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Call Me Bi Any Other Name: Anal Monstration, Formal Bisexualization, Gay Indigestion

Jacob Engelberg

For some viewers, *Call Me by Your Name* (Luca Guadagnino, 2017) just wasn't gay enough. Though the film centres on the desire and love between two men, its gay or queer credentials were called into question by a variety of critics, journalistic and scholarly alike. For *The Advocate*'s Ben Ratskoff, the film 'depicts an enchanted utopia where the social realities of gayness cannot intrude'; for the *Washington Post*'s Garrett Schlichte, *Call Me by Your Name* is 'indicative of how media ensconces queer life and is inherently shaming of gay sex'; in a guest article for *Slate* magazine, drag performer Miz Cracker pronounces that gay men have 'fallen for this ungay romance because it's so straight – and if we gays love anything, it's chasing after straight guys'.[1] Sentiments around these purported deficiencies were echoed by veteran scholar D. A. Miller, who declared the film typical of the 'mainstream gay-themed movie' in its supposed elision of images of sex between men: '[T]he beautification campaign in and around *Call Me by Your Name* runs gay sex through such grandiose sentimental misrecognitions that we would no longer know it even if we did see it'.[2] The troubling unrecognizability of gayness in the film is compounded, for Miller, by the visibility of what he calls its 'hetero-consummations', sex between men and women.[3] Here we get a clue as to what undergirds these critics' misgivings around the film's nongayness: a fundamental anxiety around bisexuality.

By bisexuality, I am not referring to one certain identity formation or sexuality label. Rather, I use this term in a capacious sense – similarly to its use by scholars of bisexual theory and many bisexual activists – to describe desire towards people of more than one gender.[4] Though I wish to articulate these kinds of desires with specificity, those bisexual potentialities between and beyond the gay–straight

binary are expansive, resisting the presumed univocality of dominant categories of sexual orientation. The discomfort articulated by those decrying *Call Me by Your Name*'s lack of gayness is characterized, I contend, by three phenomena: an investment in the visualization of queer sexuality through the cinematic monstration of certain sex acts, which are treated as representational paradigms par excellence; the transgressions of formal bisexualization, wherein a film departs from established codes of sexual signification that work to reify gay and straight sexualities (monosexuality); and the troubling presence of nongay queers in queer space, which is, in turn, conceptualized as *putatively* gay.[5] Analysis of the roots of this discomfort not only reveals the ideological, identarian and intellectual limitations of certain queer methodologies but also uncovers the centrality of bisexuality to *Call Me by Your Name*'s cinematic project.

While one should be wary of overstating declarations of authorial intention, it is remarkable that two of *Call Me by Your Name*'s 'authors' have suggested bisexuality as a term through which to understand the text. In an interview with *Playboy*, André Aciman reflects, 'People don't talk about [*Call Me by Your Name*] as *bisexual*, do they? [...] They want to see it as [...] a gay story.'[6] At the Toronto International Film Festival, Luca Guadagnino proffered a similar interpretive framework: 'Maybe we are making the first bisexual movie'.[7] Though Guadagnino's claim to pioneership is obviously contestable, both his and Aciman's suggestion of bisexuality as a possible frame of interpretation is worth taking up. Similarly, Aciman's identification of certain viewers' *volition* to find in this story a knowable form of gayness is instructive. What might a queer text look like were it to exceed knowable forms of gayness? Bisexuality, I suggest, is at once an expansive and particularizing lens through which to approach *Call Me by Your Name*'s status as a nongay yet queer film. As an analytic approach, bisexuality lays bare the strictures of gay hermeneutics and monosexist representational paradigms that have stymied discussions of *Call Me by Your Name*.[8] A bisexual sensibility allows us to comprehend the film's queerness not as a truncated or inadequate form of gayness but as a portrait of sexuality's mutability.

Anal monstration

The most troubling moment for many of the film's gay critics occurs when Elio (Timothée Chalamet) and Oliver (Armie Hammer) caress one another in Elio's bedroom and undress. From the bed where the two of them embrace, the camera pans – past Eduardo Arroyo's poster for the 1981 Roland Garros tennis championship, pasted to the wall – towards an open window. The camera rests gazing out the window at a moonlit tree, Elio and Oliver's soft moans blending with

the sounds of nature's Orthoptera. The turning away of the film from this carnal moment spells a problem for these critics. For Ratskoff, the film refuses 'the salacious filth and sexualized male flesh that give gay culture its radical power. [...] The post-gay world is too civilized for naughty gay boys and certainly cannot be bothered by the unfortunate deviancy of gay culture.'[9] Here, Ratskoff locates in the *visualization* of sex between men a deviant, radical power whose elision can only be assimilatory. In a similar vein, this moment reminds *Guardian* reviewer Guy Lodge of 'the kind of tasteful dodge that practically nods to Code-era Hollywood', by which he means the Production Code – effectively enforced to varying degrees between 1934 and 1968 – which prohibited the inference of 'sex perversion'.[10] Miller characterizes the camera's movement here as a 'demure retreat from the sex act', which shields a spectator from 'the unlovely spectacle of blood, shit, and pain' that he surmises to be taking place off screen.[11] For Ratskoff, Lodge and Miller alike, this pan can only be understood as a conservative and regressive gesture; not to depict what they assume to be anal penetrative sex between men is deemed classically homophobic.

