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In this paper, I first survey the ways in which bisexuality was understood by late 19th-century sexologists, by Freud and his followers, by Alfred Kinsey, and by contemporary social scientists and political activists. Then the three domains distinguished by Freud in which bisexuality is currently being examined are surveyed: biological bisexuality, psychological bisexuality (in terms of gender), and kinds of object choice. Particular areas of research that indicate how questions about bisexuality are currently being considered are mapped, for example, transsexualism. The final part of the paper is an inquiry into the ways in which objects are bisexual, a domain that has been neglected in the complex history of work on bisexuality.

Part I: Posing The Question

Even to pose the question in my title, I had to put “by nature” in postmodern quotation marks, signaling thereby that we all understand how very modernist, how very essentialist—thus outmoded and unhip—it is to speak of human nature. But the main problem with my question is that the word bisexual is in the process of changing meaning, as it has done many times since its invention at the turn of the last century.

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I could skirt these problems by defining bisexuality pragmatically, say as that condition which allows you to double your chances for a date on Saturday night (as Woody Allen once quipped). But even this delightful claim, with the windfall of pleasure it conjures up, is contestable because recently “biphobia,” fear of people who are bisexual, has been added to the list of prejudices; so, pragmatically, bisexuality is a condition that might get you a rock thrown your way on Saturday night. Prejudice like this is a uniquely intrahuman phenomenon. Members of the fish species that are able to mate as males releasing sperm one day and then, the next day, as females releasing ova are not punished for their versatility. No one even bothers to call these creatures pathological.

With just this brief acknowledgment that my title question is complicated, I am going to work along with it slowly, exploring its complexity, and also using it to travel into a very large arena. I hope to show that we human beings are at a fascinating historical juncture in which we are struggling to appreciate the complexity and variability of our human sexuality and to overcome another kind of prejudice, which has been with us for more than a millennium: “erotophobia,” fear of the erotic, fear of sexuality. From every disciplinary direction and in all kinds of cultural venues, people are realizing how often in the last century the complexity and variability of human sexuality were scientifically grasped and then promptly denied. Now the categories in which human sexuality has been scientifically circumscribed are breaking up. We are in a category shift. I suggest that “bisexuality” has been the category shifter, the category that never quite fit with any of the general categorical schemes for thinking about sexuality. Further, “bisexual” itself is being transformed in the transformation. I think it is turning into something like “multisexual,” a term I suggest because it can evoke another

neologism, "multicultural," a possibility, a virtue we hope for in the global millennium. Already there are among us many celebrators of multisexualism and multisexual diversity.

To begin picturing this new appreciation of the complexity and variability of human sexuality, and to prepare the way for turning at the end of this paper to some clinical studies showing the front on which I think this new appreciation currently needs particular fostering, I shall start off with four flashbacks into

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the history of scientific thought about bisexuality in the last 100 years. I shall put the question, "Are human beings by nature bisexual?" to four different vintages and kinds of experts

The Fin de Siècle Sexologists

Let's pretend it is 1900 and we have before us a distinguished panel of sexologists—a new type of scientist, some with backgrounds in biology and medicine, some from psychiatry. All have taken seriously Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, and all have studied the pioneering work within their own emergent specialty, Richard von Krafft-Ebing's (1886) *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Not all the men (there are no women in this new field) on our panel would agree with Krafft-Ebing's key causal idea that hereditary degeneration rather than environmental influences like childhood seduction cause sexual pathologies. But, whether congenitalists or environmentalists¹—as the advocates of nature and nurture were then called—the sexologists would reply to our question in chorus: "Yes, all human beings are by nature bisexual, as you can see by the evidence that the invertebrates and many lower vertebrates are bisexual (and sometimes reproductively hermaphroditic like some flatworms and fishes) and by the universally accepted knowledge that human embryos differentiate sexually only after the 12th week of their gestation."

All our informants would then go on to describe various forms of anatomical hermaphroditism in human beings as reversions to the ancestral bisexual type (see Sulloway, 1976, pp. 292-294). Krafft-Ebing (1886) himself had contributed the idea to sexology that same-sex sexual desire or homosexuality is "psychical hermaphroditism," a disturbance in the psychical sphere completely analogous to reversion in the anatomical sphere² Like the whole first generation of sexologists, and like his

¹ The nature vs. nurture debate has a long history and has been known by many names. In the 18th century, there were preformationists and epigeneticists.

² Late in his life, Krafft-Ebing conceded to the growing influence of environmentalists and gave up his conviction that it is only hereditary degeneration that brings about reversions to the bisexual past, and is, thus, at the root of homosexuality.

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younger colleague at the University of Vienna, Sigmund Freud, Krafft-Ebing considered the universal condition of bisexuality to stand revealed in all people who are not what they called monosexual—a term for which slightly later theorists would use the neologism heterosexual. Among the turn-of-the-century sexologists, homosexuality meant bisexuality, and heterosexuality was monosexuality. And all fully developed or evolved people were heterosexual/monosexual.

The shared conviction of the Darwinian sexologists was that in their bisexuality human beings start out like the lower vertebrates and the other mammals, and then they refine themselves through their development; they become, as it were, specialized heterosexuals to best serve the reproduction of their species. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, who believed for most of his career that homosexuality was a degenerative disease, felt that this meant that homosexuals should not be prosecuted by legal agencies or churches for an inherited condition. Biological determinism could be, in this sense, a progressive political position, as it had been for the pioneer homosexual theoretician and advocate for legal reform, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, who had famously described and invented names for “a feminine soul in a male body” (a Uranian) and a “masculine soul in a female body” (a Urning). Biological bisexuality explained the feminine man and the masculine woman—those two turn-of-the-century prototypes of “the homosexual.”³

Among Krafft-Ebing's sexological heirs, however, those favoring homosexual rights soon realized that they would have to depart completely from Krafft-Ebing's disease model if they wanted to win equality before the law for homosexuals. They would have to argue that homosexuality is a variant form of sexuality, not a pathology. The reformist hero of this sexological generation was Havelock Ellis (cited in Firestein, 1996). It was also Ellis who first acknowledged that if choice of objects, not degenerative reversion to the biological past, is placed in the definitional foreground of human sexuality, then one should also conclude that there is “a broad and simple grouping of all sexually functioning persons into three comprehensive divisions:

³ A good brief summary of Ulrich's classifications can be found in Haerberle and Gindorf (1998), pp. 17-20.

the heterosexual, the bisexual and the homosexual” (Firestein, 1996, p. 5). With emphasis on choice of objects, bisexuality began to emerge as a possibility distinct from homosexuality. But this trend was short-lived—except among Freudians.

Freud and Freudians in the 1920s

Let me go forward in time to 1920 and consult Sigmund Freud and his followers. I have chosen this date because we need to take into account that Freud's view of bisexuality evolved after 1900, as he developed psychoanalysis and as he distanced himself from early associates like Wilhelm Stekel, who specialized in the theory that homosexuality is a pathology. The record of Freud's evolving view can be found in the additions and footnotes he made to all the editions of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (Freud, 1905b). The record there shows that Freud was usually a great appreciator of the complexity and variability of human sexuality, but he could also lapse into being a monosexualist in the Krafft-Ebing tradition, thereby demonstrating that human beings' theories about sexuality are just as complex and variable as sexuality itself.

