CINEMAS OF BISEXUAL TRANSGRESSION

JACOB ENGELBERG

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A CAMERA OBSCURA BOOK

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For my teachers

The pleasures I tried to deny myself only assailed my mind all the more ardently.
—Madame de Saint-Ange, in Donatien-Alphonse-François de Sade,
La Philosophie dans le boudoir

It is important to resist that theoretical gesture of pathos in which exclusions are simply affirmed as sad necessities of signification. The task is to refigure this necessary "outside" as a future horizon. . . . But of equal importance is the preservation of the outside, the site where discourse meets its limits, where the opacity of what is not included in a given regime of truth acts as a disruptive site of linguistic impropriety and unrepresentability, illuminating the violent and contingent boundaries of that normative regime precisely through the inability of that regime to represent that which might pose a fundamental threat to its continuity.
—Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*

It is precisely bisexuality's ontological, epistemological and representational *polysemy* that generates its subversive potential to lay bare the mutability, contingency and inherent transgressiveness of desire.
—Maria San Filippo, *The B Word*

Non-decidability defines a *praxis*.
—Roland Barthes, *S/Z*

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Preface

This Capacity

Bisexuality is an imperfect term. It seems, at once, too particular and too general. It might evoke the idea of the bisexual as an ahistorical subject or bisexuality as a category of social-scientific taxonomy, notions that queer studies and queer politics have sought to trouble. Or perhaps it recalls various ideas of the not-now or the not-here. Bisexuality has been cast invariably, as Steven Angelides outlines, as "an artifact of our evolutionary prehistory, a state outside or prior to culture or civilization, a myth, a catachresis, and a (utopian) sexual impossibility."[1] The term can feel awkwardly imprecise. To use it is to invite challenges as to its definitional coherence, aspersions as to its critical necessity, suspicions as to its very possibility. Whereas *queer* has, across the past four decades, enjoyed and enjoined critical attention across disciplines and, outside of the academy, has proliferated across discourses of sexuality and politics, *bisexual* stands awkwardly, its ungainly sibling, purportedly out of touch and out of time. Nevertheless, it is the word I will use. Insofar as the use of words is conceptualized by Sara Ahmed as how words are "put to work or called upon to do certain kinds of work," I contend it is the work *bisexuality* can do—with its abundance of discursive, genealogical, and critical affordances—that renders it indispensable for a radical recalibration of the terms of queer film studies as we know it.[2]

Bisexuality's conceptual utility lies in its ability to describe a desirous sexual capacity beyond the dominant and dominating heterosexual-homosexual binary through which human sexuality has been organized in the West since the nineteenth century. Across this history, Angelides observes how bisexuality has tended to function as the "internally repudiated other" within the "logical or axiomatic structure of the hetero/homosexual dualism" in Western epistemologies of sexuality.[3] Despite the dominance of heterosexuality and

homosexuality—the binary of *mono*sexuality—in these epistemologies, the capacity for forms of desiring beyond these strictures has always haunted the heterosexual-homosexual binary's coherence.

This capacity for desire beyond monosexuality has not always been articulated under the sign *bisexual*. Diederik F. Janssen's extensive research into late nineteenth-century medical discourses reveals a plethora of terms through which it was described.[4] Karl Heinrich Ulrichs calls it "uranodionism."[5] For Eugène Gley, it is a "double direction of the sexual instinct" that describes this capacity's intermittent appearance.[6] For Benjamin Tarnowsky, this intermittence of desires is characterized as "periodic pederasty."[7] Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll articulate this capacity as "psychical" or "psychosexual hermaphroditism," whereas Albert Eulenburg recognizes this capacity as a "light form or precursor" to sexual inversion.[8] For Marc-André Raffalovich and Georges Saint-Paul, these capacities are to be found in a sexual type they call "indifferents."[9] Through these examples, Janssen pinpoints how, at this formative time in the development of sexual science, terminology describing this particular capacity proliferated. Around the turn of the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud began to take an interest in this capacity, something that he describes in different ways, and with different emphases, throughout his career: the infant's "polymorphously perverse disposition," the "amphigenic" and "contingent" inversions of certain adults, the physiological and psychical "bisexuality of all human beings."[10] In their later sexological tabulations, this capacity was to be found between the 2 and the 5 of Alfred Kinsey's Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale and Fritz Klein's Sexual Orientation Grid.[11] This capacity has been afforded different names in twentieth-century psychological discourses around sexuality, from *bisexuality*, to *ambisexuality*, to *omnisexuality*.[12] This is the capacity described by the contributors to *Semiotext(e)*'s 1981 special issue named "Polysexuality."[13] In social and activist discourses, this capacity has been articulated under a plethora of signs, including *bisexuality*, *bi+*, the *bisexual umbrella*, *pansexuality*, *sexual fluidity*, *heteroflexibility* and *homoflexibility*, *queerness*, *nonmonosexuality*, and, most recently, *plurisexuality* and the *multiattraction spectrum*. Beyond the English language, of course, further terms proliferate. Under whichever sign they travel, these terms attest to something troubling for dualistic epistemologies of sexuality: desire's capacity to exceed heterosexual-homosexual divisions.

The preeminence of the term *bisexuality* in naming this phenomenon in Western discourses provides us with a useful discursive genealogy. The term *bisexuality* has populated psychomedical discourses from the late nineteenth century to the present day; *bisexuality* emerged in the twentieth century as a popular term

for individuals articulating their own desires, later appearing in the acronym that became popularized transnationally, LGBT, and its variations; from the 1970s onward, it was the term under which political organizing took place as bisexual politics; and in the 1990s, bisexual theory emerged as a critical practice vis-à-vis the paltry attention bisexuality was afforded in gay and lesbian studies and queer theory alike. The term *bisexuality* affords us a critical history to think through the cultural, social, and political import of desires toward people of more than one gender.

Yet, a recurrent problem *bisexuality* has posed as a term for those seeking to articulate sexuality beyond dominant frameworks is the twoness that seems to be implied in its *bi-* prefix, suggesting desire toward people of *two* different genders. This conception of *bisexuality* has, indeed, been articulated throughout the term's history in a way that is complicit with the dominant epistemology of an oppositional and discrete sex binary, which gained preeminence in Western medicine between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the concept of the gender binary, which was popularized in the mid-twentieth century, first emerging in sexology before being reappropriated for feminist politics and theory.[14] A shift that occurred between the 1980s and 1990s, however, saw bisexual activists and theorists rearticulate their understandings of *bisexuality* away from these binaries in ways that chimed with transgender politics' problematization of discrete categories of sexual taxonomy.[15] These examples of articulations of *bisexuality* away from the gender binary should not suggest that bisexuals have never deployed binary definitions, nor should it elide the popularity of these definitions throughout the twentieth century. What they do suggest, however, is how certain bisexual thinkers have worked to conceptualize *bisexuality* in ways that exploit its potential to challenge not only the hetero/homo sexuality binary but also that of man/woman. I am sure some might suggest that terms like *pansexuality*, *plurisexuality*, or *omnisexuality*—with their Greek (*pan-*, all, every) and Latin (*plūri-*, many; *omni-*, every) prefixes denoting multitude as opposed to twoness—would be better suited for speaking nonsingular sexual desire beyond binary gender. However, my decision to use *bisexuality* is predicated on the conceptual, political, and theoretical work that has operated under this sign, especially insofar as this work has perverted the normative meaning of the *bi-* prefix to pluralistic ends. And even in discourses around *bisexuality* in which a bothness seems to be in operation, I draw attention to how, often, this bothness works dialectically to precipitate a binary's destabilization and the emergence of polyvalent possibilities beyond its confines.

Although problems are likely to arise with any choice of terminology around gender and sexuality, I want to clarify how and why I will be using

certain terms in this book. My use of the term *bisexuality* will be capacious, referring to the capacity for desiring beyond a single gendered object. Both the adjective *capacious* and the noun *capacity* take as their roots the Latin *capāx* and *capāci*, which, fittingly, describe the ability "to take in." In this sense, we might think of bisexual capacity as a kind of open receptivity to desirous possibility. When naming phenomena as "bisexual," I am not making an ontological claim of the correctness or incontrovertibility of bisexual categorization. Rather, I do so to draw attention to such phenomena's attestation of desirous possibilities beyond unidirectional gendered object choice. I will privilege the term *gender* over *sex*, as I recognize the organization of material bodies into discrete sexes on the basis of an assumed or ideal reproductive function to be a fundamentally social phenomenon, with *gender* foregrounding this particular valence.[16] Correspondingly, my use of the terms *male* and *female* do not adhere singularly to the notion of sex; instead, I use them as adjectival forms correspondent to *man* and *woman*, respectively. In accounting for desirous forms of relationality between gendered subjects, I will eschew the terms *heterosexual* and *homosexual* to avoid the assumption that certain relational forms necessarily indicate a single (mono)sexuality. My imperfect remedies are the terms *intragender* and *extragender*, which delineate desirous relations between people of a shared gender and between people of different genders, respectively. Admittedly, this formulation articulates a binary not dissimilar to the hetero-homo binary, yet its usefulness lies in its nonexclusivity, its resistance to inferring direct correspondences between forms of desirous relation and specific formations of sexuality, and its foregrounding of the operations of similarity and difference herein. I will also use the term *queer* throughout this book; when it is not paired with *theory*, *studies*, or *politics*, which refer to those respective traditions, I take *queer* as an adjective describing that which falls outside heterosexuality or cisgenderness. The process of identifying genders on screen in the first place is to operate within the terms of a cissexist economy of signification. In other words, our ability to read a figure as man, woman, or even an ambiguous gender is to apply a cisnormative yardstick regarding how certain genders appear conventionally. The visual is, in Amy Villarejo's words, "the terrain . . . that gender binarism is most strictly enforced."[17] I contend, however, that we cannot speak of sexuality's signification on screen without attention to, and critical use of, the cissexist economy of signification through which sexuality tends to be read. It is with critical knowledge of the conventions of this visual system of gender signification that we can come to understand how they are transgressed and through which bisexuality's potential to trouble sexual dualisms comes into view.

If you are still unconvinced of the utility of *bisexuality* as the term through which to do this work, let me stress that engagement with the potential to desire beyond strict and exclusive heterosexual-homosexual organization is what grounds it. This is a potential that we can explore—and, indeed, that has been explored—under various appellations. While I hope to demonstrate the affordances of *bisexuality*'s particular use, I posit that any discomfort with the term should not preclude engagement with its conceptual deployment. The work herein involves attention to those excessive forms of desiring that involve mutability rather than stasis, nonlinearity rather than unidirectionality, polysemy rather than univocal signification. Certain deployments of film form, I will suggest, are particularly suited to conveying these desirous possibilities in the formation of cinemas wherein monosexual interpretation cannot hold, wherein the rules of monosexual taxonomy are transgressed. While I will call these extensive desirous capacities "bisexuality," I endeavor to preserve the term's instability. Thus, any lingering discomfort with it need not be suppressed but, instead, can be stayed with as a generative force of disorientation. Such a disposition may prove useful as we work to unmoor the security and reliability of structures of sexual organization and proceed without their guarantee.

Introduction

Bisexuality, Transgression, Cinema

Salò, or The Seventeen Genderless Asses

DUKE. Lights out!

. . .

BISHOP. Before we begin, I have a proposal.

DUKE. Tell us, tell us!

BISHOP. We have not yet decided what prize to give to him or to her whose behind is judged to be the best. Here is my proposal: he or she whose behind is judged to be the best will be killed immediately.

DUKE. Agreed. This way—without knowing to whom they belong—we are sure to be impartial.

. . .

MAGISTRATE. Knowing that an ass belongs to a boy rather than a girl could influence our decision. Instead, we must be absolutely free to choose.

—*Salò, or The 120 Days of Sodom* (Pier Paolo Pasolini)

Salò, or The 120 Days of Sodom (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1975) transposes Donatien-Alphonse-François de Sade's *The 120 Days of Sodom* into the Republic of Salò, a short-lived German puppet state that operated in Italy during the final two years of the Second World War. This historical setting is the backdrop against which a group of fascist libertines, in collaboration with others, kidnap a group of teenagers and imprison them in a remote palace. In an expansive room, a competition is facilitated to determine whom among their captives

FIGURE 1.1 A tableau of genderless asses. *Salò, or The 120 Days of Sodom* [*Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma*] (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1975). Digital screen capture.

has the best ass. The adolescents are naked and bent prone, their heads covered with sacks and their rears pointed upward. As the libertines evaluate the asses on display, the Magistrate (Umberto Paolo Quintavalle) remarks how this formal presentation—lights off, heads covered—ensures impartiality regarding the genders of their surveyed objects.

The ass has no gender. In the various systems of social organization that have operated throughout history as a means of determining gender, the ass has never been a trustworthy physiological signifier. If, as psychoanalyst Lou Andreas-Salomé argues, ego formation involves the repudiation of the anus in favor of genital sexuality, then this display of bodies—centering the ass—might remind us of that which precedes ego formation, the anality shared by all rather than the site of genitality upon which sex division is violently articulated.[1] In *Salò*'s tableau of seventeen genderless asses, we glimpse the possibilities of desire undetermined by gender, a bisexual erotics.[2] Single-gendered object choice became the ascendent form of sexual subjectivity in the West from the late nineteenth century onward—the heterosexual configuration aligned to normality and the homosexual configuration aligned to pathology. This Manichean system of social organization posits, at once, a dualism of gender or sex, determined fundamentally by the appearance of the genitals, and a dualism of sexual desire. *Salò*'s brief configuration of bodies illuminates,

through the genitals' concealment and the ass's exposure, the possibility of desire beyond the regime of sexual difference.[3]

Whereas this tableau figures the possibility of desiring beyond single-gendered object choice through elision of the symbolically dense genitals, elsewhere, *Salò* speaks to this same possibility through the serialized exposure of frontally naked bodies. Throughout the film, the unclothed bodies of captives are rendered objects of monstration. Viewing the genitals of Franco (played by Franco Merli) and Sergio (Sergio Fascetti) in close-up, or the frontal display of Renata's (Renata Moar) naked body, we are confronted not with an image of genderlessness but with a fleshy, genital array of differently gendered bodies. Although the genderless asses conceal those primary and secondary sex characteristics made meaningful in a cissexist signifying economy, and the latter examples provide serial representations of these body parts, both eschew the demand that desire be oriented toward objects of a single intelligible gender. In the camera's scopophilic refusal to taper its gaze—either to intelligibly gendered objects or to objects of a single discernible gender—*Salò*'s spectator is invited to participate in a bisexual form of primary identification.[4]

Yet, these cinematic images cannot be divorced from the diegetic context from which they emanate: that of violence, coercion, cruelty, humiliation, fascism. Presenting, at once, the paradoxical fascist preoccupation with the notion of freedom ("we should be absolutely free to choose") and fascism's envisaging of social homogeneity—figured in the uniformity of the asses on display—*Salò*'s images of free sexual choice unencumbered by sexual difference are inseparable from the force of domination.[5] Although it may trouble us that this image of bisexual erotics is rendered through violent subjugation, this is a trouble with which it is worth staying. Franco is the captive who is determined to have the best ass, and he is wrestled to his feet, a gun pressed to his temple, as he anticipates his prize: death. The trigger is pulled but the gun is unloaded. To Franco's dazed bemusement, the Bishop announces that the promise of the release of death as his prize was, in fact, a ruse: "You fool! How could you think we would kill you? We would want to kill you a thousand times over, to the limits of eternity, if eternity had limits." Franco and his fellow captives' cycle of torture continues.