These readings have, however, met contestation. David Greven, in his response to Miller's article, asserts that

> [i]t's impossible for Miller to imagine that, perhaps, the film is employing a certain level of decorum here to frustrate our appetites for full-on consummation in a manner that is commensurate with its larger, painstakingly maintained themes and aesthetics of longing to the point of deprivation.[12]

In Greven's reading, the film transposes the aches of its protagonists onto the spectator, whose potential longing to see 'full-on consummation' – to potentially look upon these actors' naked bodies and *see* them engaged in anal sex – is frustrated, leaving us with a bathos akin to that of our characters.[13] The lack of consideration given to the affective functions this scene performs is reflected in Greven's broader critique of Miller's essay, which he sees as typifying a tendency among certain gay male queer theorists: 'that anything that smacks of personal investment – emotional ties, personal and mutual – must be evacuated from any depiction of sex and sexuality'.[14] Through Greven's critique, we can thus understand the reverence of the sex act as superlative queer cinematic representation as the natural conclusion of an approach which denies the representational meaningfulness of emotionality. Within this interpretive framework, longing, pleasure, joy and melancholy are small fry when compared to the *image* of messy, abject, visceral homosex.

The privileging of the sex act among *Call Me by Your Name*'s critics is also interrogated by Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover in their observation that

'[d]ebates around leaving the central sex scene off screen reveal a persistent anxiousness about the monstration of gay sex, a demand and sometimes a pressure for queer films to show sex acts in a declarative fashion'.[15] This investment in declarative sex acts, which they term 'queer monstration', presents itself as an imperative for queerness to be made visible. Monstration was first conceptualized in film studies by André Gaudreault, who uses the term to describe an early mode of narrative communication 'which consists of *showing* characters [...] who *act out* rather than *tell* the vicissitudes to which they are subjected'.[16] This showing rather than telling is a specifically *visual* mode of representation, the 'Here it is! Look at it' that characterized early cinema's display of attractions.[17] To be invested in a cinema of queer monstration is to forge a yardstick of queer representation with reference to a visual economy. In this economy, queer value is found in those images most identifiably *gay*.

But what 'counts' for these critics as an identifiably gay image? It is wrong to suggest that *Call Me by Your Name* never deploys a monstrative narrative mode in relation to sex – it is deployed in some instances and not in others. The film's refusal of monstration in *this moment* is a refusal of the scene of potential penetrative anal sex, that, with respect to the film *in toto*, cannot be read as a closeting of *any sex* between men. Accusations of *Call Me by Your Name*'s assimilationism, self-censorship or regressiveness are complicated by the visualization of carnal desire between Elio and Oliver at other moments in the film: from massaging to kissing to groping to cock-sucking to cum-licking. These moments *are* salacious and sexual, and, no, they would not meet the strictures of Hollywood's Production Code. There is nothing that would suggest to me that the image of a man licking a mingling of peach juice and cum off his finger is any more deferential to the sensibilities of a heterosexual or homophobic audience than the scenes of penetrative anal sex between men that can be found in successful 'gay' films like *Weekend* (Andrew Haigh, 2011) or *Kill Your Darlings* (John Krokidas, 2013). It would seem, therefore, that the complaint is not that the film elides the portrayal of sex between men but that it does not show us the scene of what many assume to be penetrative anal sex. The gay representational paradigm yearned for and politicized by these critics is not simply queer monstration, but *anal* monstration.

The image that Miller purports to have been denied – that of bloody, shitty penetrative anal sex and 'Elio's desiring asshole' – is, tellingly, one he *imagines* having taken place.[18] Nowhere does the film evidence precisely what kind of sex Elio and Oliver partook in that night.[19] Miller's secondary assumption – that Elio bottomed and Oliver topped – betrays further the limitations of his interpretive approach: the skinny, shorter ephebe must be the bottom, the muscular, taller 20-something must be the top. These imagined details are

symptomatic of a normalizing undercurrent in Miller's essay, which surmises both the kind of sex that took place and the roles taken therein with reference to normative notions of what 'gay sex' *is* and which 'type' of men *do what*. We can thus come to understand Miller and other critics' identification of homophobia in the unseen (and fundamentally imagined) image of anal penetrative sex as an ideologically inflected hermeneutic bound by its own normalizing prejudices.

This hermeneutic reveals itself to be undergirded by the normative and fundamentally anti-queer assumption that anal penetrative sex is *the* gay sex act par excellence. In Miller's undeniably most well-known article, 'Anal Rope', he describes the anus as

> the popularly privileged site of gay male sex, the orifice whose sexual use general opinion considers (whatever happens to be the state of sexual practices among gay men and however it may vary according to time and place) the least dispensable element in defining the true homosexual.[20]

It would seem that, with time, Miller's sense of what 'gay male sex' is has shifted away from the variety and proteanism of sexual practices among gay men, instead seeking, in queer film representation, that which is 'popularly privileged' by 'general opinion' as meaning 'gay male sex'. It is through this allegiance to dominant sexual epistemology that Miller is now content to conflate anal penetrative sex with gayness as a whole (pun perhaps intended). Miller's surmising of a bottom and a top through qualities of these characters that one can only guess – perhaps physicality, age, demeanour – is not incidental: it is part and parcel of an epistemology of sexuality that remains tied to normative categories. To take up this epistemology of sexuality is to be limited by a rigid, overdetermined taxonomy through which sexuality is necessarily organizable into binaries of male/female, masculine/feminine, gay/straight, active/passive. These are the very structures queer enquiry has sought to unsettle.

The film, however, provides us with something more expansive than this taxonomical approach permits. *Call Me by Your Name*'s turning away from a *potential* site of anal penetrative sex occurs alongside the explicit visualization of other kinds of queer carnal relation. Consider the moment which is, for Greven, 'the film's most achingly, overpoweringly sexual scene':

> Oliver systematically cracks each of Elio's toes in order – so the older man says – to soothe his pain over a nosebleed. Elio's breath hisses out with each crack, but he submits; it's sweetly sadomasochistic. There are many ways of depicting the erotic onscreen; doesn't this one deserve recognition?[21]