Freud (and his then friend Wilhelm Fliess) had started out with the Krafft-Ebing idea that homosexuality is a reversion to the original bisexuality, but by the 1920s his attention had shifted more and more to the psychological domain. His clinical observations had taught him that all people, regardless of their particular physical or sexual constitutions, make bisexual object choices. As Freud (1937) said summarily:

It is well known that at all times there have been, as there still are, human beings who can take as their sexual objects persons of either sex without the one trend interfering with the other. We call these people bisexual and accept the fact of their existence without wondering much at it ... But we have come to know that all human beings are bisexual in this sense and that their libido is distributed between objects of both sexes, either in a manifest or a latent form [p. 261].

The implications of this thought were enormous. Freud rejected the idea that homosexuals are feminine souls trapped in male

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bodies or masculine souls trapped in female bodies; he insisted, instead, that all souls chose both same-sex and opposite-sex objects. Over time, however, and through a process of repression, most people chose one sex or the other predominantly and manifestly, that is, consciously, all the while retaining in their unconscious minds the road not taken. Not all desires and choices are evident in behavior; but more are evident in the bisexuals, who are in less conflict, who do not repress as relentlessly, as do heterosexuals or homosexuals.

All human beings are by nature bisexual, in Freud's view, both biologically and psychologically. But Freud went even further and realized that the psychological domain is not just a domain of object choice. It is a domain of what we would now call gender identity: of how a person feels and imagines himself or herself to be in terms of maleness and femaleness, masculinity and femininity, and how a person is in relation to prevailing conventions about what is masculine and feminine. In this domain, too, we are all bisexual in the sense that we are all a mixture of masculine and feminine traits and characteristics, some of which—like activity and passivity, perhaps—are closer to the biological domain and some more social or conventional. Very clearly, in his case study of a female homosexual, Freud (1920) distinguished three domains that make up an individual's sexuality:

Physical or biological characteristics

(physical hermaphroditism)

Mental sexual characteristics

(masculine or feminine attitude)

Kind of object choice [p. 170].

These are three domains or types of bisexuality. And it seems that these three domains vary independently to one degree or another in every individual.

In effect, Freud was acknowledging that one predominantly male person who takes males as his predominant sexual objects may have predominantly masculine mental characteristics, while another who does the same may have predominantly feminine mental characteristics. These are two different sorts of males behaving homosexually, the products of two different developmental routes and object-choice histories. Freud and his colleagues, such as Ferenczi, studied developmental differences,

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using concepts like identification and noting that some men identify more with men and masculinity, some more with women and femininity. At this period in his work, the process of identification—a process of ego shaping—was more salient in Freud's thoughts than was the process of ego control over or repression of libidinal drives, which had been central to his thoughts in 1900. When their egos are emergent, children attach themselves bisexually; and then, as their egos mature and become shaped, they become delimited in their identities and their object choices. All human beings are in mourning for roads not taken.

Freud was not the only theorist of the 1920s who was trying to speak of variant types, to appreciate the complexity and variability of human biological bisexuality, gender mixture, and bisexuality of object choice. The leading German advocate of homosexual rights, the sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, who appreciated Freud and was appreciated by him, issued a summary of his own research in 1926 (see Haerberle and Gindorf, 1998, pp. 20-28). Although Hirschfeld (unlike Freud) thought of homosexuality as a biological phenomenon, he nonetheless insisted that males and females can be described and differentiated by (1) their sex organs, (2) their other physical characteristics, (3) their sex drive, and (4) their other psychological characteristics. If these four domains of variability are taken into account, Hirschfeld argued, then four broad types of what he called “intersexual variants” can be catalogued:

1. Hermaphroditism as an intersexual formation of the sex organs
2. Androgyny as an intersexual mix of the other physical characteristics
3. Metatropism, that is, Bisexuality and Homosexuality, as intersexual formations of the sex drive
4. Transvestitism as an intersexual expression of the other psychological characteristics

But Hirschfeld's classification, like Freud's, was not recognized as a departure because they both kept considering their ranges of variants in relationship to heterosexuality, which stood outside the range as the norm. Both kept ending up saying conventionally that there are two fundamental types of human sexuality:

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normative heterosexuality and all else—intersexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and so on. The radical tendency of the 1920s was to acknowledge variability; but it was very difficult for theorists not to slip back into the basic dichotomy articulated by the turn-of-the-century sexologists: the normal (heterosexual) and the pathological. For Freud and among the Freudians, too, the sexological repressed kept returning.

Kinsey and the Sex Researchers

One of the key consequences of Freud's radical view that all human beings are bisexual all their lives, even though most will limit themselves by repression to monosexuality of fantasy and behavior, was his opposition to separating homosexuals (or bisexuals) off for study as a separate group (Freud, 1905b): “Psychoanalytical research is most decidedly opposed to any attempt at separating homosexuals off from the rest of mankind as a group of special character” (1905, p. 145 n1). Until quite recently, no one in the later Freudian tradition took this statement of Freud's as seriously as he did, however, because the Freudian heirs were

more impressed by the idea that homosexuality is not heterosexuality, which they saw as the normal outcome of development.

The post-Freudian for whom Freud's radical lesson rang truest was not a psychoanalyst. Alfred Kinsey was a zoologist, and his tendency to think as a student of animal behavior is obvious in the metaphor that frames the most famous passage in his famous book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, which created a sensation when it was published.

Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. It is a fundamental law of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. ... The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects [Kinsey, 1948, p. 639].

Kinsey's method of study was to interview hundreds of men and later women—asking them not about their biology or their mental sexual characteristics, but about their sexual responses

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to other human beings and about their sexual behavior. The result was astonishing, even to Kinsey.

In the various male interview samples Kinsey studied, he found that between 25% and 50% were in some way and to some degree behaviorally bisexual; that is, they admitted to engaging in both heterosexual and homosexual sex to the point of orgasm. Kinsey ranged these respondents on a scale—called later The Kinsey Scale—between a group who had had only heterosexual experiences and a much smaller group that had had only homosexual experiences.

So, Kinsey's answer to the question, “Are all human beings by nature bisexual?” would have been, consequently, a complex “yes and no.” He recognized that human beings as a species may possess the capacity to react to same-sex as well as opposite-sex stimuli, and this is their mammalian heritage. Behavior involves delimitation of possibilities, as Freud had said. But a certain number of the species do react only to same-sex or only to opposite-sex stimuli, for whatever reasons, biological or cultural. Like Freud, Kinsey recognized that it is a fallacy, however, to think that people are their behaviors, that behaviors and identity (to use a later term encompassing desires and choices) are the same. Thus Kinsey recommended that, instead of using the words heterosexual and homosexual as substantives that stand for persons, or even as adjectives to describe persons, they may better be used to describe the nature of the overt sexual relations, or of the stimuli to which an individual erotically responds. This clarification also explains why Kinsey did not say that 25% to 50% of his samples were bisexuals—this would be just another misleading substantive or adjective.

In a preliminary statement of his findings about males, Kinsey (1941) made his nonpathologizing, nonessentializing perspective and his conclusions crystal clear, aiming his words right at the old sexological emphasis on finding biological causal explanations:

Any hormonal or other explanation of the homosexual must allow for the fact that somewhere between a quarter and a half of all males have demonstrated their capacity to respond to homosexual stimuli; that the picture is one of endless inter-gradation between every combination of

homosexuality and heterosexuality; that it is impossible to distinguish so-called acquired, latent and congenital types; and that there is every gradation between so-called actives and passives in a homosexual relation.