A film whose enduring power pivots around the implication of the pernicious in the pleasurable, *Salò*'s rendering of bisexual erotics through the transgression of various moral standards instantiates a tendency in various cinemas' figurations of bisexual possibility. This relation—between the cinematic figuration of bisexual possibility and transgression—is the phenomenon this book traces. To begin with the example of *Salò* is to posit that an analysis of this relation

need not be limited to those transgressions we deem aspirational, reclaimable, or positive. But equally, this analysis need not be circumscribed by an approach that repudiates these images as circulating phobic, deleterious, or negative ideas about bisexuality. Instead, my analysis proceeds via an interrogation of the compelling relation between the cinematic figuration of bisexual possibility and the breaking of various standards: social and political rules, ethical and moral norms, conventions of film form.

This book traces cinematic figurations of bisexual transgression that, like *Salò*, offer glimpses of bisexual possibility through their transgression of various rules. Although monosexuality—the structure of sexuality involving desire toward people of only one gender—may be culturally ascendent and naturalized on film through formal conventions in sexual signification, bisexual possibility can be found in what Maria San Filippo identifies as those "bisexual spaces . . . that represent and appeal to interstitial, fluid spectatorial identifications, and thus have the potential to subvert, or 'unthink,' monosexuality," as well as those "sites (textual and extratextual locations) and sights (ways of seeing) that resist monosexuality and that attribute desire to physical, emotional, and material determinants beyond gendered object choice."[6] That bisexuality is figured persistently on film through a relation to transgression is far from incidental. Bisexuality being figured as a possibility is itself a transgression of the rule that humans are necessarily heterosexual or homosexual, and, as we will see, the transgression of bisexuality is made meaningful on film—persistently—through other forms of transgression. This analysis invites a turn to those transgressive cinemas, transgressive films, and moments of transgressive figuration in which bisexual possibility comes into view amid the troubling thrills that rush as a border is crossed. In *Salò*, a film indebted to Sade's original tale set in the milieu of French libertinism, we can certainly find evidence of such processes at play, but these pleasures are also described evocatively in another Sade work: *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795).[7] At the beginning of this dramatic dialogue, Madame de Saint-Ange reflects on her efforts to quell her sexual appetite by restricting her lovers to women. Alas, she finds that her abstinence from male lovers only meant that these pleasures "assailed [her] mind all the more ardently."[8] This relation between prohibition and pleasure, and the entanglements of this dynamic with bisexual possibility, is one we shall trace across a number of cinematic contexts. While monosexuality may rule cultural understandings of sexual subjectivity, as it rules conventions in cinema's signification of sexuality, bisexuality emerges as a disruptively compelling transgressor, inviting us to look scopophilically upon the genderless ass and asking us, "Well, wouldn't you?"

Bisexual transgression is a prevalent and persistent phenomenon discernible across disparate cinematic contexts. Attention to this phenomenon is instructive not only insofar as it foregrounds a bisexual focus in a critical landscape in which bisexuality is rarely prioritized but also to the extent that it recalibrates the terms upon which inquiries into gender, sexuality, and transgression on-screen are predicated. Centering bisexual transgression enables a dynamic approach to questions of cinematic sexuality, directing us toward the fecund ground between and beyond polarities of gender and sexuality and in contravention of rules of sexual, social, and aesthetic organization. The geographic scope of the corpus I consider encompasses Europe, North America, and Australasia: areas traditionally associated with ideas of the West. This focus reflects my attention to Western genealogies of sexual epistemology; although I attend to various national and cultural differences herein, these contexts share a historical relation to certain discourses of gender and sexuality that affect the figurations of bisexuality they produce. Nevertheless, in my afterword, I outline some of the figures of bisexual transgression populating cinemas beyond the West. These constitute suggestions for the future direction of investigations into bisexual transgression that should attend to these films' respective contexts of sexual epistemology while reflecting on the operations of globalization herein. This book thus maps how cinemas have grappled with bisexuality in a context of sexual epistemology in which bisexuality's very existence has been deemed questionable. Importantly, this is a context in which Western conceptions of gendered and sexual binarism—which, in turn, have functioned as conceptual teloi in notions of Western civilizational development and white supremacy—find themselves disturbed. To analyze cinematic sexuality with these considerations in tow affords us a vantage point from which to consider cinema's potential to unmoor interlocking structures of sexual-social organization.

This introduction begins with a critical history of bisexuality across scientific, social, political, and theoretical discourses to establish the term's genealogy and critical utility. I then consider bisexuality's marginal position within queer studies, in which it has often been dismissed as irrelevant, unfruitful, or even anathema to queer inquiry. Next, I outline some of bisexual theory's interventions in queer studies, particularly as they relate to sexual epistemology, before assessing the utility of the contested terms *monosexuality* and *monosexism*. I then trace various uses of *bisexuality* in theoretical approaches to film and media, first, in aesthetic and film theories deploying it as a critical term and, second, in expressly bisexual film and media critiques characterized by two different approaches: axiological and critical. In conversation with the latter, I propose

thinking of bisexuality's intelligibility on film as a hermeneutic problem requiring a critical bisexual hermeneutics. I also stress the conceptual utility of figures and figurations in accounting for cinematic bisexuality, as opposed to notions of bisexual subjectivity. Next, I assess various theories of transgression and their relation to bisexuality, defending the notion of bisexual transgression against its disparagement in some strands of bisexual theory. I outline how various figures of bisexual transgression have been deployed in critical bisexual writing and assert the potential these hold for illuminating cinematic spaces where bisexual possibility is figured as transgressively knowable.

Discursive Bisexualities

> "Bisexuals"/polymorphous perverts . . . were an endangered species after 1870, for they were (and are), in fact, thoroughly *endangering*, undermining the binarisms through which life was (and is) rendered comprehensible.
> —Donald E. Hall, "Graphic Sexuality and the Erasure of a Polymorphous Perversity"

> The bisexual group is found to introduce uncertainty and doubt.
> —Henry Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*

Bisexuality's potential to disturb binary models of human sexuality is a quality inherent throughout much of its discursive history. The roots of the term lie in late eighteenth-century botany, where it described flowers possessing both carpels and stamens, signaling a coincidence of reproductive functions deemed female and male, respectively.[9] During the nineteenth century, the term was increasingly applied to animals exhibiting sexual characteristics deemed both male and female, also called "hermaphroditism."[10] In Charles Darwin's widely read 1871 monograph *The Descent of Man*, he elucidates his theory of sexual selection, proposing that hermaphroditism is a feature of lesser-evolved organisms and that, as species evolve, they atrophy and become sexually dimorphic: either male or female.[11] Naturalist Ernst Haeckel transposes these ideas regarding the evolution of species onto the development of individual organisms in his claim, in 1874, that "phylogenesis [the evolution of species] is the mechanical cause of ontogenesis [an individual organism's development]," what is commonly known as recapitulation theory.[12] While these debates in the natural sciences may seem far removed from articulations of bisexuality in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we must remember that the genesis of bisexuality's discursive history occurred within an epistemological framework in which distinctions between sex, gender, and sexuality did not operate

as they tend to today. In the late nineteenth century, assumptions of contingency between human physiology and the constitution of humans' sexual desires were commonplace in the medical sciences. The lesser-evolved physiological bisexuality that natural scientists purported to observe in certain species would thus come to effect conceptions of a psychical bisexuality.[13]

For Sigmund Freud, the term *bisexuality* had shifting resonances throughout his career, but all involved a compresence of phenomena commonly understood to be exclusively male or female: fluctuations in individuals' perceptions of their gender, their multiply gendered object choices, or the sexual complexity of all our physiologies.[14] Freud's thinking on bisexuality was influenced integrally by Wilhelm Fliess, who argues that "all living things bear a bisexual [*zweigeschlechtigen*] character."[15] Freud is convinced of the argument, in the biological sciences, that "an originally bisexual physical disposition has, in the course of evolution, become modified into a unisexual one."[16] He is wary, however, of purporting a straightforward correspondence between physiological and psychical bisexuality, which he deems "independent of each other."[17] Instead, Freud proposes that sexual object choice tends to develop—both phylogenetically and ontogenetically—from a range of sexual objects into a single one:

> The object choice of the pubertal period is obliged to dispense with the objects of childhood and to start afresh as a "sensual current." Should these two currents fail to converge, the result is often that one of the ideals of sexual life, the focusing of all desires upon a single object, will be unattainable. . . . A disposition to perversions is an original and universal disposition of the human sexual instinct. . . . The sexual drive of adults arises from a combination of a number of impulses of childhood into a unity, an impulsion with a single aim.[18]

Freud's specification of the singular sexual impulse of adulthood marks the outcome of his famous Oedipus complex theory, yet the means through which this outcome is attained are theorized differently for boys and for girls.[19] First, the boy must retain the mother as the original object, while the girl is obliged to abandon the mother as the original object. Second, the boy's narcissistic identification with his penis is retained, while the girl's narcissistic identification with the clitoris must be abandoned.[20] These differences between the genders' Oedipus complexes mean, for Freud, that "there can be no doubt that the bisexuality, which is present . . . in the innate disposition of human beings, comes to the fore much more clearly in women than in men."[21] I suggest we understand this point from Freud as an attestation not of a natural

bisexuality more prevalent in women but instead of bisexual potential's greater social perceptibility among women, chiming with the gendered dynamics of bisexual intelligibility I trace later. These differences aside, the overriding lesson from Freud is that no human is ever entirely free of this bisexual predisposition. Although it may be repressed by most, its endurance in the unconscious was paramount.[22]

The universalizing claims around bisexuality in Freud can certainly be problematized along the lines Judith Butler does when they write that "to presume the primacy of bisexuality . . . is still not to account for the construction of these various 'primacies.'"[23] The ideas of Freud and other psychoanalysts have also been critiqued routinely by thinkers in both bisexual activism and theory. The most common protests are as follows: His ideas seem to preclude the possibility of a mature adult bisexuality; they might be said to relegate bisexuality to a past, forever inaccessible in the present; they deploy bisexuality only insofar as it can be a fulcrum upon which heterosexuality and homosexuality are predicated; and they promote racist-colonialist understandings of bisexuality as the domain of the uncivilized and monosexuality as the domain of the civilized. My response to these critiques, however, stresses the utility of understanding Freud and his contemporaries not as observers of a naturalized or biologized truth of human sexuality. Instead, we should understand them, first, as analysts of social and cultural processes at play in the contexts in which they wrote and, second, as theorists of the drives that animate the psyches of individuals navigating these contexts. Freud himself is consistent in his description of heterosexuality's attainment as an "ideal," and it is in this sense that his theories' utility is not ontological but diagnostic. With bisexuality, what remains useful in Freud and his contemporaries is their attestation of the psychic endurance and prevalence of bisexual possibility in societies in which a mature monosexuality is either naturalized, in the case of heterosexuality, or pathologized, in the case of homosexuality. Freud observes cultural processes at play in which this curtailment of desire functions as a cultural demand, out of which one or other monosexuality is naturalized.[24] In cultures stipulating a binary model of sexual organization, the persistence of bisexuality continued to operate, as Henry Havelock Ellis observes, as a sign of "uncertainty," which, in the words of Donald E. Hall, was "thoroughly endangering" to the self-aggrandizing neatness of binary taxonomy.[25]

It is during the twentieth century that bisexuality came to be taken up as an identity category through which individuals understood their own sexualities. Similarly to the discursive history of homosexuality, bisexuality was repurposed from scientific discourses to be redeployed socially. The

1970s saw the first expressly politicized formations of bisexuality take shape in the United States, with the 1972 formation of the National Bisexual Liberation Group in New York and the Ithaca-based Quaker group the Committee of Friends on Bisexuality.[26] This decade also saw the first use of the term *bisexual chic*, referring to the perceived popularity of bisexuality within various countercultures. A *Newsweek* article from 1974 declares, "There is a new vibration to spring this year. . . . Bisexuality is in bloom."[27] Discussing the purportedly increased popularity of bisexuality with *Playboy*, controversial sexologist John Money remarks, "I wouldn't be surprised if the Seventies earned the sobriquet of the bisexual decade."[28] The 1980s saw a growth in bisexual political movements both within and beyond the United States, emerging in England, Scotland, West Germany, and the Netherlands. In the same decade, male bisexuality in particular received greater attention in the wake of the AIDS crisis, with fears around the transmission of HIV into the heterosexual family unit effecting bisexual men's stigmatization. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, there was also fervent discussion around bisexual women within lesbian communities, in which they occupied a contested position. By the 1990s, bisexual activist communities had expanded further, bringing with them magazines, activist edited collections, and, in the academy, bisexual theory. Seemingly forgetting their 1974 announcement, a 1995 cover of *Newsweek* proclaims, "Bisexuality: Not Gay. Not Straight. A New Sexual Identity Emerges."[29] This is, admittedly, only a cursory tour of a thirty-year period that does not do justice to the various tensions, contradictions, and complexities around bisexuality herein. While I explore these shifting dynamics in greater detail in my case studies, for now I seek only to underscore the intense proliferation of cultural and political attention toward bisexuality across these decades. This book's predominant attention to films made between 1970 and 2000 is thus rooted in the contextual richness that bisexuality's increased discursive circulation affords a historically informed film analysis.

Gendered Bisexualities, or Delineations of Nonexistence

A regular observation across much bisexual writing involves the markedly gendered differences in common understandings of bisexuality that also seek to establish its nonexistence. The adage goes that, among women, bisexuality is unremarkable, a capacity of all women whose desires toward other women, as long as they are concurrent with desires toward men, can be rewritten as heterosexuality. Insofar as female bisexuality can be demarcated as nonthreatening—an erotic

spectacle, a frivolous experiment, a permissible peccadillo—female bisexuality's queerness is often depoliticized and subsumed into hypersexual forms of female heterosexuality. Part of the alignment between female bisexuality and dominant notions of (heterosexual) womanhood is rooted in what Shiri Eisner terms bisexuality's association "with multiplicity rather than singularity or 'oneness.'"[30] As theorized most famously by Luce Irigaray, the woman's sexuality is considered "at least double, goes even further: it is *plural*."[31] It is through this association that female bisexuality can be discursively transformed into something befitting dominant heteropatriarchal understandings of gender and sexuality. As Eisner notes, this cultural process works to "neutralize the 'sting'" carried by female bisexuality so that it is made into a nonthreatening erotic spectacle and "converted and rewritten into . . . something that's both palatable and convenient to patriarchy."[32] We should note, however, that just because this resignification of female bisexuality takes place, its effects are not necessarily normalizing. Beyond the social alienation produced by the demarcation of bisexual women as heterosexual, research in the social sciences has made troubling links between the treatment of bisexual women as hypersexual heterosexuals and the disproportionate rates of sexual violence they have been shown to face across a variety of cultural contexts.[33] Moreover, the resignification of female bisexuality as a form of heterosexuality is, importantly, not simply a framework through which female bisexuality simply becomes female heterosexuality. Instead, there is a specific process at play here whereby female bisexuality is taken to be the ne plus ultra of depoliticized womanhood, acquiescent to patriarchy and its demands of female sexual spectacle.