Far from assimilatory, the film's depiction of moments like these, and its avoidance of that which comes to mind first when many think 'gay sex', in fact broadens the scope of queer cinematic erotics. For Greven, there is an overwhelming erotic power in this scene of toe-cracking. For me, it's Elio's perverse encounter with Oliver's swimming trunks. His face shrouded in them, he inhales the fabric that has touched the genitals he desires; as he worships this fetish object – stretched out on all-fours, yogi-like – his concupiscence is briefly assuaged in a moment of sensory abandon. My stressing of the queer import of this moment of protracted, fetishistic sexuality is grounded in my agreement with Lisa Downing 'that a queer theory that does not embrace the energies of the "perverse" is missing a trick in failing to celebrate the "twistedness," the "athwart-ness," of which perverts have long been accused'.[22] In this sense, the film's expansion of carnality *beyond* sites of penetrative sex should be understood as quintessentially perverse in its fetishistic turning towards a nonnormative object. It's moments like these, which fleetingly orient us around a heady fetish object, that offer a queer expansion of erotics. As Oliver remarks upon noticing Elio has masturbated using a peach, 'You've moved onto the plant kingdom already. What's next? Minerals?' Perhaps.

The misgivings of the critics who bemoan *Call Me by Your Name*'s lack of 'gay sex' – emblematized, for them, in the camera's turning away from a site of potential anal penetrative sex – are, in fact, parochialism. Their approach reveals what might be termed an axiology of representation, which privileges sex involving penile penetration and devalues the sexuality and eroticism of other perverse, inventive, queer kinds of carnal relation. The film itself, however, makes space for what Galt and Schoonover call 'the heterotopic and anti-reifying forces of queer desire, where queerness resists any stable mapping of bodies to identities'.[23] This queer instability is unrecognizable to some as gayness, but perhaps it is not gayness at all.

Formal bisexualization

Michael du Plessis, in his survey of discourses around bisexuality, observes that 'bisexuality seems to lend itself to exaggeration – all or nothing; everyone is bisexual or no one is'.[24] These biphobic adages have been articulated in starkly gendered ways when positioned against women and men respectively. Vis-à-vis women, the assumption is that *all* have bisexual capacity, rendering female bisexual specificity meaningless. It is from this position that female bisexuality is, in the words of Shiri Eisner, 'converted and rewritten into [...] something that's both palatable and convenient to patriarchy'.[25] Often, this conceptualization of female bisexuality treats it simply as a component or an extension of female heterosexuality: an unserious phase or an erotic spectacle for heterosexual men. When turning to critical engagements

with film, we can observe this tendency in the reluctance to think cinematic representations of female bisexuality through the lens of queerness, a tendency which Maria San Filippo subverts in her reparative bisexual readings of *Persona* (Ingmar Bergman, 1966) and *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch, 2001).[26] The nonexistence of male bisexuality, however, is conceptualized differently. As bisexual scholars and activists alike have observed, whereas women's desire towards other women is neutralized (often through hypersexualization) into 'heterosexuality', bisexual men's desire towards other men is treated as a *disqualification* of attraction towards women, yoking such desires to gayness indelibly.[27]

A symptom of this tendency can, similarly, be found in both critical and vernacular discussions around *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005), the majority of which diminish the film's representations of its main characters' desires towards their wives in a strategic effort to read them as gay. These kinds of presumptions should be understood as rooted in dominant ideology's epistemological frameworks: patriarchal in their androcentrism, cissexist in their gender binarism and monosexist in their insistence on a gay-straight binary. We can understand these frameworks, in Louis Althusser's terms, as part of an ideology that *hails* sexual subjects into intelligibility, a process he calls interpellation.[28] To recognize monosexism as a constituent part of dominant sexual ideology is to better understand how bisexuality has been conceptualized as nonexistent. In other words, it is not bisexuality that is impossible, but bisexual *interpellation* within an ideology of sexuality defined by monosexism.[29]

It is evident that the dominant monosexualities are often naturalized on film, but this phenomenon is not simply a symptom of spectators' own ideological presumptions. Cinema has also worked on the level of *form* to naturalize monosexual signification. Most are familiar with the classical narrative structure deployed by many Hollywood films, in which heterosexual marriage is established as a telos reifying heteromonogamous norms.[30] Yet, comparatively, certain 'gay' narratives adhere to structures that establish a coming out temporality journeying from inauthentic closetedness to authentic outness. These kinds of 'sexual journeys' can be seen, for example, in Evie (Nicole Ari Parker) from *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love* (Maria Maggenti, 1995) or in Howard (Kevin Kline) from *In & Out* (Frank Oz, 1997); a character's past extragender relationship is repudiated in order to effect the coming out narrative's telos: the acceptance of the true gay self. In these narratives, as Esther Saxey argues in relation to literature, 'the archetypal story uses the exclusion of any bisexual potential as one of its key dramatic and moral incidents', in order to buttress 'an ethical battle between enforced, inauthentic heterosexuality and redemptive gay honesty'.[31] It is through the deployment of certain narrative structures that film can exclude and subsume its characters' bisexual behaviour into narrative structures that reify notions of monosexual authenticity.

It is in such narratives that a (usually female) character's intragender desires are treated as experimental phases on the way to heterosexuality, or a character's extragender desires are treated as confused or inauthentic periods on the way to homosexuality.[32] As Beth Carol Roberts discerns,

> [i]n films where the protagonist has a relationship with someone of one sex and then one with someone of the other sex, movie critics tend to read her sexual journey as one of conflict and resolution, often utilizing tropes associated with the narratives of Coming Out or Going Straight, depending on the ordering of her partners.[33]

Roberts understands these readings as a means through which critics 'sort out (quite literally) the unruly sexual histories these films depicted'.[34] Although Roberts is describing spectatorial interpretations, it is, crucially, through a film's formal qualities – here, narrative temporality – that such interpretations become either amenable to or troubling for monosexual interpretation. I contend that part of what has rendered *Call Me by Your Name* irksome for critics looking to ascribe gayness to the film is its *textual treatment* of Elio and Oliver's desire towards women. The structuring of these characters' desires resists the models of 'Coming Out' and 'Going Straight' that Roberts identifies, instead deploying a transgressive mode of textuality which confounds expectations regarding narrative and *mise en scène*. Where such cinematic systems have been used, conventionally, to signify stable monosexual subjects, their inventive and subversive deployment *against* such a signification effects what might be termed formal bisexualization.