Any hormonal or other explanation of the homosexual must allow for the fact that both homosexual and heterosexual activities may occur coincidentally in a single period in the life of a single individual; and that exclusive activities of any one type may be exchanged, in a brief span of a few days or a few weeks, for an exclusive pattern of another type, or into a combination pattern which embraces the two types [that is, bisexuality].

Any explanation of the homosexual must recognize that a large portion of the younger adolescents demonstrates the capacity to react to both homosexual and heterosexual stimuli; that there is a fair number of adults who show this same capacity; and that there is only a gradual development of the exclusively homosexual or exclusively heterosexual patterns which predominate among older adults (p. 428).

Contemporary Sexperts and Sexual Politics

After the initial shock they caused, Kinsey's results and his tolerant attitude had little effect on the intolerance and ignorance that were characteristic of Americans in the 1950s and 1960s, before the Women's Liberation Movement. The majority of the population continued to do as Kinsey's respondents had done: that is, to be much more complex and variable in their acting than in their thinking. They continued to deny the discrepancy between the complexity and variability of their sexuality and the rigidity of the legal codes and religiously framed prohibitions they lived under. Nonetheless, until the 1970s, Kinseyian research dominated the little field of sexology. It became more and more refined and complicated as more nuanced questionnaires were designed to elicit more kinds of information than Kinsey had sought. His successors particularly focused on the second of Freud's domains, what we would now call—thanks to the feminist theorists who began to inspire the Kinseyians—gender identity. At the same time, Kinsey's stricture on the use of the terms heterosexual and homosexual as substantives was reinforced by a generation of

historians of sexuality—most important, Michel Foucault—who pointed out that these terms had come into existence only in the late 1860s and that they were very much the product of the turn-of-the-century social and cultural conditions that had supported the von Krafft-Ebing sexological or disease model for explaining homosexuality.

While Kinsey's stricture on the terms heterosexual and homosexual—and, implicitly, bisexual—was being appreciated by sex researchers and historians, it posed a problem for political activists. In the late 1960s, activists in the emergent Gay Liberation Movement recognized that Kinsey's liberal spirit animated those researchers who furthered the empirical task of demonstrating that homosexuality is not a pathology (not a disease and not a reversion to a more primitive bisexual state of the species). The activists used Kinseyian research to press the American Psychiatric Association to drop homosexuality as a diagnostic category.⁴ However, the courageous people who worked for this change were also seeking affirmation of their lives and lifestyles. And this meant that they did not try to destroy the substantive “homosexual” but, instead, identified themselves as a distinct group seeking equality. The

homosexuals saw themselves as a group with a history and a culture distinct from that of their oppressors (now called homophobes or heterosexualists). Homosexuality became an identity with “Gay is good” as its slogan (on the model of “Black is beautiful”). “Bisexuality,” however, was not part of the definition. So, once again, now for political reasons, there were but two kinds of sexuality, homosexuality and heterosexuality, gay and straight.

In the context of the remarkably effective Gay Liberation Movement, the field of sex research itself began to organize along a continuum. At one extreme, there was a group exclusively dedicated to the biological investigation Kinsey had criticized; their search was for the biological substratum that causes heterosexuality and homosexuality, the two kinds of sexuality. Some in this group felt that finding the biological substratum for homosexuality would lead, as Krafft-Ebing had hoped, to greater tolerance for people who could not help being

4 In a chapter titled “The Fall and Rise of Homosexuality,” the political history in America of the diagnosis Homosexuality has been told most recently by Kutchins and Kirk (1997).

as their biology dictated. Others hoped that, with modern scientific therapies, biologically based homosexuality could be cured or eliminated.

At the opposite end of the continuum, among those whom the lesbian comic writer Susie Bright calls sexperts, homosexuality is questioned as a category while it is being studied as “socially constructed” or “socially scripted.” “Script theory” is the more sociological theory. It emphasizes that at any given historical moment people have available from their families, schools, churches, media, and so forth all kinds of sexual modalities out of which they cut and paste a personal script, just as the students of sexuality in any given culture have their scripts, which define what does and does not constitute normal and deviant sexual behavior.⁵ “Social construction” usually points to a more psychological process of not just learning but growing in and through relationships.

Psychological processes are, of course, more complex to study and understand than are people's appearances and overt behaviors, which certainly have changed dramatically among “the homosexuals” over the last two decades of the Gay Liberation Movement and the community it worked to call into being. In public arenas and in visual presentations, the most commonly followed social script for being a male homosexual—biologically male, predominantly feminine in gender characteristics and predominantly attracted to males—gave way to biologically male, predominantly masculine in gender characteristics, and attracted to males. The virile homosexual, fresh from the gym, not the effeminate one headed for the drag show, became the most visible male type. Meanwhile current Kinseyian interview research shows that many gay men identify neither as predominantly masculine nor as predominantly feminine; in their objects and sexual activities, they enjoy variability, role playing, diversity, and, not infrequently, bisexuality. Changes are also apparent in the lesbian population, where diversity of self-description is also increasing and where the number of parents grows, with “Heather's two mommies” frequently either taking turns being “daddy” or working to rid the role “parent” of gender binaries. One could say, then, that there is much more bisexuality (in gender identification and

sometimes object choice, too) among self-identified homosexuals.

At the same time, into the ranks of the Gay Liberation Movement have come people who want the designation bisexual. They are committed to, on one hand, a struggle with the many gay and lesbian people who think bisexuality is only a transitional phase, a way station on the journey toward coming out as gay or lesbian; and, on the other hand, a struggle with prejudiced people of many sorts who imagine that bisexuals are a major conduit for the AIDS virus. The bisexuals' struggle for recognition is being helped by the fact that sexperts are now studying them and their place in the more inclusively named LesBiGay Movement. The typical stages for their coming-out processes are being formulated; and, in a growing autobiographical literature, the bisexuals are also studying themselves as gays and lesbians have done so brilliantly over the last two decades.

Part II: Challenges to the Categories

This brief historical tour of sexologists, psychoanalysts, sex researchers, and contemporary sexperts, in which I have not even tried to be psychobiographical, shows that study of biological bisexuality gave way to study of heterosexuals and homosexuals as types of people defined by their object choice. This focus slowly yielded to emphasis on object choices and behaviors, which are known now to be very diverse and changeable. Wrapped in identity politics, however, this last moment features both a great deal of identity claiming and a great deal of protest against restrictive or dichotomizing identity categories. These cross-currents exist with a great surge of reactive homophobia and biphobia among people who are frightened by the deconstructing and bending and blurring of sexual identities now in course. At present, in each of the three domains distinguished by Freud, the ways of thinking generated during this century of shifts and changes are all being challenged.

The Biological Domain

Contemporary biologists do not usually speak of biological bisexuality, but they do use terms like sexual bipotentiality,

sexual neutrality, and sexual dimorphism. "None of these modern terms," the psychoanalyst Robert Stoller (1973) claimed, "denies that aspects of both sexes are present in all animals, including man" (p. 361). So there is general agreement that the biological answer to my question, "Are all human beings by nature bisexual?" would still be yes. But, really, biological sex as the turn- of-the-century sexologists studied it has disappeared.

The more that biologically oriented sex researchers, most of them essentialists, looked for the anatomy that is destiny, the more they found that "biological sex" is not a matter of anatomy; it is made up of a multitude of different, heterogeneous elements. Now, to be at all accurate in speaking of sexuality, people should always use an adjective, as they should use a qualifier when speaking a person's maleness or femaleness. Specifically, they should distinguish (1) chromosomal sex, (2) hormonal sex, (3) gonadal sex, and (4) anatomical sex (with a distinction between internal accessory reproductive structures and external sex organs). Then,

all these subdomains except chromosomal sex should be looked at in temporal frames: there are embryological sex, natal sex, childhood sex, adolescent sex, adult sex, and late adult or postmenopausal sex.

