. 3); and BiAcademic Intervention’s collection, as revealed by the title, *The Bisexual Imaginary: Representation, Identity, and Desire* (1997) is concerned with representing bisexuals and bisexualities.

2. In his recent collection of essays, *How to do the History of Homosexuality*, while David Halperin (2002) attempts to avoid instating a simplistic distinction between representation and reality, and thus discourse and desire, he nonetheless fails to consider how bisexuality, as both an epistemological category and an identificatory axis of desire, informs the historical production the hetero/homosexual opposition.

3. This argument is detailed in the concluding section.

4. It might be useful at this stage to point out that when I refer to the historicization of categories of sexuality and the epistemological formation of the hetero/homosexual opposition, I am not referring to the ways in which these categories and the opposition are negotiated by individuals or communities. The focus of my discussion is on the epistemological conditions of possibility for the articulation of the categories hetero-, homo-, and bisexuality in dominant theories of sexuality. In short, I am referring to the way in which each of these three terms can only be defined with reference to the other two; that is, that each term derives its meaning through distinctions with the other two. This argument will be elaborated throughout the article.

5. In relation to bisexuality, the phrase “present tense” was first used by Amanda Udis-Kessler (1991). While my usage of this phrase in some ways overlaps with Udis-Kessler’s—and I am therefore indebted to her for applying it to bisexuality—it is also significantly different. Udis-Kessler is using it in a contemporary context to refer to the crisis of meaning she thinks bisexuals and bisexuality pose to essentialist understandings of sexuality. She argues that bisexuals and bisexuality bring home the constructionist understanding of sexuality as fluid and amenable to choice, thereby challenging the fixity of both hetero- and homosexualities. I am using the phrase as a way of interrogating and describing the specific historical and epistemological processes by which bisexuality has been erased as a legitimate identity in discourses of sexuality in the modern west. In this way, my analysis may complement Udis-Kessler’s, and indeed provides an historical and theoretical framework upon which to ground some of her claims.

6. This is a quote by a physiologist whom Ellis endorses (1928 [1901], 313).

7. At most, bisexuality was deployed in a statistical or behavioral sense in terms of an individual taking part in both homosexual and heterosexual practices throughout a lifetime. So despite the fact that most theorists and analysts of this period describe some of their subjects as bisexuals, in terms of the structures of individual identity they seem to be either homosexual or heterosexual. There was no such thing as a bisexual at the level of ego structure.

8. I should point out that I am referring to influential psychoanalytic models that have constituted a kind of dominant, global discursive field of (homo)sexuality. The reason I placed the “homo” in parentheses is that all too frequently normative “sexual-

ity” has been the default by-product of a discourse concerned with mapping homosexual “deviance”. It is also worth noting that psychoanalytic models such as Lacanian theory had virtually no influence on this hegemonic field of (homo)sexuality.

9. Of course, in post-Freudian psychoanalysis this threat was contained by the outright repudiation bisexuality’s existence.

10. Ironically, Fuss (1991) points out that: “The problem, of course, with the inside/outside rhetoric, if it remains deconstructed, is that such polemics disguise the fact that most of us are both inside and outside at the same time” (p. 5).

11. See Henry Abelow’s (1995) discussion of presentism in queer theory.

12. I should point out that the editors to this reader may refuse a distinction between lesbian/gay studies and queer theory. They consider queer a structuring part of lesbian and gay studies. “[O]ur choice of ‘lesbian/gay,’” they point out, “indicates no wish on our part to make lesbian/gay studies look less assertive, less unsettling, and less queer than it already does”(p. xvii).

13. The list of feminist critiques of this kind is endless. For good examples see Diamond and Quinby (1988); Hartsock (1990); Dean (1994).

14. Butler (1994) suggests that it was an unintentional move, “given that all three have made strong contributions to feminist scholarship” (p. 5).

15. Butler (1994) refers to Sedgwick, but only in a footnote (pp. 23-4, note 8).

16. Butler (1994, p. 24, note 8) argues along similar lines to du Plessis.

17. While Lacanian influenced theorists such as Fuss might distinguish sexual difference from a more sociological category of gender, I am using gender along lines similar to Judith Butler (1994), whereby she has attempted to construct a theory of gender which retains some of the insights of Lacanian sexual difference whilst also incorporating a transformative notion of gender (pp. 18, 24-5, note 13). In this way, following Butler I see the notion of sexual difference as already constituted through a matrix of gender. When I discuss the separation of gender and sexuality in the work of theorists such as Fuss, therefore, I use gender interchangeably with sexual difference.

18. Foucault (1980) actually uses the term “sex,” however this term encompasses not just sexual practice, pleasure, etc., but also gender.

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