Monosexual signification on film is conventionally achieved through reference to the dominant epistemology of sexuality which reifies the gay-straight binary. Within this epistemology, aspersions are cast on the veracity of desire towards women when expressed by a man who also desires men. For a man, Michael Amherst writes, 'a single kiss with a man can be taken as symptomatic of closeted homosexuality'.[35] That a man who has once expressed desire towards men might *retain* his desire towards women – or experience desire towards women *later* – is rendered both conceptually and epistemologically unthinkable. It is within this monosexist ideology of sexuality that *Call Me by Your Name*'s visualization of sex acts between Elio and Marzia (Esther Garrel) takes on a specific significance. Rather than be understood simply as a symptom of the 'acceptability' of images of sex between men and women in cinema, these scenes must be understood in two contexts: first, the ideological context, where it dashes presumptions around queer men's potential to desire women and, second, the textual context, wherein the film presents these scenes in concert with its narrativizing of the burgeoning love between Elio and Oliver. *Call Me by Your Name*'s visualization of sex between

Elio and Marzia thus provides an affirmative visualization of male bisexual possibility against the doctrine of monosexist ideology and the conventions of narratives of sexual becoming.

The sex scenes between Elio and Marzia are tender in their unpretentiousness. The first time they have sex is outside at night. Their figures occupy a corner of the frame against a backdrop of dimly moonlit grass. It's Elio's first time doing this, and he ejaculates prematurely. Elio is mortified but Marzia is playful and nonplussed; she laughs and reassures him that this is fine. The second time they have sex is in a stony garret atop the Perlmans' villa. Elio throws a dusty mattress to the floor and turns on the radio; F. R. David's Europop classic 'Words' plays out, Marzia removes her bikini top and Elio kisses her abdomen. The two stumble onto the dirty mattress and Elio folds down Marzia's bikini bottoms; intermittently, he kisses her mons pubis and looks directly up at her. We cut to the radio, which tinnily hisses the cheesy tune.

Watching these scenes carefully, it becomes apparent that certain critics' assertions of their graphicness – what Miller calls 'the explicitness reserved for hetero-consummations' in the film – are hyperbole.[36] The outdoor sex between Elio and Marzia is barely perceptible; their bodies flank the frame as we witness a moment not of idealized sexual union but of sweet sexual clumsiness (Figure 10.1). Although the second sex scene between the two depicts them in a less concealed manner, it cuts away to a radio just as the sex between them is beginning. When Miller writes that '[t]o gaze on love-making had been perfectly acceptable when Elio lost his (heterosexual) virginity with Marzia', and that the film treats sex between Elio and Oliver as 'the wrong kind of fuck', he cynically exaggerates the former scene's explicitness in the service of a reading unsupported by the film itself.[37] What Greven calls the 'decorum' exercized in the sex scene between Elio and Oliver is just as discernible in the scenes between Elio and Marzia: in the hiddenness of their decentred bodies in the grass and in the cutaway to the radio in the midst of their passion. Therefore Miller is, again, treating the visualization – even the nonexplicit, barely perceptible visualization – of *penetrative* sex *as* sex, as the prized form of fucking.

The placement of these scenes within the film's narrative structure poses further challenges to Miller and other critics' readings of the film's 'straightness'. Consider that the outdoor sex scene cuts to Elio hunched over at a desk, scribbling messages to Oliver declaring his desire for him; Elio and Marzia's second tryst occurs on the same day as his first with Oliver. In her consideration of different narrative temporalities and their relation to bisexual intelligibility on film, Roberts proposes that

> [t]ypically we are shown (bi) characters oscillating between, or partaking in, same- and other-sex attractions, particularly in narratives where plot and/or story unfold



FIGURE 10.1: Elio (Timothée Chalamet) and Marzia (Esther Garrel): a (barely perceptible) moment not of idealized sexual union but of sweet sexual clumsiness. Luca Guadagnino (dir.), *Call Me by Your Name*, 2017. Italy/France/USA/Brazil. © Frenesy, La Cinefacture.

> in chronological order and/or within a homogenous setting. [This] strategy ensures that one sexual event is not perceived as more authentic or less definitive than the other [...]. [T]he (sexual and) narrative conditions anticipate those of the cinema, a medium in which the importance of same- and other-sex activities is weighted through temporal and spatial relations.[38]

This oscillatory approach to depicting sexual desire wherein intra- and extragender attractions occur in succession spells a bisexualization of narrative temporality; these moments' spatial contingency works to support their contextual equability. In this sense, *Call Me by Your Name* can be understood as anticipating the tendency of a monosexual spectatorial hermeneutic to disqualify certain representations of desire with the support of narrative justification, and to deny it this justification.

The temporal presentation of these desires in an oscillatory fashion, twinned with their taking place within the same milieu, frustrates attempts to read them monosexually. It is this cinematic quality that inspires critic Anthony Lane to remark,

> you don't think, Oh, Elio's having straight sex, followed by gay sex, and therefore we must rank him as bi-curious. [...] Desire is passed around the movie like a dish, and the characters are invited to help themselves, each to his or her own taste.[39]

Lane's observation that the film's portrayal of Elio's desirous excesses resists ranking this character's sexuality is accurate. However, we should not consider bisexuality (or even 'bi-curiousness') as a ranking akin to the dominant monosexualities. Bisexuality, instead, signals possibility beyond a hegemonic binary of sexuality, not an alternate model of sexual subjectivity that can be just as easily signified on film as heterosexuality and homosexuality. *Call Me by Your Name*'s formal presentation of its characters' desires frustrates monosexual taxonomy as it ushers in bisexual potentiality.