The corollary perception of bisexual men, however, involves bisexuality being rewritten as homosexuality; here, sexual desire toward other men produces a totalizing effect in the opposite direction. In the man assumed to be heterosexual, a single deviation into intragender desire holds the potential to undo his heterosexuality irreversibly.[34] From the second half of the twentieth century onward, some of the most prominent figures in psychoanalysis and psychology would reify understandings of male bisexuality as male homosexuality. Psychoanalyst Edmund Bergler writes in 1957 that male bisexuality "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."[35] For Bergler, bisexual men are, whether intentionally or not, homosexual charlatans whose purported desires are irrational in his medical framework. Czechoslovakian sexologist Kurt Freund

comes to similar conclusions through his experiments measuring penile tumescence in relation to pornographic stimuli as an index of sexual arousal. With these experiments in 1974, Freund determines that there is no evidence for what he terms "bisexuality proper" among men.[36] Freund's conclusions were influential for American psychologist J. Michael Bailey, who led similar experiments to Freund's in the 2000s that purported to prove the nonexistence of what he calls "physiological" male bisexuality.[37] As Bailey summarizes: "Freund . . . was never able to find a subset of men who appeared bisexual in the lab. Although their data are less scientific, gay men share Freund's skepticism. They have a saying: 'You're either gay, straight, or lying.'"[38]

Attention to the gendered forms taken by common understandings of bisexuality is thus central to any bisexual cultural analysis. Importantly, these common understandings carry with them an assumed cisgenderness. Rooted as they are in patriarchal and heterosexist frameworks, so too do they carry an inherent cissexism that treats expressions of transness as deviant maleness or femaleness, determined by sex assigned at birth. These common gendered understandings of male and female bisexuality, therefore, cannot but reproduce a gender binary in which trans and nonbinary gender are deemed nonexistent. Yet, as we have seen, cultural attitudes toward female and male bisexuality involve their being rewritten as heterosexuality and homosexuality, respectively, thus consolidating notions of bisexuality's general nonexistence. Similar discursive moves are observable in recent antitransgender thinking, whereby transness is treated as nonexistent by recasting it as a confused homosexuality, as male paraphilia, or as symptomatic of mental illness or neurodevelopmental disorder.[39] What these characterizations share with those professing bisexuality's nonexistence is their function as epistemological frameworks that resignify phenomena attesting to a binary's insufficiency or nonexclusivity to befit dominant conceptions of gender, sex, sexuality, and medicine. A compelling parallel thus emerges through which sexualities that contest neat binary organization and genders that contest neat binary organization must be rendered nonexistent in order that these binaries maintain their purported ontology.

The question thus emerges as to how to discuss the cultural implications of phenomena that are culturally assumed to not exist. One analytic offering a potential egress here is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's conceptualization of the dialectic of being and nothing: that *that which is* is inseparable from *that which is not*.[40] For Hegel, the dissolution of this opposition between being and nothing involves a movement toward *becoming*.[41] With this analytic in place, we should pause before countering assertions of bisexuality's nonexistence simply with exclamations of "Bisexuality exists!" Instead, we can understand

the assertion of "monosexuality *is*, bisexuality *is not*" as an unstable mantra haunted by its negations. The critical task thus involves posing challenges to the exclusivity and taxonomical stability of sexual formations, eschewing the zero-sum games of being and nothing, and giving way to a space of potentiality where sexuality is understood as always able to be otherwise, always becoming.[42] One of the central ways in which such potentialities have been explored, albeit without recourse to Hegel, is bisexual theory. A series of interventions into queer studies as it was emerging in the 1990s, bisexual theory posed epistemological trouble in its exploitation of values with which bisexuality has tended to be cast, bringing uncertainty, unintelligibility, and the contestation of binary thinking to the critical fore.

Queer Theory and Its Bisexual Interventions

> Bisexuality is not merely a problem of an unrecognized or vilified sexual preference that can be solved, or alleviated, through visibility and legitimation as a third sexual option. . . . I propose, therefore that we assume bisexuality . . . as an epistemological as well as ethical vantage point from which we can examine and deconstruct the bipolar framework of gender and sexuality.
> —Elisabeth D. Däumer, "Queer Ethics"

Although the genesis of queer theory was characterized by a call to depart from the "ideological liabilities" of the terms *lesbian* and *gay*, and to embrace how "the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically," the role of bisexuality herein has often been dismissed.[43] Around two decades after its genesis, David M. Halperin observes that while "'queer theory' was once the name for the field of study that capitalized on the crisis of sexual definition, on this breakdown in our conceptual categories . . . *queer* has lost its sense of unassimilable and irredeemable sexual deviance, and subsided into a mere synonym of *gay*."[44] Notwithstanding discussions of Freud's theories of bisexuality, allusions to bisexuality in queer studies tend only to be found in parentheses and endnotes, if not prescinded from altogether. When it has been addressed, queer theorists have often been skeptical of bisexuality's critical utility. For Lee Edelman, the "hetero/homo binarism . . . [is] more effectively reinforced than disrupted by the 'third term' of bisexuality. . . . The category of 'bisexuality' can appear to position itself between reified polar opposites of 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual.'"[45] In an online discussion, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick warns against how "the political concept of 'bisexuality' seems to offer a *consolidation and completion* of an understanding of sexuality as something that can be described adequately, for

everybody, in terms of gender-of-object-choice. . . . As though . . . you have now covered the entire ground and collected the whole set."[46] Edelman's and Sedgwick's conceptual reticence toward bisexuality is rooted in their perceptions of its consolidating effect over dominant understandings of sexuality.

Steven Angelides critiques these positions, however, as enacting the limitations they purport to observe. He writes that these arguments are structured by "a curious *dis/avowal* of bisexuality, where only some of its possible meanings have been authorised."[47] Although Angelides acknowledges that bisexuality can be deployed in a consolidatory fashion, he stresses that this is just one of its potential deployments. Bisexuality, for Angelides, is most threatening to hegemonic conceptions of sexuality when engaged in the present tense: "It is *not* bisexuality *per se* that reinforces our binary categories of sexuality. Rather, it is the temporal framing of bisexuality—*the persistent epistemological refusal to recognize bisexuality in the present tense*—that has functioned to reinforce the hetero/homosexual binarism."[48] To recognize bisexuality's presentness is to facilitate its use as that which troubles the heterosexual-homosexual binary's very epistemological grounding: the nowness of bisexual possibility.

Bisexual theory's foundational contention lies in the epistemological utility of a bisexual focus in queer approaches to gender and sexuality. The concerns that came to characterize bisexual theory are expressed earliest by Elisabeth D. Däumer in her 1992 article that proposes "we assume bisexuality . . . as an epistemological as well as ethical vantage point from which we can examine and deconstruct the bipolar framework of gender and sexuality."[49] Däumer's articulation of such a vantage point is as suspicious as Edelman's and Sedgwick's toward consolidatory approaches to bisexuality. She insists that "bisexuality is not merely a problem of an unrecognized or vilified sexual preference that can be solved, or alleviated, through visibility and legitimation as a third sexual option. . . . The effort to disambiguate bisexuality and elevate it into a sign of integration might counteract the subversive potential of bisexuality as a moral and epistemological force."[50] Instead, Däumer proposes that bisexuality's critical position "*between* identities" is a useful vantage point from which difference can be explored without recourse to oppositional binaries.[51]

It is in the aftermath of Däumer's call that scholars consider in greatest detail what a bisexual epistemological position might look like. For Clare Hemmings, what is most epistemologically useful in bisexuality is its "insistent partiality," which "makes visible the process by which we all become sexual and gendered subjects."[52] A bisexual epistemology brings into view those qualities of dominant sexuality—"separation, self-reflection, stasis"—that exert a

constricting force over all forms of sexuality.[53] The conception of bisexual epistemology I find most compelling comes from Maria Pramaggiore, who reappropriates the cliché that bisexuals are "on the fence" to theorize a bisexual "epistemology of the fence." Pramaggiore elucidates:

> The fence, in its nominal form, identifies a place of in-betweenness and indecision. Often precariously perched atop a structure that divides and demarcates, bisexual epistemologies have the capacity to reframe regimes and regions of desire by deframing and/or reframing in porous, nonexclusive ways. Fence-sitting . . . is a practice that refuses the restrictive formulas that define gender according to binary categories, that associate one gender or one sexuality with a singularly gendered object choice, and that equate sexual practices with sexual identity. Bisexual epistemologies—ways of apprehending, organizing, and intervening in the world that refuse one-to-one correspondences between sex acts and identity, between erotic objects and sexualities, between identification and desire—acknowledge fluid desires and their continual construction and deconstruction of the desiring subject.[54]

In Pramaggiore's evocative conception, bisexual epistemologies are characterized by a nonexclusive approach to knowledge formation, which underscores, in relation to sexuality, the various ways in which experiences and expressions of sexuality do not correspond conventionally. Central here is desire's capacity to transform: an affirmation of desire's contingency and mutability.

Attention to desire's potential to be nonsingular in its directionalities, and wont to change, involves a reckoning with that which dominant notions of heterosexuality and homosexuality must negate in their efforts toward stable meaning. Hemmings outlines how both heterosexuality and homosexuality maintain their epistemological coherence through a repudiative relation between the terms.[55] Here, the positive demarcation of the gender of one's object choice is made meaningful through the negative demarcation of another possible gendered object; the latter is the subtrahend in whose deduction the positive gendered object choice is affirmed. In thinking through how to handle conceptual oppositions, we might return once more to Hegel in his perspicuity that "it is explicitly what contains . . . oppositions at which the understanding stops short . . . and contains them as something sublated within itself."[56] Among queer theory's founding texts, we find critical analysis of heterosexuality's negation of homosexuality—from Judith Butler's discussion of heterosexuality and melancholia to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's analysis of heterosexuality's "simultaneous subsumption and exclusion" of homosexuality in the hetero-homo

dyad.[57] These analyses, however, stop short of recognizing bisexuality's conceptual utility in working through the oppositions they wish to deconstruct. To limit our discussion of the heterosexual-homosexual opposition to the ways in which the former negates and internalizes the latter, or vice versa—or even to their compelling overlaps—is, still, to bottleneck our understanding. Such an approach maintains the sublations that form the opposition, even while professing to unconceal them. To think about sexual epistemology only through the given oppositional terms is to secure their sublations. Instead, I suggest we should take the route Hegel describes as the speculative moment, which "grasps the unity of the determinations in their opposition, the *affirmative* that is contained in their dissolution and their passing over into something else."[58] The dissolution of the heterosexual-homosexual opposition can thus work to affirm something else, a bisexual possibility that expands and complicates the epistemic landscape's cartography. To enact such a speculative moment, however, we must take a critical stance toward what has become a contested term in sexuality studies: *monosexuality*.

The Problem of Monosexuality

Theoretical formulations of bisexual inquiry have worked to shift a queer intellectual focus onto how dominant formulations of heterosexuality and homosexuality often share certain investments: teleological narratives of sexual becoming, a belief in sexuality's naturalness, a conception of sexuality as an unchanging expression of an inner truth, and a structure of mutual oppositionality wherein each sexuality renders the other meaningful through the repudiation of its opposite. Although all bisexual theory is attentive to the vantage point bisexuality provides in critiquing these dominant ideas, there is disagreement as to the utility of grouping together heterosexuality and homosexuality under the term *monosexuality*. *Monosexuality* describes desires toward people of only one gender (heterosexuality and homosexuality), and *monosexism* describes "a social structure operating through a presumption that everyone is, or should be, monosexual."[59] While many bisexual activists and bisexual theorists deploy these terms, a number of British bisexual theorists argue against their use. The strongest critiques to this effect come from Hemmings, who writes that "to term all non-bisexuals *monosexuals* erases the differences between lesbians/gay men and heterosexuals, equating the power dynamics that exist between bisexuals and lesbians/gay men with those between homosexuals and heterosexuals. Such a gesture refuses to acknowledge the social hierarchies of sex, gender, and sexuality that have historically influenced

and continue to influence, subject and community formation."[60] Hemmings contends that the use of *monosexual* as a descriptor erases the operations of structures of homophobia and sexism. It is unclear, however, why Hemmings believes that the former necessitates the latter. Hemmings claims that "in this rubric bisexuals are uniquely oppressed by monosexism. . . . By setting up this division, the differences between lesbians and gay men and heterosexuals in terms of power are elided."[61] However, the acknowledgment of a social rule stipulating the normality, maturity, or legitimacy of attraction toward only one gender, while casting attractions toward more than one gender as nonnormative, immature, or illegitimate, need not suggest that this rule operates independently of others. There seems to be a reluctance on Hemmings's part to recognize that systems of sexual oppression can operate in more than one way.[62] While Hemmings suggests that the term *monosexuality* "erases the differences between a lesbian feminist position and a heterosexual male position in relation to structures of power," her example already shows that strict divisions of sexuality cannot be thought of independently: the woman figure she cites is homosexual, the male figure she cites is heterosexual, yet she still deploys these sexuality terms while noting gendered differences herein.[63] Hemmings's resistance to the term *monosexuality* is thus rooted in what I contend is an error whereby attention to the social stipulation that people should only desire people of a single gender is misconstrued as a denial that other social stipulations exist.

Another issue with Hemmings's critique is its elision of an important locus of critical attention: the mutual investments and workings of heterosexuality and homosexuality. These investments are parsed in detail in legal scholar Kenji Yoshino's article "The Epistemic Contract of Bisexual Erasure." With attention to sexual epistemology, Yoshino illuminates the multiple sites of mutual interest between liberal gay rights movements and heterosexist norms that rely upon the erasure of bisexuality for their mutual coherence.[64] Yoshino does not seek to elide power differentials between heterosexual and homosexual people but, instead, identifies those points of shared investment between a liberal gay politics defining queer sexuality as heterosexuality's equal opposite—natural, immutable, secure—whose coherence is dependent on bisexuality's elision. Instructive critical interventions like Yoshino's are impossible without attention to monosexism.

Hemmings also critiques the term *monosexuality* because she sees it as "attempting to mark out bisexuals as somehow 'beyond' sex and gender . . . creating a boundary around bisexuality (that only the most enlightened and gender-free may cross?)."[65] In this usage, Hemmings argues, monosexuals are

considered "politically duped into believing in a two sex, two-gender system."[66] Hemmings's contention is that the identification of monosexuality creates a hierarchy of sexual radicalism in which bisexuality's ability to operate within a sex or gender binary is elided. While I agree that bisexuality does not per se contest a binary system of gender, Hemmings seems uncurious to entertain how it might hold the potential to do so. It seems uncontroversial, to me, to suggest that bisexuality can describe desire beyond gender. It is the beyondness of our desires that characterizes their nonsingularity: We desire beyond single-gendered objects, our sexualities are constituted beyond the present in a way that embraces our pasts and potential futures. To attest to this beyondness is not to assert bisexuality as being beyond the reaches of discourse or beyond social exigencies but, instead, to mobilize bisexuality's ontological capacity for desiring beyond single-gendered object choice toward a destabilization of sexual norms that cement rigid gender and sexuality binaries. This is not a trouble we should avoid lest some be considered unenlightened or unradical. On the contrary, it is new forms of knowledge and radical challenges to extant systems of gender and sexuality to which our critical thinking must be drawn.