While debating the Freudian distinctions among sex, gender, and kind of object choice and considering the proposition that there is no simple relation among these domains, researchers are now realizing that there is no simple relation among the subdomains or the periods of sex either. Certain very specific, but not yet well-understood, biological syndromes have conveyed this lesson and suggested that each human being's biological sex is a unique conjunction, changing over the course of a lifetime, of the various sexual elements.⁶

When hormones were discovered in the 1930s, the Darwinian and Freudian view that all human beings are biologically bisexual seemed confirmed; for both men and women were found to have the hormones most responsible for male development (androgens) and the ones most responsible for female development (estrogen), in varying proportions and produced in different sites. Since the 1940s, however, it has been understood that all embryos, whether chromosomally male or

⁶ A good popular summary of the biological topics I am going to review briefly can be found in Mondimore (1996), Part II.

female, begin with female tissues and mature as females unless testicular tissue is added, that is, unless there are available at a critical juncture the hormone testosterone (as produced in the male gonad, the testis) and another known as “Mullerianinhibiting hormone” (MIH), which halts the development of the Mullerian ducts into female organs. By the late 1940s, it was clear to researchers that the gene on the Y chromosome known as the “testis determining factor” (TDF) sets off the androgenization process. So, the Darwinian-Freudian proposition that we all begin bisexual should be modified to say that by the time we are born we are chromosomally monosexual (usually) and hormonally bisexual in terms of the gonadal hormones.

But this story also needs qualification. When the biology of chromosomes was first worked out, it seemed that there were clearly two combinations, XX for females and XY for males. The Y chromosome was designated the “male” one simply because a gene on it controls the testosterone level in a developing embryo, and this gene was held to determine the embryo's development into a male. But then came the discovery that not all human beings are either XX or XY. Men with Klinefelter's syndrome, for example, are XXY, which means that they have an extra copy of the chromosome labeled “female,” and in this sense, they are not chromosomally monosexual but, rather, bisexual. Their Y chromosome fulfills its function of sustaining testosterone levels through gestation and on into childhood. But, nonetheless, at puberty some Klinefelter males—but not all—experience a dip in testosterone level and a degeneration of their testes; many have a decreased interest in sex in comparison with XY males. But researchers have not been able to establish any direct correlation between these effects of the syndrome and manifest adult sexual object choice.

Study of variants that can come about in the embryological developmental process has refined the realization that even visible sex cannot be accurately discussed as simply male or female. There are different types of intersexuality—sex ambiguity or duality.⁷ For example,

chromosomally male fetuses with “androgen insensitivity syndrome” have defective receptor sites for testosterone, so they are born with female genitalia and are

7 Fausto-Sterling (1993) has summarized her review of intersexuality types.

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usually medically assigned as females to be raised by their parents as girls. But when they fail to menstruate at puberty, or later, when they are discovered to be infertile, their male chromosomal sex is discovered. The majority of women with “androgen insensitivity syndrome” are manifestly heterosexual on the Kinsey Scale; thus, from a chromosomal point of view, they are males attracted to males, while from an anatomical point of view they are females attracted to males. In another syndrome, chromosomal females with a defect called “congenital adrenal hyperplasia” (CAH) have levels of testosterone from the adrenal glands that are too high, so they develop masculinized genitalia. Chromosomally, they are females; anatomically, they are intersexual or, one might say, bisexual (but not hermaphroditic in the sense of having the genitals of both sexes).

In a third syndrome, chromosomal males with normal testosterone levels but lacking an enzyme necessary for the normal development of external genitalia, are born with what appear to be female genitalia and are raised as girls. With the normal upsurge of testosterone at puberty, such girls develop a penis-sized genital and male secondary sexual characteristics. Many males with this syndrome assume a male sexual identity at puberty, and the majority of these, being attracted primarily to women, locate themselves on the heterosexual end of the Kinsey scale. Some of these men also report that they felt themselves to be male all their lives, while they were being raised as girls. But others with this syndrome prefer to continue as females, helped by hormone treatments to stop their masculinization. Here, chromosomal sex and preadolescent anatomical sex differ, as do—in many cases—medically assigned sex and self-identified sex (or gender identity).

In the 1960s biological research on sex identity tended to focus on hormonal sex and its eventual relation—if any could be found—to object choice. More recently, the focus has been on genetics and the “sex” of the brain. There has been a muchpublicized search for “the homosexual gene,” a phrase that makes no sense whatsoever if the multiplicity and complexity of the subdomains making up sexuality is taken into account. What would such a gene control? None of this genetic research has yielded anything that resembles a causal explanation for homosexuality or heterosexuality. The most that can be said

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for it is that it shows that diverse biological factors seem to have an influence on gender identity and object choice, but that this influence cannot be specified—it seems to differ from person to person, or, to use Kinsey's language, to range along a continuum from very influential to not very influential. At the extreme where biological factors seem least influential are to be found those known to Ulrichs (1864) as “feminine souls in masculine bodies” and “masculine souls in feminine bodies,” except that such people are not now called homosexuals; they are called transsexuals.

The Psychological Domain

As sex variation has been more intricately mapped, it has become evident that the subdomains making up biological sex do not—individually or together—determine gender identity and object choice. The biological sex subdomains have influence, of course, to different degrees in different people and in different syndromes, but usually, if not always, biological factors are overridden by gender development, including sex assignment and a person's history of object choices and experiences. This conclusion can be reinforced by turning for a moment to modern evolutionary thinking.

We can observe that human beings, of all the mammals, are the ones whose sexual drive is least tied to biological functions, specifically reproduction. For example, most—not all—of the other mammals engage in mating behavior only when the female's estrus signals her readiness. Human (and a few primate) females, on the other hand, are distinctive for being always ready for sexual encounter and, further, for having a sexual organ, the clitoris, which serves no direct reproductive purpose but can provide intense pleasure as it plays its role in orgasm, a phenomenon that also serves no direct reproductive purpose and can be part of heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or autoerotic behavior.⁸ Further, we can state that toward the human

⁸ One could note that the human male contributes to the organization of pleasure his mammalian uniqueness, too: his penis is always exposed and its state of unarousal is as visible as its state of arousal, it does not retreat into his body or into the safety of a sheath (although clothiers have tried to make men safe like the other mammals with various kinds of cod-pieces). But these are ways in which anatomy determines pleasure, not destiny—or identity.

end of the evolutionary line, as biology has less and less sway, psychology and social organization have greater and greater consequence, including in the biological domain. We human beings can imagine and chose sexual possibilities for ourselves that are not known to the other mammals. We can organize the sexuality of other animals and ourselves as breeders, trainers, educators, legislators; we can manipulate the sex of our young very complexly, by proscribing or promoting some of their sexual expressions and not others or by doing something like taking them to a clinic for sex assignment and treatment if their biological sex is ambiguous. We can even intervene in the biological domain with hormone treatments, sex change operations, technologically aided reproduction, manufacture of genetic components, cloning, and so forth. Apparently, it is “human nature” to act on human nature, to challenge it, push it; or, as the psychoanalytic sexpert Robert Stoller (1985) once put the general conclusion, “the more advanced the evolutionary development, the less absolute is the effect of somatic factors and the more we are dealing with a psychology into which the concept of choice enters” (p. 13).