Yet it is not simply through sex scenes that *Call Me by Your Name* conveys this potentiality but also in some notable shots where the film visualizes these extensive desires through the positioning of actors' bodies as constituent parts of the *mise en scène*. We can sense this bisexual potentiality when Elio watches Oliver and Chiara (Victoire du Bois) dancing and kissing, later gazing upon their embrace the morning after the party (Figure 10.2). Yes, there is sexual jealousy here, but this is not simply the Girardian heterosexual erotic rivalry.[40] As Elio's later comments about Chiara reveal, his are sexual jealous*ies* directed towards both Chiara and Oliver, a simultaneous desire to be the one kissing *either* of them.

Or perhaps we can discern a similar organization of bodies in the *mise en scène* when Oliver beckons Marzia to feel a knot in Elio's back; the three of



FIGURE 10.2: Elio (Timothée Chalamet) gazing upon the embrace of Chiara (Victoire du Bois) and Oliver (Armie Hammer) the morning after the party. Luca Guadagnino (dir.), *Call Me by Your Name*, 2017. Italy/France/USA/Brazil. © Frenesy, La Cinefacture.



FIGURE 10.3: Marzia (Esther Garrel), Oliver (Armie Hammer) and Elio (Timothée Chalamet) touch in a moment equally caring and erotic. Luca Guadagnino (dir.), *Call Me by Your Name*, 2017. Italy/France/USA/Brazil. © Frenesy, La Cinefacture.

them touch – briefly – in a moment equally caring and erotic (Figure 10.3). These tableaux speak to the unique bisexual legibility of the triangle. A recurrent observation of bisexual theorists, including Catherine Deschamps, Marjorie Garber, Clare Hemmings, Maria Pramaggiore and Maria San Filippo, the triangular image carries the potential to convey bisexual desirous simultaneity.[41] Yes, this image is structured according to a cisnormative gender binary – its display of desire towards a man and a woman *simultaneously* – but its subversiveness lies in its *structural rejection* of compulsory monosexuality. Images of triangles featuring two men and one woman carry two subversive potentials: first, they work against the ideological denial of male bisexuality's possibility, and second, they depict a *multiplicity* of desire in a male subject, thus defying the masculinist notion of male oneness, famously theorized by Luce Irigaray.[42] We can find these subversive triangular images of male bisexuality in film examples ranging from Coline Serreau's *Pourquoi pas!* (*Why Not!*, 1977) and Eloy de la Iglesia's *El Diputado* (*Confessions of a Congressman*, 1978) to John Akomfrah's *Speak Like a Child* (1998) and Alfonso Cuarón's *Y tu mamá también* (*And Your Mother Too*, 2001). In the context of a monosexist epistemology of sexuality that denies male bisexuality's possibility and asserts the oneness of masculinity, these cinematic images are disruptive. By making this observation, I do not mean to say the image of the bisexual triangle is the

ideal bisexual image. (In fact, it indicates the stringent limitations of bisexual legibility on screen.) The image of the bisexual triangle image might be understood, instead, as a means through which film has made bisexuality knowable. In a visual economy in which sexuality must be seen to be believed, the bisexual triangle image beats a monosexist visual logic at its own game.

Call Me by Your Name's handling of desire through systems of narrative temporality and *mise en scène* indicates a kind of formal bisexualization at play. Through these unconventional deployments of form, the film takes the systems of sexuality's signification on screen and perverts them to such an extent that the semiotic clues through which sexuality is usually read on screen become unreliable in their multivocality. A similar kind of sexual-semiotic polyvalence also animates Guadagnino's limited series *We Are Who We Are* (2020). Here, the sexualities of the characters Fraser and Caitlin/Harper (both of whom are played by bisexual-identified actors: Jack Dylan Grazer and Jordan Kristine Seamón, respectively) are rendered expansive through a proliferation of differently gendered desirous encounters and, with Caitlin/Harper, the unintelligibility of the character's gender.[43] Semiotic instability is a theme that *Call Me by Your Name* also touches upon in dialogue. In her compelling reading of Oliver and Samuel's (Michael Stuhlbarg) discussion of the word apricot's etymological roots, Jaishikha Nautiyal finds parallels with the film's treatment of sexuality:

> The incongruities, the repetitions, and the arbitrariness of the word apricot's signification across the seven seas catalyze the preripened, tart juiciness of desire that ironically blooms prior to and alongside the identity-fixing confines of its transnational markers [...]. Among several other moments in the film, this moment of intrigue rearranges and mobilizes what might otherwise be limited as heterosexed sensory objects of desire – opening into feeling before calling and naming the inexplicable, desire-bending-love-breaking-heart-barking-love.[44]

This desirous unnameability – metaphorized through 'apricot' as a Saussurian arbitrary sign – speaks to sexuality's potential for extensibility.[45] When queerness is articulated as being one certain thing – a *gay* thing, with a concomitant language and symbolic economy that secure its knowability – desire's extensibility becomes something to be purged. And, like the overzealous eater who has gorged themselves on apricots, peaches and eggs, these erotic excesses leave some dyspeptic.