Monosexism thus describes one facet in a web of sexual organization that, rather than isolating a particular form of sexual oppression without attention to others, in fact, complexifies and particularizes our understanding of varying dynamics at play here. While Hemmings is "deeply concerned by the discursive and political effects that the creation of the monosexual/bisexual binary has," this concern is misattributed.[67] The monosexual/bisexual binary is already at play socially: It operates in state systems of border control deeming the legitimacy of those seeking asylum on the basis of their sexualities, it affects the interpersonal relations of bisexual people in the world, and, as social scientists have observed across decades, it marks disparities in health, exposure to violence, and material conditions of bisexual people in varied cultural contexts.[68] The issue lies, therefore, not in naming monosexism but in monosexism itself.[69]

Bisexuality's Uses in Aesthetic Analysis

BISEXUAL AESTHETICS, BISEXUAL SPECTATORSHIP

Prior to the emergence of bisexual theory, and its fitful articulations in film and media studies, bisexuality's deployment for critical approaches to aesthetics appeared most pronouncedly in two loci: the cultural-aesthetic theory of Sergei Eisenstein and feminist theories of film spectatorship.[70] Strange

bedfellows they may be, yet their scholarship shares an investment in bisexuality as a means of accounting for the relations between gender, sexuality, and aesthetics. Bisexuality is a topic that fascinated Eisenstein, first, in relation to the theories of Otto Weininger and, later, in relation to the work of Magnus Hirschfeld, whose Institute for Sex Research he visited in the early 1930s.[71] Eisenstein proposes that "the dialectical principle in sex is bisexuality."[72] His understanding of bisexuality encompasses notions of sex (intersexuality or hermaphroditism), gender (the coincidence of masculinity and femininity), and sexual desire (bisexuality in its current sense).[73] Theorizing the application of the dialectical method to questions of sex, Eisenstein posits these bisexual dynamics as undergirding the terrain of inquiry.

Bisexuality, Eisenstein argues, must be "rethought of as a social process eliminating contradictions, establishing legal equality and equal participation in labor and achievements—no longer by the mystical feminine and masculine 'elements,' and much less by biological 'categories.'"[74] Remarkably, Eisenstein proposes what is effectively a proto-queer thesis, arguing for social change through a denaturalization of sexual taxonomies. For Eisenstein, the function of bisexuality in these denaturalization efforts involves its reminder of the simultaneous presence of that which is deemed masculine and feminine, male and female, and even heterosexual and homosexual in us all. These arguments anticipate the later work of sexual revolutionaries like Shulamith Firestone and Mario Mieli, whose imaginings of a postrevolutionary future involve the nonexclusivity of the dyads Eisenstein traces.[75] Eisenstein stresses that "these ideas about bisexuality here bear no relation to any narrow sexual problem. We are interested in the issue of the 'lifting' of this biological field of application of the conceptual opposites."[76] The utility of bisexuality for Eisenstein thus lies not in reproducing overdetermined biological accounts of bisexuality but in engaging bisexuality dialectically as a means of parsing that which society has dichotomized.[77]

Especially pertinent for my investigation is how Eisenstein conceptualizes such bisexual possibilities as discernible in certain aesthetic works. He discusses a scene from Jacques Deval's 1935 play *L'Âge de Juliette* in which a young couple, Serge and Mietta, exit their hotel room to an offstage bathroom while mechanics fix a radio; upon their return, the couple is wearing each other's bathrobes. Eisenstein concludes that this sequence not only conveys Serge and Mietta's having been intimate with one another, it also evokes "the restoration of this initial, primary, unitary bisexual element."[78] For Eisenstein, this example attests to a bisexual potential he deems a "precondition in all creative dialectics": the presence of that which reminds us of the possibilities beyond

strict male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual divisions.[79] In his application of a bisexual dialectical method to Deval's play, Eisenstein demonstrates a potential aesthetic works hold for us to glimpse possibilities beyond dominant sexual taxonomies, a potential to which trans and bisexual interventions in film and media studies would also later attest.[80]

Bisexuality's utility as a descriptor of gender and sexuality's mutability is also key for feminist theoretical engagements with questions of film spectatorship. An early example of this critical trend can be found in Laura Mulvey's articulation of a female spectator's identification with male characters as a "transsex identification . . . shift[ing] restlessly in its borrowed transvestite clothes."[81] While not naming this identification across gender lines as "bisexual," Mulvey's theorization suggests the potential to understand cinematic spectatorship as a protean process that can take place across categories of gender. Yet further, in her description of a female spectator identifying herself with a male protagonist, Mulvey is articulating not only a gender transgression (which trans media theorists have since developed beyond the clumsy transsexuality/transvestism metaphor) but a potential desirous transgression.[82] Here, Mulvey also attests to how a female spectator might vicariously desire a heterosexual male protagonist's female object of desire: the female spectator might desire a female object *as man*. Elizabeth Cowie's later article "Fantasia" speaks to this potential to identify and desire in unfixed ways. Cowie draws upon Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis's articulation of fantasy not as the object of desire but as its setting, its "mise-en-scène."[83] Cowie contends that "what is necessary for any public forms of fantasy . . . is not universal objects of desire, but a setting of desiring in which we can find our place(s). . . . While the terms of sexual difference are fixed, the places of characters and spectators in relation to those terms are not."[84] Within this framework, a spectator might experience multiple sites of identification and desire, caught amid various forms of sexual alignment within the fantasy space of cinema. Cowie later turns to bisexuality—as do other feminist film theorists, including Janet Bergstrom, Carol Clover, Miriam Hansen, Tania Modleski, Margaret Morse, Gaylyn Studlar, and Linda Williams—as a means of describing the sexual and gendered flexibility experienced in film spectatorship.[85] "This notion of bisexuality," writes Cowie, "emphasizes the complexity as well as the interdependency of the multiple positions constructed in film."[86] Feminist theoretical accounts of spectatorship seeking to map the numerous positions that constitute film viewing have sometimes found in bisexuality a model for doing so, useful in its potential to capture the inherent plasticity of our spectatorial identifications and desires.

Such potentialities might even be glimpsed in the earlier writing of André Bazin. Although Bazin is not generally understood as theorizing questions of gender or sexuality, in his account of eroticism and the cinema, he writes that "the cinema unreels in an imaginary space which demands participation and identification. The actor winning the woman gratifies me by proxy. His seductiveness, his good looks, his daring do not compete with my desires—they fulfill them."[87] Bazin's comments serve as a reminder that, in film spectatorship, identification and desire are never discrete processes; his gratification is rooted not only in the assumedly beautiful woman described but in his ability to identify with a seductive, good-looking (read: desirable) man. Bazin's reflections, in fact, speak to Jackie Stacey's later warning against "the rigid distinction of *either* desire *or* identification," and her call for theories that "address the construction of desires which involve a specific interplay of both processes."[88]

One site in which the dynamics undergirding Bazin's spectatorial account have been developed, and Stacey's call for thinking desire and identification together has been taken up, is expressly bisexual film studies scholarship. Pramaggiore's bisexual intervention in discussions of spectatorship highlights "the spectatorial difficulty of clearly distinguishing between wanting to 'be' a character . . . and wanting to 'have' a character."[89] In a similar vein, Maria San Filippo suggests that "we are welcomed *out* of the closet by the cinematic experience" and that "screen media offer a liberating space for the accommodation of subjectivities and desires beyond monosexuality."[90] In these bisexual theorizations, film spectatorship carries with it the potential to desire, albeit transiently, in ways that transgress the heterosexual/homosexual division. Film's recurrent invitations to desire and to identify in partial, protean, and impermanent ways proffer bisexual possibilities wherein various desires and identifications might be experienced vicariously.[91]

These theoretical contributions speak to the utility of bisexuality as a critical framework through which to explore cinema's potential to remind us of sexuality's extensive capacities, both conceptually, at the level of signification, and intersubjectively, at the level of the spectator's desires and identifications. Yet this critical impulse can and has been taken further afield in critical practices where bisexuality functions not only as a concept for critical deployment but also as the primary position from which film criticism emanates—as, in other words, a bisexual film criticism. These critical practices tend to consider the relation between bisexuality, cinema, and sexual politics, lingering longer on the question of bisexuality's textual representation or representability. Although bisexual theoretical approaches are those I find richest in exploring these questions, a significant history of bisexual film criticism developed through different

approaches more aligned with bisexual activism. Both critical genealogies provide insights into the fraught position of bisexuality vis-à-vis cinema: its problems, its conflicts, but also its potential affordances.

BISEXUALITY AND MEDIA: THE AXIOLOGICAL APPROACH

> As with other minority peoples, few images of Bisexuals appear in the popular media. It is unconscionable that when Bisexuals are portrayed, it is as sick depraved creatures.
> —ACT UP New York, "NBC Protest"

An early milestone in expressly bisexual media critique occurred in 1988 in concert with a series of protests that responded to an episode of the American television series *Midnight Caller*. The late 1980s saw bisexual American groups' increased militantism, with calls for participation and attention in gay political campaigns becoming demands whose urgency was heightened by the AIDS epidemic.[92] This politics was in full force in the response to the episode, entitled "After It Happened," which depicts an HIV-positive bisexual man who purposely transmits the virus to others. Following the leaking of the episode's screenplay, the New York Area Bisexual Network and the Bisexual Support Group joined forces with AIDS activist group ACT UP New York to protest the series' portrayal of bisexuality.[93] In an activist landscape in which attentions were turning to the import of screen representation, bisexual politics was finding a place for itself.

These emergent bisexual media critiques are observably influenced by approaches in gay media critique circulating during the late 1970s and 1980s that considered negative portrayals of certain sexuality groups as either symptomatic of queerphobia or precipitative of queerphobic attitudes and even violence. New Line Cinema's 1974–1975 lecture series "Presentations" included a talk by Vito Russo that was later included in his book *The Celluloid Closet*; their catalog description calls the talk "an insight into the power of the media to perpetuate social stereotypes."[94] Five years later, New Line would showcase a similar lecture, this time, with a bisexual angle, delivered by Don Fass, the founder of the National Bisexual Liberation Group. The promotional text for the presentation promises a discussion of "the bisexual experience" alongside illustrative film clips.[95] Although precise information about the content of Fass's presentation is difficult to find, it is reasonable to suspect that it followed a similar approach to those of New Line's other speakers, which, alongside Russo's focus on homosexuality, featured Molly Haskell on "the treatment of women in the movies" and James Murray on "blacks in films."[96] These

NBC POLICY ON AIDS:
TO FRIGHTEN OR ENLIGHTEN?

An upcoming episode of NBC's "Midnight Caller" portrays a bisexual man infected with HIV (the "AIDS virus") who knowingly spreads the disease to male and female partners. A woman he has infected then hunts him down and tries to kill him.

This episode does more than merely sensationalize the plight of the estimated 1.5 million people currently living with HIV infection in this country. . .

IT ENDANGERS THEIR VERY LIVES!

The premise of a vindictive Person With AIDS (PWA) purposefully infecting others plays into the public's darkest, ill-founded fears about AIDS transmission and further pumps up an already highly-charged atmosphere of national AIDS hysteria.

This dangerous scenario, with its "Innocent Victim" becoming infected by the "Guilty/Evil HIV Carrier" then goes on to promote violence and vigilantism as a valid response to the AIDS Crisis!

WHAT IS NBC TELLING THE PUBLIC?

A recent Roper study states that the American Public uses Television as their major source for AIDS Information and Education. But instead of educating the Public about AIDS or helping to bring a more compassionate response to people who are living with AIDS or HIV Infection, NBC is cynically choosing Ratings Points over Broadcasting Ethics.

What is at issue here is not censorship, it is ethics.

We demand that NBC apply the same standards to people infected with HIV as they do to other racially or sexually sensitive subjects.

We demand that NBC stop playing ratings games with people's lives!

We demand that NBC recognize its responsibility to the American Public and cancel this episode of "Midnight Caller" immediately!

We are ACT UP, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, a diverse, non-partisan group of individuals united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis. For more information, please call 212-533-8888.

SILENCE = DEATH

FIGURE I.2 An ACT UP New York pamphlet for a protest of *Midnight Caller* at NBC. Document scan.

presentations' use of film as a means through which to explore issues of social justice regularly took the form of identifying stereotypes and censuring cinema's role in perpetuating prejudice. This tenor of argument can be found in the 1985 revised edition of Russo's *The Celluloid Closet*, where he writes: "Open violence against gay people in America has reached epidemic proportions, fueled by films that encourage young people to believe that such behavior is acceptable."[97]

The arguments proffered by Russo, his contemporaries in the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), and ACT UP New York are characterized by an approach that would come to be known as "media effects theory." The definitive premise of media effects theory involves the idea that media can have direct, measurable influences on the attitudes and actions of its viewers.[98] The problem with this premise is not that media cannot affect its audience's perceptions of the world. Instead, it is the characterization of the media text as producing linear, unidirectional, and univocal messages, devoid of textuality, stripped of social context, and impervious to the interpre-

tive faculties of those who receive them. That representations can affect the social perception of social groups—a phenomenon explored more delicately by scholars like Stuart Hall and Richard Dyer—does not mean that all social groups are equally intelligible, nor does it mean that processes of comprehension are directly predictable.[99] This phenomenon also cannot be taken to mean that the truth about a group is definitively representable, nor does it mean that images certain people deem to be negative necessarily invoke negative social outcomes (yet, in media effects approaches, the first contention often dovetails with the latter). In these approaches, sprawling and pervasive issues like social queerphobia become conveniently crystallized in a repudiable bad object.

Much bisexual writing has engaged the language of negative representation, stereotypes, or tropes—and the presumptions of media effects—to discuss cinema, from the scholarly and para-academic writing of Wayne M. Bryant, Justin Vicari, and Jonathan David White, to listicles in online publications with titles like "11 Bisexual Tropes I'm Honestly Tired of Seeing in TV and Movies" and "9 Bisexual TV and Film Characters Who Deserved Better than Tired Tropes," to an entry on the wiki TV Tropes that lists media objects containing the purported trope of "the Depraved Bisexual."[100] Admittedly, there is some utility to this work: the identification of stereotypes and tropes works to map the textual terrain with an eye for repetition, drawing our attention to where notable recurrences take place and the persistent meanings with which bisexuality is often invoked. The efforts of a researcher like Bryant in his encyclopedic *Bisexual Characters in Film: From Anaïs to Zee* (1997) endures as a valuable resource in the sheer breadth of films it identifies as potentially open to bisexual inquiry. Where these pieces of writing lack rigor, however, is in their mode of reading, tending to proceed by identifying in certain media texts a character they read as bisexual and whose representation, they argue, is either beneficial or deleterious for perceptions of bisexual people.[101] The examples they cite in the negative range from *The Berlin Affair*'s (Liliana Cavani, 1985) seductive art student Mitsuko (Mio Takaki) and *Blue Velvet*'s (David Lynch, 1986) paraphiliac gangster Frank (Dennis Hopper) to the unnamed gay-man-turned-woman-desiring-misogynist (Rocco Siffredi) of Catherine Breillat's allegorical art film *Anatomy of Hell* (2004). While I am sensitive to the frustrations that undergird the readings of these films, they make a critical error. The regular suggestion one finds is that representations of bisexuals behaving badly are untruthful.

This assertion speaks, first, to the presupposition that media can represent the truth about a social group.[102] Here we would be wise to remember Gayatri

Chakravorty Spivak's careful articulation of the difference between representation qua *Vertretung*, "representation in the political context," and representation qua *Darstellung*—"the philosophical concept of representation as staging, or, indeed, signification."[103] In Spivak's exposition, we are warned that confusing these two senses of *representation* nullifies political work into a shallow reading practice whereby representational visibility is embraced uncritically as a metric of social transformation. Spivak's ideas are developed in the film studies scholarship of Kara Keeling and echoed in that of Rey Chow, both of whom criticize the tendency to understand aesthetic representations as, in Keeling's words, "political proxies."[104] What is ineffectual, therefore, in approaches to film that seek truth, coherence, or proxies of the political is a fundamental misapprehension of the aesthetic that risks reproducing dominant discourses that conflate narrow notions of what cultural groups are said to look like with what these groups are or might be.