Showing that sexual destiny arises from what people choose to make of their biology has been the common project of modern Freudians like Stoller, heirs of Kinsey, and contemporary sexperts of the social constructionist sort, although it has not prompted much investigation of how people's ways of organizing themselves psychically and socially specifically affect their biology. Even in these days when scientists are rediscovering ancient wisdoms of the East and West about how regimen can change neurophysiology, reinvestigating the insights of psychosomatic medicine, considering how psychotherapy can affect physiology, and exploring how environmental forces shape sexual functioning, causal explorers still travel more strongly in the opposite direction, from body to mind, in the *fin de siècle* manner.

But to steer clear of “anatomy is destiny” or “biology is destiny” causal arguments, theorists have needed an approach that would establish the priority of the psychological domain and the importance in people's identities of gender, the ingredient of identity that is more psychological than sex. Since the late 1960s, feminist gender theorists have worked from within and from

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outside Freudian psychoanalysis to reform it and contest the idea that women are destined to be less than men because they lack the phallus, the emblem of male sexuality. Their work has led to a general conclusion that resembles the one I noted earlier about biological sex: as biological sex is not a single thing—certainly not just anatomy—so gender is now known to be complex. No single line of gender identity development ends up at the single destination “masculinity” or the single destination “femininity.” It is also too simple and biased toward heterosexual normativity to say, as Freud (1931) did, that there are three lines of gender development for women with three outcomes: normal (heterosexual) femininity, the masculinity complex, and asceticism (p. 229). Not only does biology alone not determine gender identity, but neither does any other single cause or type of construction: not infant- and child-rearing methods, not identifications within a family configuration, not the Oedipus complex, not object choices or experiences of being an object chosen (including traumatic ones), not adolescent rites of passage and societal and cultural institutions of gender creation. But all these forces converge in any given person's gender identity in any given time.

So adjectives are needed here, too, to mark the subdomains of gender and the developmental periods of gender. That is, gender identity is not a fixed and stable entity, definitively set at a given point (say, the preoedipal period) and definitively manifest in behaviors at a given point (say, late adolescence). People often—and in some circumstances typically—do want their own and other people's gender identities to be fixed and stable, so they self-identify, subscribing to ready-made substantives or scripts like “I am a heterosexual.” But they do have to work at that achievement of stability. Again, as Freud had said about object choice, there is a process of delimitation, there are roads not taken, and there is mourning for disavowed gender (femininity, masculinity, and mixtures). And, further, efforts to achieve a stable and fixed gender identity can become ingredients of prejudices like sexism, homophobia, and biphobia, which are prejudices against gender identities perceived as “deviant” or unstable and prejudices against appreciation of the complexity and variability of human sexuality.

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Of the many hypotheses constituting gender theory, one has been of particular importance for enforcing this emphasis on gender identity as multidetermined, complex, and variable. This is the hypothesis that women are more “bisexual” than (heterosexual) men. Freud was the originator of this hypothesis as he observed in his late essays on female sexuality that women, like men, retain their intense tie with their mothers in all their later relationships.⁹ (Indeed, Freud went so far as to argue that it must be penis envy that turns women toward men—otherwise, what would move them to leave their mothers?) For heterosexual women, this means that their opposite-sex relationships are, in effect, bisexual, whereas heterosexual men who are transferring their mother love to their later loves of women are more likely to be caught in a conflict between two or more women. Many later Freudians have acknowledged that the Oedipus complex in heterosexual women is frequently a “bisexual relational triangle” (Chodorow, 1992). And they acknowledge a second implication, too: that women may be

more inclined to transfer their mother-love to love of a woman rather than turning toward a man; that is, the woman's mother-love may incline her toward "homosexuality."

Such contemporary psychoanalytic work on bisexuality of gender and of object choice has detached the study of gender identity and role development from biology, but it has seldom focused in on the topic of how gender is and is not related to object choice. Consequently, many of the fin de siècle sexological notions linking gender role reversal-femininity in men and masculinity in women-with same-sex sexual preference have lingered on. This inertia was most influentially evident in the work of Stoller (1985), who had importantly argued that what he called "core gender identity" is not a biological product but an assertion, a self-representation, "I am a male" or "I am a female." As much as he appreciated that biological sex is not indicative of gender identity, Stoller did not appreciate the corollary: that gender identity is not indicative of sexual object choice. And this became obvious when he turned his attention to transsexualism.

9 Freud (1908) had actually always emphasized the bisexuality of women, and particularly of hysterics, when he emphasized the idea that regression to bisexuality underlies pathology.

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Biological males who desired to be women and biological females who desired to be men were known to Krafft-Ebing, who had read about them in the pamphlets written in the 1860s by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, the man who spoke of "feminine souls in male bodies" and "masculine souls in female bodies." To both Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing the so-called Uranian males were homosexuals; the term transsexual dates from 1949 and came into common nosological usage only in the late 1960s.¹⁰ That is, Krafft-Ebing, like most sexologists until very recently, assumed that a man who wants to be a woman wants, also, to be the object of male desire-that is, he wants to be the passive partner in a male-male homosexual relationship. A woman who wants to be a man wants, similarly, to be the active partner in a female-female relationship. The model or ideal within which the Uranians were understood was heterosexuality; that is, they were judged to be failed heterosexuals.

The legacy of the von Krafft-Ebing sexological understanding of transsexuals, which was, of course, developed long before "sex change" procedures became available in 1953, has been strong even among the Freudians who distinguished biological sex, gender, and kind of object choice.¹¹ So Stoller (1985) thought that any "male primary transsexual" who sought sex change would, postoperatively, be attracted to heterosexual men and not to homosexual men or people of the opposite natal sex, that is, women. However, recent Kinsey-like research among transsexuals and a growing transsexual autobiographical literature have begun to show clearly that transsexuals are very diverse in terms of object choice, preoperatively and postoperatively. The supposition that transsexuals are attracted only to people of their natal sex has been disproven. Many transsexuals behave bisexually and are attracted to members of the gender they join (Firestein, 1996, p. 91). Further, transsexuals themselves consistently indicate that their condition consists of unhappiness over their genital sex, not over their gender identity or their object choice- and this is why many transsexuals reject the current psychiatric designation "gender dysphoria."

¹⁰ See John Money's helpful lexicon in Haeberle and Gindor (1998), p. 126.

11 Males who live as females and females who live as males without wanting to undergo genital change are now known as transgenderists.

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Stoller's understanding of the object choice of those males he called "primary transsexuals" followed from his description of them as males who, without any biological intersexuality, were characterized by having developed a feminine "core gender identity," a basic sense that "I am female." Such a male does not deny his male anatomy and sex assignment, but he is nonetheless decisively shaped from birth by his mother's promotion of his feminine characteristics. His mother revels in his beauty and grace and tries to keep him close-so close that his typically very passive and distant father is not available as an object of identification and never becomes a rival for the mother's love. The mother's love envelops such a male child. Their symbiosis never ends; his gender identification is all with his mother. Even puberty does not influence such a male's marked femininity.¹² Stoller concluded that as an adult a primary transsexual would be attracted only to a heterosexual man and would not think of himself as homosexual or respond to the advances of homosexual men, whom he would consider to be interested in his male genitals.¹³

As far as women desiring sex change are concerned, Stoller, like most psychiatrists and psychoanalysts, assumed that a female-to-male (FTM) transsexual was a butch homosexual, that is, that she had become male in order to be the active one in partnership with a woman (usually feminine, whether heterosexual or homosexual); in effect, she wanted to be in a heterosexual-like partnership. However, the most extensive study to date of transsexual men (FTM) showed that although all but one of the 45 transsexual men in the study had been attracted to women before their sex changes, more than half of them had also been attracted to men at some point in their lives-that is,

12 Stoller (1985) distinguished "male primary transsexuals" from "secondary transsexuals." One sort of the latter experienced periods of masculine identity and activity growing up but comes to think of himself as a feminine homosexual seeking a masculine homosexual partner. A sex change can seem to this type of person a way to be more successfully feminine. Similarly, a male transvestite can want a sex change as a way to enjoy being a woman. Neither of these sorts is propelled to escape a male body.