Gay indigestion

During Oliver's first breakfast with the Perlmans, Annella (Amira Casar) offers him a second egg in a gesture of hospitality. Oliver refuses the offer, however,

cautioning, 'I know myself too well. If I have a second, I'm just gonna have a third, and then a fourth, and then you're just gonna have to roll me out of here'. Oliver's awareness of his own propensity towards overindulgence serves as a rich metaphor for the bisexual desirous excesses that will come to be revealed; this is a metaphor that bisexual theorist Jo Eadie sees played out in other cinematic contexts wherein bisexual figures on film are made meaningful through their signifying 'the threats of unchecked appetite'.[46] For Eadie, filmic representations of bisexual gluttony emanate 'not out of a general emotion of "biphobia" but through [bisexuality's] implication in very particular discourses of anxiety'.[47]

One anxious discursive drama in which the bisexual figure can be found is what Eadie calls '[t]he pull between uncontainable appetite and dour asceticism'.[48] It is within this conflict between temperance and voracity that bisexuality is rendered knowable, the feared excesses of bisexual desire metaphorized in the excesses of ingurgitation. Yet further, *Call Me by Your Name*'s use of eggs as the objects through which this conflict is analogized recalls the most renowned eggs of classical literature: those served at Trimalchio's feast in Petronius's *Satyricon*. In this memorable episode, the grotesque half-hatched viscera beneath the eggs' shells signify the orgiastic excesses – both sexual and gastronomical – of Trimalchio and his guests' celebrations.[49] That the ovular excesses to which Oliver alludes might evoke this scene of antiquitarian excess speaks to the rich layers of metaphor within the film. It is, therefore, apposite that within *Call Me by Your Name*'s milieu – idyllic, leisurely, replete with knowledge of classical literature and abundant with eggs aplenty – bisexuality's own excesses come into view. With his comments, Oliver announces a propensity for desirous excess while imposing temperate limitations herein. Beneath their joviality, Oliver's words evoke the struggle between appetite and asceticism, which Eadie finds so typical of cinematic bisexualities, and an awareness of the laws of decorum governing his present surroundings. The abject image of being 'rolled out' following overconsumption is not becoming of breakfast on the veranda; Oliver saves his overindulgences to be shared privately with his allies in excess.

A focus on *Call Me by Your Name*'s metaphorization of bisexuality through excess gives us a clue as to an additional aspect of certain critics' discomfort with the film, what, I contend, is a gay discomfort with bisexuality more broadly. In his polemical and astute consideration of anti-bisexual sentiment within gay discourses, Jo Eadie proclaims:

> Indigestion is at the core of the gay body politic. Its constant invitation to queers to come and join the party (in either sense of the word) results in a discomforting mass of foreign bodies lodged inside, stuck in its throat, or undigested in its stomach. The cure would be to recognize that the signs which have been collected

> around the figure of the homosexual [...] in fact secure nothing [...]. They do not – and this is crucial because it is the very opposite of how those signs are usually read – *tell us anything*.[50]

Here, Eadie parses precisely the threat that bisexuality poses a certain form of gay politics, that which San Filippo terms 'bisexuality's ontological, epistemological and representational polysemy that generates its subversive potential to lay bare the mutability, contingency and inherent transgressiveness of desire'.[51] *Polysemous excess is the enemy of a gay representational politics predicated on knowable signs*. To view Elio's face – in one instant enshrouded in Oliver's swimming trunks, inhaling a trace of the cock and balls he desires, and, in another, hovering above Marzia's vulva, transfixed in anticipation of the pleasures that await him – is to view a figure desirously polymorphous and semiotically polysemous.

The threat of bisexuality to a certain kind of gay politics has been theorized by Kenji Yoshino in his hypothesis that straight and gay people 'have mutual investments in the erasure of bisexuals'.[52] The causes of these investments are outlined by Yoshino as, first, an unwillingness or an inability to understand phenomena beyond binaries (both philosophically and cognitively), and, second, a political investment in stabilizing categories of sexual orientation, maintaining the alleged 'primacy' of sex binarism, and preserving the norm of monogamy.[53] The specifically gay investment in bisexual erasure is also characterized, according to Yoshino, by an 'interest in guarding the stability of homosexuality, insofar as [gay people] view that stability as the predicate for the "immutability defense" or for effective political mobilization'.[54] Bisexual erasure can thus be understood as an epistemic tool through which homosexuality can shore up its pretence of immutability and position its politics with reference to a stable contingent.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues, in one of queer theory's foundational texts, that heterosexuality's meaning is dependent on the 'simultaneous subsumption and exclusion' of homosexuality.[55] While this observation is, as Sedgwick would say, axiomatic, we must also account for a homologous process to that which she describes. In this process, homosexuality is made meaningful through the subsumption and exclusion of heterosexuality. These contrapuntal straight and gay processes are contingent upon what Clare Hemmings calls the 'due process of repudiation in the formation of a gendered and sexual self'.[56] The repudiation of one or other gender thus works to establish monosexual subjectivity as immutable: innate, natural, unchanging. For a gay politics or theory to acknowledge bisexual possibility is to lose grip of certain binary structures of which it has made strategic use in asserting its immutability: straight/gay, male/female, monogamous/nonmonogamous. It is through these binaries that mainstream gay politics has made some of its legislative gains, from same-sex marriage to asylum-seeking on

the basis of sexual orientation.[57] Yet texts hold the potential to remind us of the excesses of desire disavowed by this kind of gay politics, and to render discernible those it excludes. In these troubling bisexual images, desire's mutability manifests itself in ways that undermine a sexual politics of immutability.

However, these strategies are not limited to a mainstream gay politics but can also be found in certain strands of queer theory where, ironically, the former is often critiqued. David Halperin's cutting assertion in 2009 that '*queer* has lost its sense of unassimilable and irredeemable sexual deviance, and subsided into a mere synonym of gay' can help us to identify certain monosexist trends in queer theory.[58] I'm talking about those works of queer scholarship predicated on a critical and theoretical oppositionality to heterosexuality, a reclamation of medico-juridical models of 'the sodomite' or 'the homosexual' and the centring of those intragender sex acts allegedly most discomforting for straight sensibilities. The predominance of these gay critical foci constrains queer studies' potential to find meaningful those expressions of sexuality that fall outside dominant models of sexual epistemology.