Second, these critics' characterizations of such a truth about bisexuality regularly involve loosely defined notions of goodness, which can, under no circumstances, conform to stereotypes about bisexual people. Shiri Eisner reminds us that "this outright denial of [bisexual] stereotypes creates a mirror image of the bisexual imagined therein. . . . This bisexual is reassuring, harmless, stable and safe . . . unthreatening and docile . . . a harmless and benign sexual citizen . . . answering each and every call for normativity with enthusiastic consent."[105] The critical weakness in an antistereotype bisexual approach to media lies in its acquiescence to normative notions of recognizability and virtue, notions that should be interrogated rather than reasserted. These approaches to reading media images are axiological: They are guided by a normative value system through which truthfulness, virtue, and positivity are determined. What hamstrings them is thus an assumption that bisexuality is definitively recognizable in media (and that media viewers will necessarily perceive bisexual people in the same ways a media text represents them), alongside bromides involving a broadly defined aspiration toward supposedly positive representation that, more often than not, reveal themselves as calls for either normativity or respectability.[106]

More critical approaches to representation, however, are mindful of the contingency of mediated meaning-making and skeptical toward the promise of good representation, the likes of which have recently been developed within trans media studies in ways that speak to important alliances between critical bisexual and transgender media analysis. When Jo Eadie intervenes in conversations around bisexual representation, he warns against reading bisexual filmic figures' embodiments of excess and transgression simply as evidence of

FIGURE 1.3 Mitsuko (Mio Takaki) seduces Heinz (Kevin McNally) while Louise (Gudrun Landgrebe), her lover, sleeps. *The Berlin Affair* [*Interno Berlinese* / *Leidenschaften*] (Liliana Cavani, 1985). Promotional image.

bisexuality being "stereotyped." Instead, he suggests that "we may learn something here about the discursive regulation of bisexuality . . . how bisexuality is made socially meaningful."[107] Eadie's proposition moves us away from the ruse of thinking representation as both a signifier of truth and the originator of supposedly negative media effects to consider, instead, the discursive practices through which bisexuality is aligned with certain social meanings, often involving the transgression of a limit. Eadie's impulse is mirrored in the recent work in trans media studies led by Cáel M. Keegan, who describes the dismissal of what he terms "bad trans media objects" as enacting a politics that grants the "least disruptive" of these objects "a marginal amount of inclusion."[108] Keegan's critique of good trans media objects—representations of ethical, happy trans figures presented through codes of authenticity—involves them being the least challenging to extant systems of gender, the trans figure working to naturalize the cisness of other diegetic figures.[109] The bad trans media object, however, exploits the capacity in badness to indicate "the presence of something unclassifiable within the established categories used to

delimit sex and gender."[110] This critical approach allows Keegan to revisit some of trans representation's most repudiated figures among popular trans media criticism—from *Tootsie*'s (Sydney Pollack, 1982) Michael/Dorothy (Dustin Hoffman) to *The Silence of the Lambs*' (Jonathan Demme, 1991) Buffalo Bill/Jame Gumb (Ted Levine)—to consider the ways these figures pose a disruption to dominant paradigms of gender and sex, a disruption that is not contained but, rather, poses challenges to cissexist forms of governmentality.[111]

I share with Eadie and Keegan an investment in looking to bad media objects not simply as evidence of prejudicial attitudes but as usefully disruptive representations in which social anxieties, systems of sexual signification, and models for queer forms of dissidence come into view. The alliances to be forged between critical bisexual and transgender approaches speak to some important sites of mutual solidarity in our work.[112] As Shiri Eisner reminds us, transgender and bisexual people (who are, empirically speaking, groups that overlap significantly, with significant proportions of each group identified as both) embody certain challenging forms of social being while also facing similar accusations from those dismissive of their political legitimacy.[113] Eisner details how both bisexuality and transness speak to our capacity for change, for sexual becoming, in contrast with notions of sexual immutability. Both also have a complex relation to notions of passing, the unreadability of their queerness sometimes voluntarily taken on and sometimes coercively enforced. Relatedly, both groups are regularly accused of desiring or having straight or straight-passing privilege and of acquiescing to a dominant gender binary. While taking pains not to treat this shared ground as a space of direct parallels or equivalences, Eisner's work outlines pertinent homologies between bisexuality and transness within dominant sexual epistemologies. Their analysis illuminates two particular anxieties that both bring to bear: first, the capacity for our sexual selves to change, to be different in the future to how they were in the past and, second, the ability for that which looks normative—cisgender, heterosexual, or of a binary gender—to reveal the insufficiency of dominant codes of sexual signification in the presence of an unintelligible queerness. When reconceptualized as such, we find clues to the particular affordances of moving images with regard to troublesome, transgressive, or disruptive figurations of transness and bisexuality. The durational nature of the form allows for change or becoming to take place; its visuality allows for questions around sexual epistemology's relation to perception to take shape. These questions around cinematic temporality, visuality, and sexual epistemology animate this book, with trans media theory recurring as an important accomplice in staging my bisexual

intervention. What this mode of inquiry requires, however, are more critical approaches than axiology can afford.

CRITICAL BISEXUAL APPROACHES TO FILM AND MEDIA: HERMENEUTICS AND FIGURATION

Donald E. Hall's introduction to an edited collection on bisexuality and representation submits that "BISEXUALITY cannot be definitively represented."[114] The operative word in Hall's provocation is "definitively." Whereas heterosexuality and homosexuality have associated with them comprehensible, intelligible representational forms, bisexuality carries no such certitude. Consider bisexual activist Robyn Ochs's question:

> What kind of behavior would I—as a bisexual—have to engage in for other people to see me as bisexual? I could walk into the room with a man and a woman, one on each arm, engaging in public displays of affection with each in a way that makes it obvious that we're sexual partners. Or I could be known to have multiple partners, including at least one man and one woman. Or I could leave someone for someone else of a different sex than the partner I have left. (Interestingly, in this scenario, many people still might not read me as bisexual. Rather, they might interpret me as having finally "finished coming out" or decide that I have "gone straight").[115]

Ochs's reflections highlight how the dominance of a monosexist frame of interpretation works to preclude bisexuality as an interpretive possibility. Bisexual theorists have worked to parse precisely why and how bisexuality is rendered intelligible or unintelligible in a text and to develop bisexual frameworks of interpretation that embrace partiality, mutability, and interstitiality. In the major works of queer film theory, however, scant attention has been paid to issues around bisexuality, favoring, broadly speaking, an implicit focus on the figure of the homosexual (including particularized variations, such as the pansy or the butch), the gender transgressor, or on notions of gay, lesbian, or queer cinema. The most critical scholarly work on bisexuality and film has come from Maria Pramaggiore, Jo Eadie, Alexander Doty, Maria San Filippo, and B. C. Roberts. The work of these scholars is linked by a critical relation to notions of good representation and a questioning of the very terms upon which (bi)sexual representation is predicated. I call these approaches "critical" because of their interrogation and problematization of presuppositions regarding sexuality's representability on film. These thinkers do not assume that film

form is a tabula rasa upon which any sexuality might be represented; instead, they attend to the epistemological and formal exigencies through which cinematic sexuality is constructed.

Pramaggiore reminds us that "even when texts are 'about' queers or queerness, textual elements can repress or express possibilities for bisexual desires, that is, nonsingular desires that may be detached from strict sex and/or gender oppositions."[116] Pramaggiore's invitation for us to consider the construction of such desires on film spells the critical impulse found throughout these scholars' work on bisexuality and film, wherein film's capacity for figuring desire in nonlinear, nonexclusive ways is anatomized. These scholars, whose work I engage with throughout the book, share some central foci: bisexuality's temporal dimensions and how these interact with narrative; bisexuality's relation to cinematic space and how mise-en-scène and editing affect relational structures between different characters; and the preponderance of cinematic bisexual figures in whom other issues or identities are metaphorized. Attention to these aspects of cinematic sexuality foregrounds the contingencies that determine bisexuality's very figurability.

To return to Hall's contention that bisexuality "cannot be definitively represented," we must remain cognizant of how bisexuality's representability is stymied by epistemological and significatory conventions befitting monosexual interpretations. San Filippo reminds us that, conceptually, bisexuality is produced through a "crisis of signification," that its very intelligibility is obscured "by modes of representation and reading confined within monosexual logic."[117] In order to address questions of bisexuality and cinema, therefore, we must attend first to the question of sexuality's very interpretation. One of the primary difficulties in approaching texts through a bisexual lens is the inevitable question as to what counts as bisexuality or who counts as bisexual. My approach to identifying moments of bisexual interest on film, however, is not definitive but capacious, stressing how particular hermeneutic approaches work to bring bisexual meaning into view. I am disabused of the notion that any text can be said to signify a certain sexuality in a totalizing, replicative fashion; semiotics' enduring reminder for scholars of representation stipulates the social contingency of signification and meaning.[118] That different readers and different approaches to reading effect the garnering of different meanings must be the starting point for questions of bisexual representation.

Let us consider Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2005). For some viewers of the film, the tale of Jack (Jake Gyllenhaal) and Ennis (Heath Ledger) reflects the pains of the closet: Their heteronormative family lives constitute an inauthentic space where they must keep up the pretense of heterosexual

masculinity, the mountains they wander as their love burgeons are spaces of authenticity, where a true gay self roams free. Such is the reading made by Gary Needham, for whom *Brokeback Mountain* narrates "the drama of homosexual desire and repression," yet, for a different viewer employing different interpretive frameworks, other meanings might be taken.[119] This latter viewer might look to the affection and desire shown between Jack and Lureen (Anne Hathaway), as well as Ennis and Alma (Michelle Williams), as authentic. This viewer might see the desires expressed by Jack and Ennis toward their wives, as well as toward each other, not necessarily as in opposition but as constitutive parts of these figures' desirous capacities. While one such desire is socially sanctioned and the other carries social sanctions, these social rules need not determine our reading the sincerity of the desires of those navigating them. Read differently, San Filippo determines that *Brokeback Mountain* "takes pains to establish that for neither man is sexuality predicated on gendered object-choice," effecting a "consistent refusal to toe the line of monosexuality."[120] I provide these interpretive examples not to suggest that San Filippo's is the correct reading and Needham's the incorrect reading but, instead, to show how the process of interpretation informs readings of textual sexuality. While the gay reading is no less justifiable than the bisexual reading, I want to stress how monosexual assumptions determine the dominant way in which sexuality is read textually. It is through the use of a critical bisexual frame of interpretation that different meanings come into view. To read with a critical bisexual eye is to contest the ascendency of a monosexist hermeneutic.[121]

In my identification of bisexual figures and bisexual meaning in film, I use a critical bisexual hermeneutic that is attentive to those moments when a monosexist expectation is dashed, those moments that defy monosexual interpretation, those moments in which bisexual possibilities make themselves known. In philosophical hermeneutics, these moments might be compared to Hans-Georg Gadamer's discussion of the phenomenon of "*Anstoß nehmen*"—of "being pulled up short," "being affronted," or "being irked"—"by the text."[122] This phenomenon takes place, Gadamer continues, when either the text "does not yield any meaning at all or its meaning is not compatible with what we had expected."[123] The appearance of bisexual possibility in film occurs through this phenomenon of *Anstoß nehmen*, in which the conventional process of monosexual interpretation is stoppered.

In order for a critical bisexual hermeneutic to work, an interpreter must be open to the possibility of a multiplicity of interpretations, resonances, evocations, and meanings. It must reject the monosexist hermeneutic's logical roots in the rule of the "either/or." Poet and bisexual activist June Jordan contends

FIGURE 1.4 A monosexist hermeneutic requires that we negate moments like this scene of desire between Jack (Jake Gyllenhaal) and Lureen (Anne Hathaway)—either by ignoring it or interpreting it as inauthentic—in the service of a gay reading. *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005). Digital screen capture.

that bisexuality "invalidates either/or formulation, either/or analysis."[124] Jordan's words speak to the necessity of rejecting mutually oppositional binaries in the formulation of bisexual meaning. Such a hermeneutic position might be elucidated through what Roland Barthes calls "the role of an *and/or*," in relation to a text's having two possible means of interpretation (codes).[125] Barthes asks: "Is one more important than the other? . . . If we want to 'explicate' the sentence . . . must we *decide* on one code or the other?"[126] Barthes's answer is that to decide upon one or the other code is "impertinent," that to be attentive to the "and/or" at play here involves recognizing the text's "plurality," "non-decidability," its "polysemic chain."[127] A critical bisexual hermeneutic must work through what Barthes calls the "praxis" of "non-decidability."[128] Just as the bisexual refuses the choice between heterosexuality and homosexuality, so too must a critical bisexual hermeneutic refuse the tyranny of the "either/or." San Filippo underscores how "it is precisely bisexuality's ontological, epistemological and representational polysemy that generates its subversive potential to lay bare the mutability, contingency and inherent transgressiveness of desire."[129] Such is the value of a critical bisexual positioning that, in order to illuminate bisexually polysemous possibilities, must transgress the rules of monosexual monosemy.[130]

A final way in which my approach to bisexuality and cinema will be guided is by an insistence in looking to bisexual figures and figurations. The figure has constituted a critical term for poststructuralist philosophers, like Jean-François Lyotard, for its potential to disturb the strict division between the symbol and that to which it refers, to describe that which is irreducible to signification.[131] The use of the figure for film studies involves, for Belén Vidal, a means for us to attend to "the elements of visual form which resist the culturally regulated exercise of decoding into the 'flat' space of reading, in favor of the 'mobility' . . . of the visual."[132] The figure allows for a circumvention of erroneous assumptions of one-to-one alignments between the cinematic and the extratextual, allowing, instead, for an approach that embraces polysemy, nondecidability, and mutability. My attraction toward the figure in accounting for cinematic bisexuality is rooted in its inherent suspicion toward the cinematic image as a direct representation of a referent in the world.[133] The figure's personified articulation should not, however, be conflated with notions of subjectivity. Conceptions of the bisexual subject often presume a comprehensive form of bisexual subjectivity in the world, yet the figure carries no such assumptions. What we find more regularly in film, I suggest, is how the invocation of a bisexual possibility, in fact, troubles notions of sexual subjectivity as it troubles the assumption of sexuality's intelligibility.

Bisexuality's resistance to dominant notions of sexual subjectivity has been a central concern in much bisexual theory.[134] If we understand subjectivity in the Althusserian sense as the means through which ideology hails subjects, bisexuality's preclusion herein is rooted in dominant ideology's refusal to recognize bisexuality as a possibility.[135] The invocation of bisexual possibility thus disturbs these terms' binary logic and undermines notions of sexual subjectivity. To speak of cinema's bisexual figures is therefore different from assertions of cinematic bisexual subjects: these figures deride the farce of sexual subjectivity, allowing room to discuss that which wreaks trouble herein.

To this end, one of the most useful philosophical articulations of the figure for my project comes from Donna Haraway, who describes figures as "material-semiotic nodes . . . in which diverse bodies and meanings coshape one another."[136] For Haraway, such figures are imbued with intense affective resonances rooted in their connection to story: "Figures collect up hopes and fears and show possibilities and dangers. Both imaginary and material, figures root peoples in stories and link them to histories."[137] This book embraces the potentials of such an entity, the bisexual figure, in whom the troubled relations between sexuality's social, political, historical, epistemological, and aesthetic dimensions can be encompassed.[138] Although Haraway uses the terms

figure and *figuration* synonymously, I use the former to stress a singular distillation of meanings around a particular filmic character and the latter to underscore the processual dynamics of meaning-making both within and beyond a particular cinematic figure.[139] Behind every figure—particular, compelling, singular—are processes of figuration.