13 Stoller (1985, p. 20) also indicated that he did not think there are subtypes of female transsexuals but, rather, considered all to be homosexuals drawn typically to feminine and heterosexual women. This view, too, is oversimple.

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they were in the middle of the Kinsey continuum. Postoperatively, they were often attracted to men, including gay men; and the more years they had lived as men, the more likely they were to be attracted to gay men.¹⁴

These studies show that bisexuality of object choice exists in Kinseyian proportions among transsexual people, as does attraction to people of the transsexual's new gender. But, further, they show that assumptions made by researchers about how gender identity and object choice or sexual preference are related have been too simple (and too heterosexist). Sexual preference, too, is less monolithic than has been thought.

Bisexual Object Choice and Choice of a Bisexual Object

As contemporary researchers have considered bisexual object choice in the wake of Kinsey's research and in the light cast on gender by feminist- influenced sexperts, it has become clear that bisexual object choice comes in many varieties. So here, too, adjectives are needed. Fred Klein (1978), for example, has suggested that there are four main bisexualities, distinguished by time frames. First, "transitional bisexuality" signals a timelimited transition from heterosexuality toward homosexuality or (less frequently) vice versa. Second, "historical bisexuality" names the past behavior of people currently engaging exclusively in heterosexual or homosexual relationships. In their pasts, they can have had various kinds and combinations of same- and opposite-sex relationships, either sequentially or during the same period of past time. "Sequential bisexuality," then, is a third type, and "concurrent bisexuality" a fourth. Within these types, bisexuality can be more or less open or acknowledged, more or less understood, more or less approved by the individual or by the familial or social context.

Other sexperts have noted that some bisexual behaviors are more socially scripted than others. In societies where marriage is prescribed and there are no sanctioned alternative forms for sexuality, homosexual behavior takes place extramaritally and clandestinely. This is so-called married-bisexuality. For unmarried people in such societies, without sanctioned heterosexual outlets, bisexuality may be adopted temporarily

14 On Devor's 1993 study, see Firestein (1996), p. 94.

(secondary bisexuality). In many cultures, by contrast, it is expected that married men will have homosexual lovers outside their homes, and this behavior is sanctioned as long as the married man assumes an active role in sexual acts (particularly anal intercourse). "Greek love" was of this type and currently is known as "Latin bisexuality," with the difference that in the modern form the married men usually identify themselves as heterosexual whereas the ancient Greeks did not operate with the heterosexual-homosexual dichotomy. Some cultures, the best known among them being certain Native American tribes like the Lakota and the Navajo, have a particular bisexual role that enjoys great status. Individuals who are revered for being "two-spirited," feminine and masculine, adopt the gender role of the opposite sex, sometimes marrying persons of their own sex. Their versatility is celebrated, and they are consulted on tribal matters as repositories of wisdom and healing power.¹⁵

In conditions where homosexuality is strongly proscribed, conversely, bisexuality can be adopted as a disguise or a cover or a form of transitional experimentation before committing to the proscribed mode. There are other circumstances conducive to experimental bisexuality as well: bisexuality is, in many cultures, typical of adolescence and of adolescents' institutions, like boarding schools, clubs, military cadet units, reformatories. In some societies, adolescent bisexual behavior takes very specifically scripted forms. In Melanesia, for example, most youths engage in bisexual sex as part of their rites of passage, with their homosexual acts being of only one sort-for example, oral fellation of an older man, which is thought of as incorporation of the older man's manliness.¹⁶ Some societies

15 Among anthropologists, this arrangement is known by its French name, *berdache*, although Native Americans generally reject this term as an imposition. Descriptively, it is called "gender-reversed homosexuality" (see G. Herdt in Haeberle and

Gindrof, 1998, p. 162). Different tribes have different names for the two-spirited individuals; and the Navajo *nadle* is not the same as the Lakota *wintke*. More tribes have male berdaches than have female ones.

16 As G. Herdt (in Haerberle and Gindorf, 1998, p. 162), notes, “agestructured homosexuality” is a ritualized form of sexual practice, like the berdache, but the two forms are mutually exclusive and do not occur in the same geographical regions. The berdache feminizes males, while age-structured practices masculinize young men; the berdache masculinizes women, while the age-structured (Lesbian) practice feminizes them.

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seclude their young women in all-female institutions where homosexual sex (often including breaking of the hymen) is preparatory for later heterosexual marriage, as was the case on Lesbos in the time of the great poetess Sappho. The bisexuality of adolescent or adult prostitutes and sex workers is sometimes referred to as “technical bisexuality.” Finally, if the sex—or genitalia—of an object does not enter into a person's object choice, that person practices what is known as “equal bisexuality.” A celibate person, for example, may have bisexual fantasies that do not focus on the object's genitals but emphasize spiritual qualities (which may be neither masculine nor feminine).

These typologies of bisexualities are, of course, made largely from the outside; they do not speak to object choice as a matter of inner life. Further, they concern an object only as female or male, that is, as identified by sex (or, more specifically, anatomical sex, genitals) and role in sexual activities, not by gender, and not by the object's own inner life or type of object choice. Until the 1990s empirical sex researchers did not even inquire simultaneously into the sexual behavior and the sexual identities of their respondents (Firestein, 1996, p. 30). To go into the territory of sexual identity further than questionnaires and even extensive interviews can take you requires something like a psychoanalytic setting, or at least a psychodynamically oriented inquiry.

In my view, understanding of the bisexualities would be deepened considerably by recognizing that the most underestimated and thus understudied of the three Freudian bisexuality domains—sex, gender, kind of object choice—s the last, where the emphasis has always fallen on the choice, not the object. This emphasis has come about for (at least) four reasons. First, as long as classifications followed the fin de siècle sexology guidelines and had people choosing their sexual objects by and for their anatomies, no other characteristics of sexual objects were much noticed. Second, there was no precedent in psychoanalysis for speaking about how objects effected those who chose them; object choice was not viewed as interactive or relational, as a two-way street. In an interactive view, the sex, gender, and type of object choice of the chosen object (in reality and in the choser's mind) must be accounted for.

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Third, objects and object-choice were not often viewed as contextual or sociocultural. There was no way to account for the obvious fact that, in different times and places, different types of objects have been deemed the most desirable (or the least), and different combinations of sex and gender characteristics in objects have been valued (or devalued). In the late 1960s in America and Europe, for example, the favored object for many women who would have registered on the heterosexual end of the Kinsey Scale was a male who was virile but feminine—a Hirschfeld androgyne. There was much lamentation that all the men of this sort were homosexual. Culture critics in the period meanwhile lamented loudly the feminization of American youth—while the same feminization was celebrated by Aquarian visionaries who wanted to make love and not war. In the current cultural moment, there is a phenomenon that

goes by the name bisexual chic, which the 1960s androgyne presaged. Some people, like the rock star Mick Jagger, have survived public life long enough to have been exciting as androgynes and then to have been rediscovered as bisexually chic.