With consideration of this dominant formulation of gay politics and the assumption of a gay position in queer studies, we can better understand the eschewal of bisexuality in critical responses to texts like *Call Me by Your Name*, which fail to signify gayness in a univocal manner. A useful parallel can be drawn here through Joseph Ronan's critical analysis of the reception of Alan Hollinghurst's novel *The Stranger's Child* (2011). Ronan posits that '[t]he novel's bisexualities stage a critique of their inevitable interpretation within the terms of the Gay Novel'.[59] Ronan expands that these terms are defined by an overdetermined reading position that seeks the depiction of explicit sex between men, and a notion of 'Gay Truth'.[60] Importantly, the encounter between what Ronan calls the 'Gay Reader' and the bisexual text 'is frustrating [...]. It refuses to provide what it sets the Gay Reader up to want – particularly in the way sex is presented.'[61] The similarities between this text's reception and that of *Call Me by Your Name* are stark; accordingly, we might say that the 'Gay Spectator' seeks 'Gay Truth' in the 'Gay Film'. Neither Ronan nor I are positing these terms as essentialized categories of subjectivity or ontology; rather, these are hermeneutic and epistemological positions rooted in a monosexist understanding of sexuality. It is within this epistemology that bisexuality must be cast aside, lest it threaten a monosexual reading tradition.

This critical move is nowhere more observable than in Miller's article's only mention of bisexuality, which is literally parenthetical. In these parentheses, he writes that, in the 'mainstream gay movie', 'gay protagonists regularly pass through the bisexual antechamber'.[62] In order to be accounted for, bisexuality must be figuratively *siloed*. It must be banished to a conceptual antechamber – a

place of transition, smallness, indeterminacy. Steven Angelides writes, in his historiographic consideration of bisexuality, 'Bisexuality has functioned as the structural Other to figurations of sexual identity and has represented the very uncertainty of the hetero/homosexual division'.[63] If Miller were to grant bisexuality the status of a *room*, this would be to *render uncertain* that upon which his critique is predicated: the conceptualization of sexual identity through the heterosexual/homosexual binary.

The space *Call Me by Your Name* affords these excesses, however, is roomy. Alcohol is drunk to excess, fruit is put to use in excess of its dietary function, desire exceeds monosexual frameworks. The film evokes the abandon of excess, while simultaneously figuring its aching unreachability. Joyous inebriation becomes vomiting, the peach once so appealing becomes the object of sexual shame, the person one desires must leave. Where the film choreographs various dances between excessive abandon and sobering bathos, we can perhaps find a dynamic akin to that between bisexual desire and the epistemological frameworks that structure its experience. To know a desire towards Elio, Oliver, Marzia and Chiara is to know the difficulty of these desires being expressed or signified, read or known. Perhaps one of the most meaningful ways *Call Me by Your Name* enjoins bisexual specificity is through the starkness with which it conveys yearning. To desire bisexually in a world structured by monosexual epistemology is to yearn for a world anew.

Elio, Oliver and Mario

If Elio and Oliver were to take a trip from the Perlmans' villa, around an hour's drive northwest, they would find the city of Milan. There, in the summer of 1983, they might have encountered the group of volunteers who were in the process of creating the *Circolo di cultura omosessuale Mario Mieli* [Circle of Homosexual Culture Mario Mieli]. This group, which remains in existence to this day, was founded shortly after the suicide of their namesake, Mario Mieli, an Italian theorist, performer and activist. Were Elio and Oliver to speak with these volunteers, they perhaps would have told the two lovers about the ideas of their friend Mario. Perhaps they would have shared with them an Italian copy of his groundbreaking 1977 monograph *Elements of Homosexual Critique*. Delving into this explosive book, Elio and Oliver might have discerned something they recognized in themselves.

Mieli was a radical, communist utopian whose work pulses to this day with a longing to see the world otherwise. Mieli's invective railed against the state, the heteronormative family and the rigidity of gender norms. In theoretical manoeuvres that made use of Sigmund Freud's conception of polymorphous perversity, he

sketched the contours of a better future.[64] In *Elements*, Mieli contends that 'everyone is born endowed with a complete range of erotic capability [...]. They become either heterosexual or homosexual only as a result of educastration (repressing their homoerotic impulses in the first case, and their heterosexual ones in the second).'[65] We can understand Mieli's neologism, educastration, as akin to what I have described as a monosexist epistemology of sexuality, a system of knowledge that renders homo- and heterosexuality meaningful and renders bisexual potentialities unthinkable. Mieli's book ends with a rallying call to embrace that which educastration has denied us in favour of a kind of gay sexuality that does not disavow extragender desire. Mieli polemicizes:

> The liberation of sexuality [...] includes the complete recognition and the concrete manifestation of erotic desire for persons of the other sex on the part of homosexual men and women, and the realisation of a new gay way of loving between women and men.[66]

Mieli's vision of a sexual utopia can and should be recognized today as one with pertinence vis-à-vis bisexuality. Reading Mieli's text, Elio and Oliver would likely recognize a capacity they know in themselves, and perhaps – were they to part ways with some bourgeois tendencies – they might even be convinced of its political power. The recognition and manifestation of desires towards people of different genders is, indeed, something both know intimately.

I conclude with Mieli's ideas not simply for the diversion of imagining Elio and Oliver's encountering them (pleasurable as it may be) but as a reminder that models of queerness undergirded by monosexual assumptions have not always been prioritized by those seeking to comprehend and change the world queerly. Instead, there is a rich tradition – within bisexual politics, queer politics and even gay politics – in thinking queerly about the plasticity and mutability of desire. The responses to *Call Me by Your Name* that I have critiqued in this chapter betray a commitment to monosexual models of sexual epistemology and a failure to imagine queer desire in more expansive terms. The symptoms of this failure can be found in the commitment to penetrative anal sex between men as the preeminent form of queer cinematic monstration, the disdain with which bisexualized forms of narrative and *mise en scène* are dismissed as only ever the product of heterosexuality, and the vociferous discomfort of the gay critic irritated by the nongay queers, who are first hungered for, then become lodged in his gullet.[67] In the critical reception of *Call Me by Your Name* we can find, 40 years after Mieli's theorization, a reification of queerness as what he calls a 'homosexuality [...] in large part subject to the dictatorship of [a heterosexual] Norm'.[68] *Call Me by Your Name* – a film exuding a polymorphous perversity that exceeds singular forms of gayness – warrants a different critical

approach to that taken up by these detractors, one through which extensive bisexual possibilities might be discerned, and educastration unlearned.