Toward a Film Theory of Bisexual Transgression

The close, mutually constitutive relation between bisexuality and transgression on film is evident in the prevalence of filmic examples in which the limits of heterosexual-homosexual organization are contested in concert with other limits' contestation. In a similar vein to June Jordan and Maria San Filippo, bisexual theologian Ibrahim Abdurrahman Farajajé reminds us that "in cultures that prioritize either/or thinking . . . anything that occupies a liminal, an intersectional, an interstitial location is seen as a threat."[140] The relation Farajajé traces between interstitiality and threat brings to bear how the confounding of the either/or hermeneutic is structured as a transgression. Transgression involves a movement beyond an established limit, the violation of a standard, the contravention of a rule. In this sense, transgression is fundamentally defined by its relation to a structure of lawful containment, prohibition, or limited possibility. Transgression poses challenges to this structure's purported boundaries, but, simultaneously, transgression is limited by this relation insofar as it is dependent upon the rigidity of the structure to which it responds in order that it be enunciated. Jacques Lacan describes how "transgression in the direction of *jouissance* [the near-intolerable excess of enjoyment] only takes place if it is supported by the oppositional principle, by the forms of the Law."[141] Transgression is thus, crucially, dependent upon the Law, the rule, the limit, in its manifestation.

Against conceptions of transgression as involving the destruction of a rule or a limit, Michel Foucault adumbrates it as "a spiral which no simple infraction can exhaust."[142] With this helical metaphor, Foucault underscores the circular, relational dance between transgression and the rule. For Foucault, the operation of transgression is not the rule's obliteration but its illumination, described as "like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night it denies, which lights up the night from the inside, from top to bottom, and yet owes to the dark the stark clarity of its manifestation, its harrowing and poised singularity."[143] Transgression's taking-place illuminates the constitution and operations of rules themselves: by contesting the rule, the rule and its workings come into view. In

working toward a theory of bisexual transgression, we can thus understand this phenomenon as necessarily involving the exposure of monosexism's workings, the structuring principles of a monosexual norm. Foucault's ideas also help to clarify transgression's workings as interstitial, never simply oppositional, in ways that complement bisexuality's conceptual location beyond, between, or simultaneously within categories commonly understood to be incompatible. Bisexual transgression reveals an underacknowledged stratum of sexual organization while gesturing, simultaneously, to possibilities beyond its strictures.

Transgression's relation to the sexual or the erotic is, similarly, central to its use for considerations of bisexuality. Georges Bataille writes that "the history of eroticism is by no means that of sexual activity allowed within the limits defined by the rules: indeed eroticism only includes a domain marked off by *the violation of rules*."[144] Bataille's interrogations of eroticism's workings stress how erotic desire regularly involves the breaking of a rule, a norm, an expectation, that the thrill of the erotic cannot be separated from the thrill of sexuality's associations with the verboten or the taboo. In this sense, all forms of eroticism might be said to be inherently transgressive, yet what marks bisexuality's singularity here is the foundational erotic transgression by which it is constituted. Further, we can consider how the experience of erotic transgression has been conceptualized as a form of sexuality in which gendered object choice is deprioritized. Tim Dean, for example, states that "transgression involves an experience of sexuality in which the gender of the partner remains secondary, if not altogether irrelevant."[145] Where bisexuality is understood as the capacity for desire beyond a single-gendered object, this quality is discernible as a persistent feature of various forms of sexual transgression in which knowably gendered objects recede from the priorities of desire.

Discussions of bisexuality in relation to transgression have been met with some fervent critiques, again within British bisexual theoretical circles. For Hemmings, "presumptions of de facto bisexual transgression have [a] foreclosing . . . effect on the range of bisexual knowledges and ontological possibilities."[146] Later, she elaborates that "instead of celebrating dubious bisexual transgressions . . . I advocate an approach that insists that bisexuality's capacity to generate radical reconfigurations of [sexual] oppositions resides not outside but within social and cultural meaning."[147] Hemmings's critique of bisexual transgression is rooted in an understanding that attestations of bisexuality's transgression foreclose a multiplicity of possibilities regarding what bisexuality might be, that they present bisexuality in an uncritically celebratory fashion, and that they assume bisexuality to be outside spaces of society and culture. I contend, however, that Hemmings's remarks, at worst, misrepresent

what transgression is or, at best, use transgression to name something altogether different from what I am naming.[148] With the conception of transgression I have outlined, the identification of bisexuality's alignment with and enactment of transgression does not necessarily spell its capacity to be celebrated, its political or social radicalism, or its operation outside of society and culture. Foucault reminds us that a discussion of transgression "must be detached from its questionable association to ethics if we want to understand it. . . . It must be liberated from the scandalous or subversive, that is, from anything aroused by negative association."[149] In speaking of bisexual transgression, we therefore need not treat it as something we can expect, in Jonathan Dollimore's words, "miraculously to change the social order."[150] Instead, as Dollimore continues, if transgression involves any subversion, it is that of "the dangerous knowledge it brings with it, or produces, or which is produced in and by its containment in the cultural sphere."[151] Foucault's warnings and Dollimore's corrective allow for an articulation of bisexual transgression that is not simply an empty call for scandalous negativity as politics but, instead, an analytic through which we can trace how transgressive renderings of bisexual possibility illuminate certain rules structuring our sexual episteme. This is a process that takes place not from the outside this episteme but from within.

Although instances of bisexual transgression on film might align themselves with scandal, subversion, or negativity, the allure of these associations is something to which we can attend critically. Our approach will be limited, however, if it concerns itself only with the ethics of figurations of bisexual transgression. To do so in the context of film analysis is to replicate a model of engagement I have critiqued in which film is assumed to tell us the truth about that which it represents, thus dovetailing into axiology. This book necessarily encompasses both instances of bisexual transgression that might be pleasurably scandalous alongside those that might be deemed ethically reprehensible. Bisexual transgression is just as discernible in figures of pleasurable seduction—such as the suave Konrad (Michael York) of *Something for Everyone* (Harold Prince, 1970) and the sultry Ariane (Bulle Ogier) of *Maîtresse* (Barbet Schroeder, 1976)—as in disturbed serial killer figures, like Otis (Tom Towles) of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (John McNaughton, 1986) and Camille (Richard Courcet) of *I Can't Sleep* (Claire Denis, 1994). To discuss these examples as constitutive of a wider alignment between bisexuality and transgression on screen is not to posit their shared ethical dimensions, nor is it to posit that all representations of transgression operate in shared ways politically. Instead, these varying examples help us to trace the persistence of this alignment across remarkably disparate contexts where, in turn, they bring rules of sexual-social organization into clearer view.

That some of these examples might be pleasurable or productive of a subversive thrill and some might effect displeasure or forms of social consolidation suggests a diversity of representations to be analyzed, not eschewed. Further, to be attentive to transgression's workings is to acknowledge that textual representations of ethically dubious acts can often produce thrilling pleasures, from the stylish murders perpetrated by dapper film noir villains to the simulation of nonconsent in hardcore pornographic film. As Dean reminds us, a transgressive text's "risk does not need to be politically defensible in order to be experienced as exciting; indeed, the reverse may be true."[152] Images of bisexual transgression provide us not with a single relation between bisexuality and ethics but with a *singular* relation between bisexuality and transgression. My work involves neither celebrating nor disparaging these representations; it attests, instead, to the value in looking at their workings critically.

The Cinematic Figure of the Bisexual Transgressor

The bisexual transgressor is the figure around which this investigation pivots: the cinematic figurations to which they give form and, through which, they are given form. Outside of film studies, this figure has appeared throughout bisexual writing in various guises that provide productively interdisciplinary models through which to approach film. For psychologist Fritz Klein, "the bisexual resembles the spy in that he or she moves psychosexually freely among men and among women. The bisexual also resembles the traitor in that he or she is in a position to know the secrets of both camps, and to play one against the other. The bisexual, in short, is seen as a dangerous person, not to be trusted, because his or her party loyalty, so to speak, is nonexistent."[153] Klein's discussion of perceptions of bisexual people uses the figure of the spy or traitor in order to explore bisexuality's conception as being doubly aligned between spaces of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Similar associations can be traced in Hemmings's articulation of the "bisexual double agent," with her "often frightening and sinister knowledge of both the inside and the outside."[154] In the light of Klein's and Hemmings's figures, we might recall some of cinema's bisexual spies, from *The Last Emperor*'s (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1987) Eastern Jewel (Maggie Han) to *Atomic Blonde*'s (David Leitch, 2017) Lorraine (Charlize Theron). These cinematic characters' ability to inhere in disparate spaces are metaphorized in their ability to seduce across lines of gender. A similar figure proposed outside of film studies is legal scholar Naomi Mezey's "bisexual saboteur," whose "excess of the hetero/homo regime" renders the categories around them incoherent.[155] Here, we might think of a character like *The Doom*

Generation's (Gregg Araki, 1995) Xavier (Jonathon Schaech), whose intrusion into the lives of couple Amy (Rose McGowan) and Jordan (James Duval), and seduction of both, effects confusion regarding the characters' identities. Or perhaps we might look to *The Does* (Claude Chabrol, 1968), a film whose narrative is animated by an ambivalence regarding which of its two central female characters—Frédérique (Stéphane Audran) and Why (Jacqueline Sassard)—is manipulating the other. Both these figures' duplicities are figured through their bisexualities: Their relations to Paul (Jean-Louis Trintignant) and to one another are wracked by an uncertainty as to the sincerity of these attachments. *The Does*' very narrative intrigue is made meaningful through this difficulty in discerning the sincerity of Frédérique's and Why's bisexual relations. Again, a bisexual figure's transgressions effect epistemological confusion.

Yet, in transposing these evocative bisexual figures to film studies, we can delve deeper to consider how the anxieties, movements, and machinations of these figures come to be expressed in and through film form itself. The bisexual transgressor's battleground is sexual epistemology. In narrative cinema, this becomes the terrain of narrative comprehensibility, where sexual knowability circulates in a wider narrative economy determining that which is known, that which is unknown, and that which remains ambiguous. These epistemological issues are often rendered all the more precarious on film by the unreliability of the visual in ascertaining knowledge. Film's various forms of visuality carry with them anxieties around any form of mediation's capacity for dissimulation. From questions of the image's diegetic veracity to the more fundamental issues of what lies beyond the frame, or what lies out of focus, narrative film depends upon systems of knowing-through-seeing while, simultaneously, remaining haunted by the dissimulative potential of these very systems. The bisexual transgressor is also characterized by particular anxieties concerning questions of spatial alignment and temporal predictability, from questions of the camp to which they are aligned to curiosities around where they have been and where they might go. On film, these issues can be explored with attention to cinematic space's sexual significations, with figures' alignments to location and to mise-en-scène expressing and reflecting issues around sexual alignment. It is also a ripe medium for exploiting issues around sexual temporality. While classical approaches to cinematic temporality can, of course, naturalize linear modes of sexual becoming—from the heterosexual marriage plot to the linear coming-out journey—different approaches hold the potential for different renderings entirely, exploiting the endurance of the past and the unpredictability of the future in ways that challenge notions of sexual unidirectionality. A film theory of bisexual transgression requires attention to the inseparability of cinematic

FIGURE 1.5 Xavier (Jonathan Schaech) masturbates as he watches Amy (Rose McGowan) and Jordan (James Duval) sleep. *The Doom Generation* (Gregg Araki, 1995). Digital screen capture.

sexuality from film form as the very matter through which monosexual conventions and their bisexual contraventions are rendered knowable.

A final observation when attending to these cinematic figures of bisexual transgression involves these figures' illumination of the monosexual binary's incoherence in concert with a revelation of others binaries' incoherence. Maria San Filippo terms this phenomenon "bi-textuality," a cinematic mode that works to "formulate and convey . . . a metaphor between bisexuality and an analogous identity construct that also resists containment within a binary taxonomy. . . . Bi-textuality ultimately works, therefore, to expose the fallacy of ordering sexuality (or any identity construct) to simplistically and constrictively as binary systems do."[156] San Filippo outlines an array of filmic figures who operate through this bi-textual mode: the "bisexual-bohemian," whose wanderlust and hedonism precipitates her navigation of spaces of normativity and otherness; the "dreamgirls" and "dreamboys" who defamiliarize "the social-sexual subject's constructed self"; and the bisexual significations of the "rich bitch" and her "dependent double," in whom bisexuality is fashioned as "the primary weapon of the characters' dual (and dueling) economic and sexual showdown."[157] These figures, which I engage in later analyses, demonstrate how cinema's bisexual transgressors are regularly made meaningful through parallel transgressions, recalling Jo Eadie's insistence that the bisexual cinematic

figure serves as "an indicator that a cultural tension is being broached, whose contours the bisexual enables the audience to negotiate, and whose dangers the bisexual always embodies."[158] A critical bisexual theoretical approach need not lament this work of metaphor in the hopes of a purist illusion of unspoiled sexual-cinematic representation. Instead, attention to these bi-textual alignments allows for a broader account of cinematic sexuality's imbrication in, and reliance upon, a variety of discourses and systems of signification in which networks of transgression are mapped.

Cinemas of Bisexual Transgression proceeds via four chapters that look at respective cinematic contexts in which figures of bisexual transgression have circulated, with each chapter foregrounding one film for close analysis. Chapter 1 considers female vampires of 1970s European and North American exploitation cinema, figures who have commonly been referred to as "lesbian vampires" but who, I will argue, are better accounted for by my term *les(bi)an vampires*. While much ink has been spilled on these films and the seductive vampires they center, I propose an original way of approaching them that is attentive to bisexual meaning. With a key focus on José Ramón Larraz's *Vampyres* (1974), I perform close readings of the les(bi)an vampire's inventive sex acts, which often exploit the ungendered-wound-as-object-choice; her relation to glamorous femininity, whose intersections with discourses around female bisexuality have not been prioritized; and her racial-national ambiguity, which serves as a persistent bi-textual point of parallelism that brings to the fore relations between bisexuality, national identity, and race. Chapter 2 moves to a radically different cinematic locus—lesbian narrative cinema—where anxieties around female bisexuality have circulated in some ways that are unique but in other ways that are consistent with broader tendencies around bisexual transgression on film. I begin by establishing cultural and political lesbian histories between the 1970s and 1990s, tracing where female bisexuality has been articulated through a particular credo that I term *bi-exclusionary lesbian ethics*. Centering Sheila McLaughlin's *She Must Be Seeing Things* (1987), I analyze how the mise-en-scène deploys cinematic indices of a woman's desire toward men in ways that precipitate her lesbian partner's paranoia. The film's expressive rendering of this paranoia involves stirring manipulations of visual coherence and notions of diegetic reality, which work, within a specifically lesbian-feminist context, to raise questions around the relation between perspective and sexual intelligibility. Here, I trace a hitherto untheorized tendency in lesbian narrative cinema's deployment of the figure of the bisexual transgressor to effect an intracommunal critique of bi-exclusionary lesbian ethics.