A fourth reason why study of object choice has not progressed far is that Freud's original insights about universal bisexuality of object choice have awaited to this day a systematic description and utilization in sexology and in clinical work. His basic orientation was toward the ways in which people chose their later objects on the basis of their earlier experience—that is, toward the phenomena of transference. Object choice was determined historically, by transference from primary object choices. Freud, then, assumed bisexuality of object choice in everyone not just because of some unspecifiable biological bisexuality but because everyone carries over into later objects not only the early representations of a beloved mother and a beloved father (a female and a male), but also representations of other beloved familial figures—siblings and grandparents and nannies, who are both female and male. This much of Freud's framework is commonly assumed, but, it seems to me, that different processes of transferential object choice have nonetheless not been explored.

In my reading of Freud's work, I see four elementary processes of transferential object choice. First, there is infant choice of a part-object—often a body part, like the breast, but also traits,

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like warmth and coldness, affection and lack of affection. When a child is capable of whole-object choice, the part-object can stand for the whole and define how the whole is experienced. If the part-object is sexed or gendered, so too—in some way will the whole object be. This mode of object choice operates in everyone, but some people are dominated by it, particularly those who incline to perversions.

Second, there are split or doubled objects, onto which a person will place separated desires and needs and sometimes separated sides of an ambivalence, a hate and a love, once felt toward a single object. A woman can, for example, love a man perhaps a successor to her father—consciously and love a woman unconsciously, as Freud's (1905b) patient, Dora, did. Or a person can love a woman who is the successor to his or her mother and concurrently love a man who is the successor to his or her father, or a person can engage these objects sequentially. In one of Freud's best known examples, a man concurrently loves a woman who is chaste and a woman who is sensual; but it is not unusual for a man to love a woman who is chaste and a man who is sensual, as is often the case in the so-called married bisexuality or Latin bisexuality. When people divorce and remarry, to cite another example, they are often moving from an object of one kind (and gender) to an object of another kind (and gender). Recently, in areas where divorce is common, one can observe a trend for women to marry, raise a family, and then turn for a second “marriage” to a woman. Women will not infrequently first marry a man with whom they continue their relationship with their mother (a mother-man) and then, in a second marriage, continue their relationship with their father (possibly with a female), repeating the developmental order of their object relations.

The split object has been such a staple of psychoanalytic study that it has obscured the ways in which an object (singular) can be bisexual, that is, can be a composite (or composed) object, which blends parts, traits, characteristics from at least two, and almost always more, sources. A woman, for example, loves a woman who is her mother plus her brother, as did the female homosexual about whom Freud (1920) wrote. Here it is the object's bisexuality that is

of great importance to the chooser. It may be the object's biological characteristics, mental or gender characteristics, or choice patterns, or all of those, that matter.

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Fourth is another type of composite object, which might be called a layered object or a manifest-and-latent object. As noted, people frequently relate to one object consciously and to another unconsciously—a splitting situation. But they can also relate to the same object on both conscious and unconscious channels; and this is a layering situation. For example, a woman might love a man consciously for his masculine qualities while she simultaneously loves this man unconsciously for his feminine qualities. This layering phenomenon is, I think, particularly crucial in the ways in which transvestites and transsexuals love and are loved.

Woven through these brief descriptions are the two fundamental types of contrast that Freud saw playing out in all the transference processes of object choosing. First, people are attracted to and aroused by an object's sexuality, which includes an object's sex and gender-maleness and masculinity, femaleness and femininity—and an object's own kind of object choice or way of being an object chosen. People are attracted to these domains as they experience them or represent them to themselves. Second, people are attracted by an object's felt capacity to satisfy narcissistic needs and anaclitic dependency needs, or (to use Freud's, 1905b, earlier terminology) sensual needs and affectional needs. In patriarchal societies, where women do the primary child-rearing, dependency and affectional needs tend to be associated originally with maternal objects. So the primary anaclitic or dependency object is usually someone chosen on the model of the woman who has fed us, and a later version is chosen on the model of the man who has protected us, as Freud (1914) noted (p. 90). Narcissistic needs and choices are complexly sex-specific. We love people who are like ourselves in the present or like we have been or like we would like to be in the future, or we chose someone who was once part of ourselves. We can observe, for example, that the intergenerational ritualized bisexualities of Melanesia or Lesbos satisfy future-oriented narcissistic needs: same-sex sex functions as a conduit through which boys are given manly virtues by men and girls are given feminine virtues by women.

These fundamental male-female and narcissistic-anaclitic contrasts show up in the four processes of transference object choice in the most varied combinations and are socially

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supported in very complex ways. For example, a man might love a boy who is male and growing into his masculinity and who resembles himself when he was the growing boy his mother (or his father) loved. “Greek love” institutionalizes a version of this possibility. A woman might love a person—male or female—who has her father's masculine qualities and looks and her mother's feminine qualities as well as her mother's typical kind of object choice, say, of a woman like herself. A man might split his love object into a woman who is chaste and supplies his affectional needs and a man who is sexual and supplies his narcissistic need to be loved by someone who is as he wishes himself to be (thus making him feel like a powerful man). So-called married bisexuality institutionalizes versions of this possibility, which is related to societal institutions' promoting arrangements in which a man has a chaste wife at home and a mistress in the servant's quarters or at the bordello or down in the dark ghetto. Or consider the man who takes pleasure in observing two women, one more masculine, one more feminine (perhaps one a stranger and one a familiar like his wife) having sex with each other; and then he has sex with both of them, sequentially, one in a more passive way in which he

experiences himself as the woman he would like to be, the others in a more active way that satisfies his narcissistic need to feel himself the man he wishes to be. Generally, group sex (including sex in Carnival situations, group sex in disguises) satisfies more than one or two desires and needs at once, as does the fixed bisexual fantasy of lying in a bed between a male figure and a female figure, simultaneously penetrating and being penetrated.

Part III: The Bisexual Object in the Analytic Situation

In my clinical practice, I assume that one of the key stories that will emerge over time, to be reconstructed and to be experienced by my patients and me in the analytic transference is the story of how the patient's objects got to be bisexual. I do not, by contrast, focus on the patient's bisexuality or homosexuality or heterosexuality-what Kinsey called the substantives-because I think it is a mistake to assume that the patient will be one of these, defined by the sex of his or her object (or objects). To

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put the matter another way: I assume that a patient's desired object will always be bisexual but not that the patient will always be bisexual or homosexual or heterosexual. The identity side evolves and fluctuates, but the prevailing type of object desired becomes clear at least in adolescence and stays constant, even if appearances are to the contrary, that is, even if a person choses (for example) now a male object, now a female one. (I am using the phrase object desired to indicate that a person may actually chose a particular person who does not meet desire criteria.)

To show how the bisexuality of the object can be revealed in an analysis, I shall present briefly three patients in whose analyses the bisexual object emerged with particular clarity and intensity. This clarity and intensity reflected the fact, I think, that all three patients came from families in which they were one of three siblings, so their bisexual objects were composites containing traits associated with a masculine and a feminine sibling as well as with the two parental figures. That is, the objects were very thickly bisexual-and the transference was, correspondingly, very crowded, layered, composite.