Whereas the first two chapters consider female articulations of bisexual transgression, chapter 3 considers the figurations of transgressive male bisexuality to be found in European art cinema, with a particular focus on films emerging in the wake of HIV/AIDS. I first consider the amenability of art cinema to renderings of bisexual possibility, with its germane investments in polysemy, ambiguity, and nonlinearity. These qualities also emerged in wider discourses around male bisexuality in the first decades of HIV/AIDS, with persistent references to the bisexual man's dangerous unknowability. With an extensive reading of Cyril Collard's *Savage Nights* (1992), I consider these alliances between art film aesthetics and bisexuality and the significance of the film's presentation of male bisexual seropositivity. Central to this analysis are notions of bisexual tourism, which animate the movements of the film's protagonist; expressions of bisexual relationalities through film form, which art cinema has deployed inventively against formal conventions that naturalize monosexual monogamy; and a bisexual ethics of ambiguity that characterizes *Savage Nights*' embrace of bisexual transgression as a form of relation amid social fragmentation.

In chapter 4, we arrive at what is perhaps the most renowned example of bisexual transgression in cinema: Paul Verhoeven's *Basic Instinct* (1992). I situate this hotly debated film in the context of the erotic thriller genre, in which I locate a transgressive bisexual erotics. I proceed with an assessment of Sharon Stone's star image, particularly insofar as it has been informed by the emergence of the postfeminist sensibility and notions of bisexual marketability. Rather than simply reading these phenomena as symptoms of bisexual female depoliticization, however, I consider their historical emergence in relation to political economy, with a focus on nineties financialization and its risky investment in normative forms of homosexuality. Through this history, I examine the erotic thriller's depictions of bisexual elites and embezzlers as symptomatic of anxieties around investment in pink economies. These anxieties among others, I argue, are crystallized in the figure of the bisexual murderer, whom I analyze in relation to the erotic thriller's narratives of ratiocination and how murderousness and queerness dovetail in these dramas of (in)visible evidence. Here I also trace pertinent parallels with transfeminine figures stalking the erotic thriller to anatomize the sexual, corporeal, and visual forms of unintelligibility that render these figures both dangerous and alluring while also pointing to fruitful nexuses between bisexual and transgender media theories. The afterword begins with a figure who perhaps serves as a limit case in cinemas of bisexual transgression: the rapist in the shadows of Gaspar Noé's *Irreversible*

(2002). With this figure, I return us to the foundations of my nonaxiological approach to transgressive bisexuality on film to consider what we are afforded when we depart from this interpretive mode. I also offer some reflections on future directions of research into cinemas of bisexual transgression, ending with a meditation on the capacity of these cinemas, and a bisexual theoretical approach to them, to radically recalibrate queer film studies.

Cinemas of Bisexual Transgression looks to figures of transgressive bisexual possibility as critical sites of interplay between sexuality, cinematic signification, and rules of social organization. Such a focus works to foreground both sexual-cinematic phenomena and approaches to sexual epistemology, which embrace partiality and proteanism—qualities with which bisexuality has been aligned historically. Correspondingly, this focus works to destabilize assumptions of wholeness and situatedness in relation to both sexual-cinematic signification and sexual epistemology in ways that expand a queer theoretical sensibility and reaffirm its foundational embrace of that which exceeds sexuality's dominant ideological categorizations. The critical approach I deploy toward images of bisexual transgression on film is attentive to bisexuality's functions on film, not as a means through which ideas of bisexual subjectivity might be consolidated but, instead, as sexual and significatory transgressions constituted by and begetting further transgressions. To read the bisexual transgressor closely in the contexts of aesthetics, epistemology, and historiography is to expand the plane of queer inquiries into film. This focus necessarily looks beyond cinema's ritualistic reassertions of heteronormativity, as it looks beyond oppositional, implicitly homosexual, cinematic figures of queer alterity. It looks, instead, toward the richly interstitial ground of bisexual transgression, where bisexuality operates along the lines first observed by Däumer as "a sign of transgression, ambiguity and mutability."[159] Attention to cinematic figurations of bisexual transgression exposes the precarities and anxieties of sexuality's binary organization as it illuminates cinema's potential to embrace sexuality's mutability, fragmentedness, and draw toward the forbidden.

Notes

PREFACE

1 Angelides, *A History of Bisexuality*, 173.
2 Ahmed, *What's the Use?*, 4.
3 Angelides, *A History of Bisexuality*, 15 (emphasis removed).
4 Janssen, "Monosexual/Plurisexual." I am indebted to this article for enlightening me on the work of Ulrichs, Gley, Tarnowsky, Moll, Eulenburg, Raffalovich, and Saint-Paul, which I detail in the following sentences.
5 In his formulation, this was *Uranodionäismus* and *Uranodioning* for men and *Uranodioningin* for women. Ulrichs, *Formatrix*, xxii–xxiii; Ulrichs, *Vindicta*, 37.
6 Gley, "Les Aberrations de l'instinct sexuel," 70 (my translation).
7 Tarnowsky, *Die krankhaften Erscheinungen des Geschlectssinnes*, 38–49, quoted in and translated by Janssen, "Monosexual/Plurisexual," 7.
8 Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 447–48 (my translation); Moll, *Die konträre Sexualempfindung*, 14; Eulenburg, "Neuropathia sexualis virorum," 68, quoted in and translated by Janssen, "Monosexual/Plurisexual," 6.
9 Raffalovich, "Inversion sexuelle congénitale," 122; Saint-Paul, *Tares et poisons*, 27 (my translation).
10 Freud, "Three Essays," 169 et seq., 122; Freud, "Letter 52," 265.
11 Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 638; F. Klein, *The Bisexual Option*, 19.
12 See Payne, "Some Freudian Contributions," 93n5; Ferenczi, "Über die Rolle der Homosexualität," 144; Nass et al., *Sexual Choices*, 159.
13 Peraldi, "Polysexuality."
14 Lacquer, *Making Sex*; Repo, *The Biopolitics of Gender*. With my historical account of *gender*, I am discussing it linguistically; obviously, gender's operations preceded the popularization of it as a term.
15 These rearticulations are observable in one of the draft manifestos from the first Politics of Bisexuality Conference in London (1984) (*Bi-Monthly*, "Bisexual Manifesto," 6), the statement of purpose of the Bay Area Bisexual Network's magazine *Anything That Moves* (n.p.) from their third issue onward, and in Julia Serano's

history of alliances between bisexual and transgender activism during the 1990s (*Excluded*, 94).

16 Here I am in alignment with Judith Butler's account of the suggestion that *sex* is "always already gender . . . the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all" (*Gender Trouble*, 10–11).

17 Villarejo, *Lesbian Rule*, 11.

INTRODUCTION

1 Andreas-Salomé, "'Anal' and 'Sexual,'" 28. Here, I am drawing on S. Pearl Brilmyer and Filippo Trentin's reading of Andreas-Salomé, in which they propose that it is "a fundamental corporeal sameness that must be erased in order for the regime of sexual difference to be established" ("Introduction," 14).

2 From one angle, seventeen genderless asses are discernible, but from another, only fourteen can be discerned.

3 This arrangement also recalls Guy Hocquenghem's assertion that the anus "does not practice sexual discrimination" (*Homosexual Desire*, 101).

4 I borrow the term *primary identification* from Christian Metz, who, drawing on Jean-Louis Baudry's articulation of the first level of identification, posits it as identification with the camera as an "all-seeing and invisible subject." Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, 97; Baudry, "Ideological Effects," 45.

5 Although Italian fascism was expressly homophobic, Barbara Spackman's analysis of Italian fascist writing demonstrates how sexual contact between men in the context of "nationalistic ardor" could be rendered permissible. One of fascist propagandist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's speeches, cited by Spackman, proffers the purported period of homosexuality of men in their twenties as a "highly respectable taste" developed "out of a sort of intensification of camaraderie and friendship in athletic sports." Marinetti differentiates this kind of queerness from the "born invert, the false man, [and] the half-woman." It would seem, therefore, that there is some national-historical precedent for the permissibility of certain forms of queer sexuality under the auspices of fascist power. Spackman, *Fascist Virilities*, 15; Marinetti, "Discorso futurista agli inglesi," 283, quoted in and translated by Spackman, *Fascist Virilities*, 16.

6 San Filippo, *The B Word*, 17–18, 22.

7 The particularities of these works' sexual politics obviously precede the late nineteenth-century consolidation of sexual categorization, including bisexuality, with the context of libertinage and the juridico-religious notions of sodomy being of particular relevance. Nevertheless, they endure as texts attesting to the equally troubling and alluring transgressions of sexual unboundedness, with their particular emphasis on boundary crossings between differently gendered objects.

8 Sade, *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, 14 (my translation).

9 See de Beauvois, "First Memoir of Observations," 211.

10 See Carter, "On a Bisexual Nematoid Worm."

11 Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 207–8.

12 Haeckel, *Anthropogenie* , 5, quoted in and translated by Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, 78.

13 Although systems of sexual governmentality in the West have varied tremendously across space and time, Erwin J. Haeberle makes the precise distinction that, prior to the eighteenth century, humans' "ambierotic potential was not doubted." These doubts, he writes, emerged with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' "bourgeoisification and scientification of life." Haeberle, "Bisexualitäten," 1 (my translation).

14 For greater detail on the developments of Freud's thinking on bisexuality, see Rapoport, *From Psychoanalytic Bisexuality*.

15 Fliess, *Der Ablauf des Lebens*, 437 (my translation).

16 Freud, "Three Essays," 127.

17 Freud, "Three Essays," 127.

18 Freud, "Three Essays," 177, 205.

19 See Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams"; Freud, "Special Type of Choice." I am grateful to Mandy Merck for the suggestion of these two Freud papers in accounting for the differences between cultural understandings of male and female bisexuality.

20 Freud, "Some Psychical Consequences," 250–56. In a corrective to his earlier assertions that boys' and girls' experiences of the Oedipus complex were analogous, Freud proposes that while boys' Oedipus complexes are "smashed to pieces by the shock of threatened castration," girls' Oedipus complexes involve the rejection of clitoral masturbation, the embrace of the father as "love-object," the replacement of the wish for a penis with the wish for a child, and a concomitant embrace of femininity. Whereas the girl's Oedipus complex necessitates a journey from female love object (the mother) to male love object (the father), the boy's is obliged to stay fixed. Freud also concedes that "a number of women remain arrested in their original attachment to their mother and never achieve a true changeover towards men" ("Female Sexuality," 216).

21 Freud, "Female Sexuality," 217. Freud also concedes that many boys experience a double orientation during the Oedipus complex, involving the desire to take their mothers' places as the love objects of the fathers ("Some Psychical Consequences," 251).

22 Ideas of a universal bisexual disposition were shared by other writers in the early twentieth century. Philosopher Otto Weininger proposes that "from the outset all are *bisexual*, that is, capable of sexual intercourse with both men and women" (*Sex and Character*, 43). Freud's student Wilhelm Stekel was even more emphatic, declaring that "there are no monosexual persons! . . . All persons are bisexual. But persons . . . are compelled by particular circumstances and consequently act as if they were monosexual" (*Bisexual Love*, 27 [emphasis removed]).

23 J. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 69.

24 These ideas would be influential for later sexological and psychological thinkers, including Alfred C. Kinsey, Li Shiu Tong, and Fritz Klein, whose work attests to bisexuality's enduring prevalence (Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*;

Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*; F. Klein, *The Bisexual Option*). Laurie Marhoefer's reading of Li Shiu Tong's archive (ca. 1980s) finds "an important and clear argument for bisexuality, for sexual fluidity, and against innate sexual identity" (*Racism and the Making of Gay Rights*, 189–90).

25 Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, 88; D. E. Hall, "Graphic Sexuality," 103.

26 Donaldson, "The Bisexual Movement's Beginnings," 34; Raymond and Highleyman, "Appendix A," 333.

27 *Newsweek*, "Bisexual Chic," 90.

28 Money et al., "Playboy Panel," 88.

29 *Newsweek*, July 17, 1995.

30 Eisner, *Bi*, 209. See also Feldman, "Reclaiming Sexual Difference."

31 Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 28.

32 Eisner, *Bi*, 143.

33 See Johnson and Grove, "Why Us?"

34 The only exception to this rule would seem to be homosocial phenomena like horseplay or hazing, in which intragender eroticism is nullified as unserious play.

35 Bergler, *Homosexuality*, 89.

36 For Freund, *bisexuality proper* is defined as "when there is virtually no difference between erotic responses to the body shapes of females and males" ("Male Homosexuality," 26, 39). Tom Waidzunas and Steven Epstein identify the scientific epistemology Freund deploys as one of "bodily truthing," in which physiological responses in laboratory settings are deemed indicative of the supposed truth of sexuality ("'For Men Arousal Is Orientation'"). Clearly, these observations also instantiate Michel Foucault's arguments around *scientia sexualis* (*The History of Sexuality*, 51–74).

37 Bailey's most well-known study is Rieger et al., "Sexual Arousal Patterns of Bisexual Men."

38 Bailey, *Man Who Would Be Queen*, 95–96. Ironically, Bailey later joined forces with the American Institute of Bisexuality to declare the existence of male bisexual attraction via penile plethysmography. These studies include Rosenthal et al., "Sexual Arousal Patterns of Bisexual Men Revisited"; Jabbour et al., "Robust Evidence for Bisexual Orientation." For critical discussion of these supposedly affirmative studies, see Eisner, *Bi*, 214–19; Engelberg et al., "Futile Search for 'Physiological Evidence.'"

39 I am thinking in particular of Helen Joyce's antitransgender book *Trans: When Ideology Meets Reality*.

40 Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 59–60, §21.68–70.

41 Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 59–82, §21.68–96.

42 Among the most compelling reformulations to this effect comes from McKenzie Wark, who first proposes bisexuality as "something that stands at the limit of the binary logic of an identity that can only exist negatively." Second, she proposes something beyond a monosexual-bisexual spectrum that she terms "an open vector . . . any possible relation that does not depend for its existence on the terms it relates in mirror opposition to each other, but which could head for the unknown, the unnamed." Wark's former formulation speaks to the potential for something intelligibly bisexual to disrupt the heterosexual-homosexual binary's logic; her

second formulation looks toward spaces of unintelligibility as a vector toward which our thinking on sexuality might be drawn. Wark, "Bisexual Mediations," 69.

43 De Lauretis, "Queer Theory," v; Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 7.

44 Halperin, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Bisexual," 454. These assumptions of a gay positioning in queer theory are also observed by bisexual theorist Jo Eadie, who, quoting Jonathan Dollimore's description of Western metaphysics, critiques the formulation of a "narrow queerness . . . precisely a 'regime of essential and absolute truth' with its own 'normative and prescriptive teleology' . . . that of exclusive and absolute homosexuality." Eadie, "Queer," 246, quoting Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, 116.

45 Edelman, *Homographesis*, xvi, 250n8.

46 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Bi," QSTUDY-L mailing list, August 17, 1994, https://mailman.rice.edu/mailman/private/qstudy-l/1994-August/01424, archived August 19, 2022, at https://perma.cc/A6L7-VAPW.

47 Angelides, *A History of Bisexuality*, 194.

48 Angelides, *A History of Bisexuality*, 194–95.

49 Däumer, "Queer Ethics," 98.

50 Däumer, "Queer Ethics," 97–98.

51 Däumer, "Queer Ethics," 98.

52 Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces*, 43; cf. James, "Denying Complexity."

53 Hemmings, "Bisexual Theoretical Perspectives," 27.

54 Pramaggiore, "BI-ntroduction I," 3.

55 For more on these processes of repudiation, see Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces*, 25.

56 Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, 133.

57 J. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 73 et seq.; Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 10.

58 Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, 132.

59 Eisner, "Monosexism," 792.

60 Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces*, 29.

61 Hemmings, "From Landmarks to Spaces," 151.

62 Potentially useful here are various concepts in Black feminist theory that map the ways in which systems of oppression operate interdependently. See Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement."

63 Hemmings, "From Landmarks to Spaces," 151.

64 Yoshino, "Epistemic Contract of Bisexual Erasure."

65 Hemmings, "From Landmarks to Spaces," 476n33.

66 Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces*, 28.

67 Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces*, 29. Another notable critique of the term comes from Merl Storr, who suggests that bisexual politics "reflect seriously on the implication of 'monosexual' and 'bisexual,' and that explicit attention must be paid to the racial heritage of both of those terms, before any such use is attempted" ("The Sexual Reproduction of 'Race,'" 85). I discuss the import of racist, colonialist epistemologies of race onto bisexuality in chapter 1. For now, suffice it to say that I am unconvinced that the racist contexts of these terms' developments preclude their use; indeed, one aspect of these terms' usefulness is precisely their illumination of the discursive alignment of monosexuality with civilization and bisexuality with "primitivity."

68 See Peyghambarzadeh, "Untellable Bisexual Asylum Stories." For a recent summary of social-scientific investigations into disparities between bisexuals and other sexuality groups, see Monro, *Bisexuality*, 52–54.

69 See also Angelos Bollas's assertion of monosexuality's theoretical utility, especially in relation to sociodicy ("Hegemonic Monosexuality").

70 Another figure central to the history of film studies who considers humans' bisexual potential is Jean Epstein, who wrote about sexuality (not in relation to film) under the pseudonym Alfred Kléber. Epstein posits that every organism "seems capable of continuing its development either in the heterosexual direction, or in the homosexual direction, and perhaps in both directions at the same time. . . . In certain cases, sexuality succeeds in pursuing an ambivalent evolution along the two paths on which it is engaged" ("Ganymède," 42 [my translation]).

71 Bershtein, "Eisenstein's Letter to Magnus Hirschfeld," 77.

72 Quoted and translated in Bershtein, "Eisenstein's Letter to Magnus Hirschfeld," 80.

73 Bershtein, "Eisenstein's Letter to Magnus Hirschfeld," 79.

74 Eisenstein, "'Shift' to the Biological Level," 21.

75 Firestone envisages "a reversion to an unobstructed *pansexuality*" and the supersession of "Freud's 'polymorphous perversity'"; Mieli envisages the unlearning of "educastration," the teaching that all are either heterosexual or homosexual (Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, 11; Mieli, *Towards a Gay Communism*, 5). I am grateful to Mandy Merck for her suggestion of the parallels between Eisenstein's and Firestone's uses of bisexuality. I develop Mieli's ideas further in my critique of responses to *Call Me by Your Name* (2017), "Call Me Bi Any Other Name."

76 Quoted in Ivanov, *Ocherki po istorii semiotiki v SSSR*, 113–14, quoted and translated in Salazkina, *In Excess*, 126.

77 This aspect of sexuality served, for Eisenstein, a primary means of mobilizing dialectics: "Bisexual conflict, *le plus saillant* [the most prominent] in a subject becomes . . . the main mechanism for the realization of a [dialectical] phenomenon." *Metod*, 495, quoted and translated in Salazkina, *In Excess*, 129.

78 Eisenstein, "'Shift' to the Biological Level," 17. For N. M. Lary, Eisenstein's reading of *L'Âge de Juliette* underscores these characters' having "rediscovered the bisexuality of our ontogenetic being" ("Eisenstein and Shakespeare," 141). The term *ontogenesis* is key here, as it situates a conception of sexuality as a process of becoming, a horizon of possibility. That this changing of clothes might indicate or agitate such a process speaks to Eisenstein's contention that the artistic representation of sexual mutability reminds us of both gender's and desire's plasticity. This phenomenon is observable in disparate moments across film history. From early cinema's cross-dressing/gender-shifting drama *A Florida Enchantment* (Sidney Drew, 1914), to Marlene Dietrich's renowned stage act in *Morocco* (Josef von Sternberg, 1930), to François Ozon's subversive short *A Summer Dress* (1996), a transgression of gender occurs in tandem with a transgression of monosexuality. The mutability of gender and sexuality come into view at once.

79 Eisenstein, *Diary*, 139, quoted and translated in Bulgakowa, "Sergei Eisenstein's System Thinking," 93.

80 I am thinking in particular of, first, Cáel M. Keegan's discussion of the trans media object as that which "cultivate[s] trans consciousness by offering an aesthetic space in which the subject might feel a way forward through the closed phenomenological horizon of binary gender." In the space of bisexual film and media studies, I am thinking of Maria San Filippo's discussion of "missed moments" in which bisexual meaning accrues. Keegan, "Revisitation," 27; San Filippo, *The B Word*, 15.

81 Mulvey, "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,'" 13.

82 Steinbock, "Towards Trans Cinema." Cf. Teresa de Lauretis's positioning of the female spectator "between the look of the camera and the image on the screen" as "double identification" (*Alice Doesn't*, 69, 143–44).

83 Laplanche and Pontalis, "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality," 17.

84 Cowie, "Fantasia," 87.

85 Cowie, "Elizabeth Cowie," 129 et seq.; Bergstrom, "Enunciation and Sexual Difference," 58; Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws*, 215–16; Hansen, "Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification," 13; Modleski, *Women Who Knew Too Much*, 5; Morse, "Margaret Morse," 246; Studlar, *In the Realm of Pleasure*, 32–35; L. Williams, *Hard Core*, 206; L. Williams, "Film Bodies," 8.

86 Cowie, "Elizabeth Cowie," 131.

87 Bazin, "Marginal Notes on Eroticism," 174.

88 Stacey, "Desperately Seeking Difference," 61.

89 Pramaggiore, "Straddling the Screen," 282.

90 San Filippo, *The B Word*, 18.

91 For a fuller account of the deployments of bisexuality in theoretical writing on spectatorship, and suggestions as to its development specifically in relation to pornographic spectatorship, see my article "Bisexual and Transgender Potentialities."

92 Udis-Kessler, "Identity/Politics."

93 ACT UP New York, "NBC Protest." Jack Bradigan Spula, from the Rochester Bisexual Men's Network, penned a critique of the *Midnight Caller* episode in "'Midnight Caller' Episode."

94 *New Line Presentations*, n.p., 1975, box 1, Robert Shaye–New Line Cinema Papers 1958–2008 (inclusive), University of Michigan Special Collections Library.

95 As cited in Herbert, *Maverick Movies*, 40.

96 *New Line Presentations*, n.p.

97 Russo, *The Celluloid Closet*, 249.

98 Borah, "Media Effects Theory."

99 S. Hall, "The Work of Representation"; Dyer, *The Matter of Images*.

100 Bryant, *Bisexual Characters in Film*; Bryant, "Stereotyping Bisexual Men in Film"; Bryant, "Is That Me up There?"; Vicari, *Male Bisexuality in Current Cinema*; J. D. White, "Bisexuals Who Kill"; Martinez, "11 Bisexual Tropes"; Rude, "9 Bisexual TV and Film Characters"; TV Tropes, "Depraved Bisexual." See also Brown et al., "Crimes of Duplicity."

101 I should note, however, that not all bisexual writing that discusses tropes and stereotypes necessarily leads to media-effects-informed conclusions. These concepts

are discussed by B. C. Roberts and Maria San Filippo, for instance, in ways that attend to questions of plot, narrative, and genre. Roberts, "Neither Fish nor Fowl"; San Fillipo, *The B Word*.

102 B. C. Roberts critiques this tendency, whereby "bi critics inadvertently attribute to [film images] a truth-value that belongs as much to the properties of the medium as to the content of the film" ("Muddy Waters," 334).

103 Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 278–79. Spivak is drawing on Karl Marx's use of these terms in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

104 Keeling, *The Witch's Flight*, 41; Chow, "A Phantom Discipline."

105 Eisner, *Bi*, 42.

106 *Respectability politics* is a term coined by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham to describe strategies of assimilation and reform in Black American politics (*Righteous Discontent*, 187). It has since enjoyed use beyond this context.

107 Eadie, "'That's Why She Is Bisexual,'" 143.

108 Keegan, "On the Necessity of Bad Trans Objects," 36.

109 Keegan is drawing upon Eliza Steinbock's equally expository work that interrogates the problematic of visual representations of transness being most intelligible "when set against an ambient background consisting of gender normative conditions." Steinbock, "Wavering Line of Foreground and Background," 171.

110 Keegan, "On the Necessity of Bad Trans Objects," 29.

111 For the discussion of *Tootsie*, see Keegan, "On the Necessity of Bad Trans Objects," 29–31; for the discussion of *The Silence of the Lambs*, see Keegan, "In Praise of the Bad Transgender Object."

112 For more on sites of solidarity between bisexuality and transness, see Nagle, "Framing Radical Bisexuality"; du Plessis, "Blatantly Bisexual"; Prosser and Storr, "Part III"; Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces*, 99–144; Meyer, "Looking Toward the InterSEXions"; Serano, *Excluded*, 81–98.

113 The following sentences paraphrase arguments from Eisner, *Bi*, 239–45.

114 D. E. Hall, "BI-ntroduction II," 9.

115 Ochs, "Why We Need to 'Get Bi,'" 172.

116 Pramaggiore, "Straddling the Screen," 276.

117 San Filippo, "The Politics of Fluidity," 71.

118 Here, I am thinking in particular of the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and his insistence that "the sign must be studied as a social phenomenon" (*Course in General Linguistics*, 16§34).

119 Needham, *Brokeback Mountain*, 47.

120 San Filippo, *The B Word*, 168, 176.

121 This practice is characteristic of what Martin Heidegger terms "hermeneutic violence," explicated by John D. Caputo as "pushing back against the pressure of received readings . . . desedimentation, stirring up the sedimented forms a tradition has taken." Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 298, §311; Caputo, *Hermeneutics*, 54.

122 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 280; Gadamer, *Warheit und Methode*, 252. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall's translation is "being pulled up short," but I am grateful to Sarah Liewehr and Alasdair Cameron for their suggestions, which I have also used.

123 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 280.
124 Jordan, "A New Politics of Sexuality," 13.
125 Barthes, *S/Z*, 77. Here, I am inspired by Cynthia Weber's use of Barthes's logoi to discuss sexual epistemology in *Queer International Relations*.
126 Barthes, *S/Z*, 77.
127 Barthes, *S/Z*, 77.
128 Barthes, *S/Z*, 77 (emphasis removed). See also Jo Eadie's bisexual reading of Barthes's articulation of connotation (also in *S/Z*) ("Indigestion," 78–80).
129 San Filippo, "The Politics of Fluidity," 78.
130 Alexander Doty stipulates a critical approach to film bisexuality as involving a resistance to "thinking monosexually"; Maria San Filippo, in a similar vein, encourages the film analyst to be attentive to the "missed moments" in which bisexual meaning accumulates. My articulation of a bisexual hermeneutic expands upon these approaches, but with a particular focus on the centrality of interpretation—and its being frustrated—for bisexual meaning-making. Doty, *Flaming Classics*, 136; San Filippo, *The B Word*, 15.
131 Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, 7. For Lyotard's discussion of film, see 268–76.
132 Vidal, *Figuring the Past*, 39, 41–42.
133 This approach to filmic figures echoes that of Jacques Aumont, for whom the figure traces the operations of tropes, metaphors, metonymies, and synecdoches on film. Aumont, *The Image*, 191–92.
134 "Conceptually," Michael du Plessis writes, "the bisexual can then only be an anti-subject" ("Blatantly Bisexual," 35). Further, bisexuality's embrace of the mutability of desire challenges any notions of sexual identity as stable, even in bisexuality itself. As Judith Butler reminds us, "The very meaning and lived experience of bisexuality can also shift through time" (*Undoing Gender*, 80).
135 See Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, 119.
136 Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 4.
137 Haraway, "Introduction," 1. Kathrin Thiele stresses how Haraway's figures "make us aware of a concrete problem; they are material-semiotic creatures that help us sense the world . . . differently" ("Figuration and/as Critique," 231).
138 These expansive dimensions of the cinematic figure speak to Luc Vancheri's assertion that "cinematic figuration is born truly when bodies set out in search of escaping their characters' fiction, when their figurative reality ceases to be their only filmic reality" (*Les Pensées figurales de l'image*, 16 [my translation]).
139 Haraway, personal communication, June 23, 2022.
140 Farajajé, "Fictions of Purity," 147.
141 Lacan, "The Paradox of *Jouissance*," 177.
142 Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," 35.
143 Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," 35.
144 Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, 124. Marjorie Garber echoes Bataille's words half a century later, in the context of bisexual cultural criticism, with her postulation that "eroticism and desire are always to some degree transgressive" (*Vice Versa*, 31).
145 Dean, "The Erotics of Transgression," 68.
146 Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces*, 6.

147 Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces*, 197.
148 See also Sharon Morris and Merl Storr's critique of bisexual transgression "Bisexual Theory," 2.
149 Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," 35.
150 Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, 121. Elsewhere, Dollimore warns against conceptualizing bisexual transgression as that which can change the social order. Dollimore, "Bisexuality, Heterosexuality, and Wishful Theory," 526–27.
151 Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, 121.
152 Dean, "The Erotics of Transgression," 78.
153 F. Klein, *The Bisexual Option*, 7.
154 Hemmings, "Resituating the Bisexual Body," 130.
155 Mezey, "Response," 1102.
156 San Filippo, *The B Word*, 41.
157 San Filippo, *The B Word*, 53, 42, 96.
158 Eadie, "'That's Why She Is Bisexual,'" 142.
159 Däumer, "Queer Ethics," 103.

1. THE LES(BI)AN VAMPIRE'S CARNAL STAKES

1 San Filippo, *The B Word*, 118; Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," 3–9.
2 Hemmings, "Resituating the Bisexual Body," 129.
3 Weinstock, *The Vampire Film*, 21.
4 Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 162–63.
5 See Rigby, "'Prey to Some Cureless Disquiet.'"
6 Mariam Wassif calls *The Vampyre*'s Ruthven "a portrait of Byron's portraits," a reflection of fantastical cultural depictions of Byron ("Polidori's *The Vampyre*," 53). We might also consider the connection between Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde insofar as it relates to the novel *Dracula*. See Schaffer, "'A Wilde Desire Took Me.'"
7 There are some examples of more minor male vampire characters presented through codes of queerness: for instance, the dandyish vampire Herbert (Iain Quarrier) of the British bawdy horror film *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (Roman Polanski, 1967) and Vampire Roman (Vladimír Marek) of the Czech fantasy-horror film *The Vampire Wedding* (Jaroslav Soukup, 1993), who is presented through codes of male drag.
8 Hanson, "Lesbians Who Bite," 184.
9 A. Weiss, "The Lesbian Vampire Film," 22.
10 In this sense, I agree with Nicole Richter that "in the case of vampire theory, a bisexual perspective is better suited to account for the fluid, polymorphous desire that is central to the genre" ("Bisexual Erasure," 279). On this point, we are in agreement, but I am less convinced of the utility of notions of bisexual erasure and appropriation without representation, of which this article makes use, to guide bisexual approaches to vampire film. Maria San Filippo also critiques how these vampires have been "staked off . . . as lesbian" in a way that forgets their "unmistakable sexual significations" ("(Re)Constructing Bisexual Space," 143).