The first two patients, a man and a woman, have much in common psychically. These precociously bright, highly verbal people are both characterologically quite obsessional, meticulously micromanaging their daily lives and operating as what we know in slang as "control freaks," always vying with their love objects and with rivals for control. Both have highly ambivalent attitudes toward their conservatively religious parents and toward their younger siblings.

The female patient let me know right from the beginning of her analysis the lineaments of her ideal object, the woman she was questing after. She brought along to the second session a piece of paper on which she had listed this ideal's characteristics, in the order of their importance. It was clear that I was going to be measured by the standards in this document as all her previous lovers had been and as her previous therapist had been. Through high school and college, her lovers had been male; thereafter, female; and she identifies now as a lesbian, having felt compelled "to end my bisexual period," as she put it. She is also aware, however, that her lesbianism is to some extent political, and her fantasy life is still quite bisexual.

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Physically, her ideal object is a “soft butch” with blue eyes. She imagines this person as quite masculine in bed—perhaps wearing a dildo; although she also thinks of herself as highly sexual and usually more interested in sex and more aggressive about getting it than her partners, male or female. Sexual aggressiveness is what she associates with her father, a very strange man, whom the patient, consulting psychiatry textbooks, diagnoses in retrospect with Asperger's Syndrome, emphasizing his total lack of social skills or empathy. But she understands her own sexuality chiefly as, like her mother's, “needy and greedy.”

The patient has a sister whom she describes as wild and promiscuous in her youth, hysterical, and a Daddy's Girl, despite the fact that the daddy beat her and railed against her for her sinful ways, her whorishness. The brother, passive, excruciatingly sweet and nice as a child, chronically depressed in his adolescent years, was the mother's favorite. The patient had to go outside the nuclear family to be the favorite of her grandmother, and she has continued this strategy in her later life by going to professionals of various sorts—doctors, therapists—who can be paid to be there for her reliably: If they are not, she fires them. The love supplies in this family were so short that the patient became very aggressive toward her siblings, attacking and competing with them for every emotional scrap. But these competitors—a father/sister and a mother/brother—are also built into her bisexual object. Once she had a dream in which her two pets, one a boy and one a girl, were in two cages, and a third pet, who resembled the boy pet but was younger, came along and felt excluded from the cages. A storm came up and all three pets ended up huddled together under a protective washbasin, burrowed in the ground, partially buried. There she was, in the only safety available—outside the house—with her boy pet and her girl pet.

The male patient told me at the beginning of his analysis that his unhappy love history was one of falling for his mother. The women he was drawn toward were marked by their melancholy—they had sad, sorrowful eyes. Further, they had been damaged in bad relationships with their fathers, who are neglectful, hypercritical, unappreciative, or hurtful. He set out to rescue these women, giving them the sensitive appreciation they had never known. Initially, the women found him wonderful, but

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eventually they retreated from his controlling behavior—the manifestation of his insecurity—and became attached to other men, his rivals: He suffered terribly from jealousy.

From behind the oedipal story as the patient told it to me, another eventually emerged in bits and pieces. He mentioned that as a boy he had had the fantasy of being a girl; that in high school he and some buddies had once dressed up as cheerleaders, balloons for bosoms, and had a blast; that he had recently wanted to buy a dress in order to play the part of a little girl in a community center skit. As the little girl in the skit, he said, he imagined himself sitting on his father's lap, snuggling, so happy. It became apparent that when he falls in love with girls needing rescue from their abusive fathers, he is also falling in love with himself, the little girl with an abusive father. While they are his mother, the women he loves are bisexual objects—man and little girl.

After about a year of analysis, the patient developed an intense crush on a woman of the requisite melancholy. But, for some reason, when the relationship began to heat up, he felt compelled to telephone an ex-girlfriend. This was a woman who had shocked him by flinging herself at him aggressively; she was what he called a man-handler. Why did he call her, jeopardizing his new relationship? His associations turned toward his sister, and then toward

the second sister. He made it clear that the older sister, was very like his mother in her victimhood: she was very feminine, but also angry and hurt. The younger one had identified herself with his father: she was tough, critical. He discovered that he could not be with a woman who was like the mother/sister without calling in one who was like the father/sister. Looking back, he realized that a woman he had once loved had been both sisters in one—and she had had lovers of both sexes. When she showed herself to be too much like the father/sister, too much of a manhandler, too frighteningly castrating, he had had to flee her.

The male patient's object contains his mother, his father, his mother/sister and his father/sister. He loves as a boy and as a young girl. The female patient's object contains her ideal mother, her ideal father, her sister/father, and her brother/mother, and her grandmother. She desires a girl who is an ideal parent and (less strongly) a boy.

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The third patient is a woman who was attracted to men and women in her youth, turned to men and married, then turned to women and had several long relationships. She thinks of herself as bisexual while she lives as a lesbian. Her lovers, both male and female, she told me, have in common that they were tall, beautiful and elegant, artistic and cultivated, somehow European (by birth or association); all were androgynous, but the men had traits the patient thought of as feminine, the women had traits she thought masculine. The women's masculine traits—particularly physical energy and athleticism—were connected to the patient's father; the men's feminine traits—particularly a kind of exhibitionism tempered with reaction formation, somewhat depressive—were maternal. The patient felt herself to be a composite of her father's and her mother's traits and was aware that she chose her bisexual objects on a narcissistic basis: but the love objects were, importantly, not ideal—they had to be brought into ideal condition by the patient's love. She is a mentor or promoter rather than a rescuer, thrilled when her loved ones flourish artistically. But what she has always wanted is also to be the mentored one, to have a lover who could do unto her what she does unto others

It puzzled this patient that every now and again she would find herself drawn to a woman who was not of her dominant desired object type: the variant type was a hysteric, very unstable, very feminine and petite. The patient, who would quickly find these women frightening and exhausting and run away from them, determined in the analysis that they were reminiscent of her sister, who, as a frail youngest child was in the mother's care and formed with the mother a symbiotic bond. The patient was attracted to a woman who was loved by the mother in a way that she herself never could be loved because she would not allow herself to be frail; that is, in the object she was attracted to a role she could not play. The patient's brother did not figure explicitly in the gallery of her objects, but the patient did involve herself as a kind of surrogate mother to his children.

The first two patients were always getting involved in struggles for power and control with their complexly constructed objects, and the transference was similarly a struggle for control. Would I give love on demand?—this seems to me the characteristic obsessional's question, and it is put to the analyst as the analyst

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is experienced as a bisexual object. The third patient struggled to allow me to work with her and not to do everything herself. This was also a struggle not to be disappointed that I was not

everything and everybody—not the total and bisexual object, as multifaceted as the patient herself.

Conclusion

I hope I have convinced you of the claim I made at the outset of this paper: that the complexity and variability of human sexuality is coming to be appreciated now that the 100-year reign of the substantives heterosexuality and homosexuality is breaking up. This break-up has come about as people have tried to understand bisexuality: biological bisexuality; psychological or gender bisexuality or (one might say) bigenderality; bisexuality of object choice; and (the newest frontier) bisexuality of the object desired/chosen. But all these substantive uses of “bisexuality,” even carefully qualified with adjectives, give way, too, as soon as they are looked into at any depth. I suggested that we are becoming accustomed to thinking of human sexuality as multisexuality. But this word, too, is just a warning not to judge the book by its cover, the human being by his or her or his/her behavior, as our experiences are richer for not being understood in categories that do not do any of us justice.

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