NOTES

1. Ben Ratskoff, '*Call Me by Your Name*: Gorgeous, But Is It Gay?' *Advocate*, 5 January 2018, https://www.advocate.com/commentary/2018/1/05/call-me-your-name-gorgeous-it-gay; Garrett Schlichte, '*Call Me by Your Name* Is a Gay Love Story. The Film Should Have Included Gay Sex', *Washington Post*, 18 December 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/soloish/wp/2017/12/18/why-call-me-by-your-name-should-have-included-gay-sex/; Miz Cracker, 'Why Do Gays Keep Falling for *Call Me by Your Name*?', *Slate*, 28 November 2017, https://slate.com/human-interest/2017/11/call-me-by-your-name-is-not-a-gay-movie.html.
2. D. A. Miller, 'Elio's Education', *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 19 February 2018, https://www.lareviewofbooks.org/article/elios-education/.
3. Miller, 'Elio's Education'.
4. Bisexual activists have used a variety of terms to indicate this broad usage, including bi+, bisexual*, the bisexual umbrella, nonmonosexuality and the multi-attraction spectrum. Although this word contains a bi- prefix, bisexual activists, since the 1970s, and theorists, since the 1990s, have put forward nonbinaristic definitions of bisexuality.
5. This chapter uses 'queer' to describe any forms of sexuality and gender beyond heterosexuality and/or cisness. My use of it is slightly different when I discuss queer theory, referring to that specific theoretical tradition which, at times, has embraced the multivalent potentials of 'queer' and, at others, has subsumed these under an assumptive cisgender gayness.
6. Quoted in Mary Katharine Tramontana, 'André Aciman Wants "Total Fluidity"', *Playboy*, 29 October 2019, https://www.playboy.com/read/andre-aciman-total-fluidity.
7. Quoted in TIFF Originals, 'CALL ME BY YOUR NAME Press Conference | Festival 2017', YouTube, 8 September 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDvj0XnYcFs.
8. Monosexism is defined by Shiri Eisner as 'a social structure operating through a presumption that everyone is, or should be, monosexual'. Shiri Eisner s.v., 'Monosexism', in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of LGBTQ Studies*, ed. Abbie E. Goldberg (London: SAGE Publications, 2016), 792.
9. Ratskoff, 'Gorgeous'.
10. Guy Lodge, 'Why Is *Call Me by Your Name* So Coy About Gay Sex?', *The Guardian*, 23 November 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/nov/23/call-me-by-your-name-gay-sex-oscars. The Production Code articulated this rule in different ways across its history. In 1927, it prohibited 'Any inference of sex perversion', and in 1930, it forbade 'Sex perversion or any inference to it'. Reproduced in Jon Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hard Core: How the Struggle over Censorship Saved the Modern Film Industry* (New York and London: New York University Press, [2000] 2002), 301, 304.

11. Miller, 'Elio's Education'.
12. David Greven, 'Unlovely Spectacle: D. A. Miller on *Call Me by Your Name*', *Film International*, 13 March 2018, http://filmint.nu/unlovely-spectacle-miller/.
13. Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover read this moment in relation to the burgeoning HIV/AIDS pandemic, a reading supported, I contend, by the large 1981 on Elio's poster, this being the year that the first recorded AIDS deaths took place. They find in the pan

> a deferral that reflects the larger stakes of historical representation and the film's ability to speak of a moment ripe with potentialities that would be so soon foreclosed [...]. It asks whether the experience of pre-AIDS sex can be visible to us at all.

'Untimely Desires, Historical Efflorescence, and Italy in *Call Me by Your Name*', *Italian Culture* 37, no. 1 (March 2019), https://doi.org/10.1080/01614622.2019.1609220, 72–73.
14. Greven, 'Unlovely Spectacle'.
15. Galt and Schoonover, 'Untimely Desires', 70.
16. André Gaudreault, *From Plato to Lumière: Narration and Monstration in Literature and Cinema*, trans. Timothy Barnard (London: University of Toronto Press, [1988] 2009), 7, 69. Gaudreault is drawing upon similar uses of this term in linguistics, namely Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, *L'Énonciation: De la Subjectivité dans le langage* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1980).
17. Tom Gunning, '"Now You See It, Now You Don't": The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions', *The Velvet Light Trap* 32 (1993), 6.
18. Miller, 'Elio's Education'.
19. The sex between Elio and Oliver is described, in detail, in Aciman's novel, in which both characters top and bottom. However, it is important not to conflate the novel with the film.
20. D. A. Miller, 'Anal Rope', *Representations* 32 (1990): 127.
21. Greven, 'Unlovely Spectacle'.
22. Lisa Downing, 'Perversion and the Problem of Fluidity and Fixity', in *Clinical Encounters in Sexuality: Psychoanalytic Practice & Queer Theory*, ed. Noreen Giffney and Eve Watson (Earth: punctum books, 2017), 140.
23. Galt and Schoonover, 'Untimely Desires', 71.
24. Michael du Plessis, 'Blatantly Bisexual; Or, Unthinking Queer Theory', in *RePresenting Bisexualities: Subjects and Cultures of Fluid Desire*, ed. Donald E. Hall and Maria Pramaggiore (London: New York University Press, 1996), 19.
25. Shiri Eisner, *Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2013), 143.
26. Maria San Filippo, *The B Word: Bisexuality in Contemporary Film and Television* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 66–91.
27. For extensive consideration of the gendered dynamics of bisexuality and biphobia, see Eisner, *Bi*, 136–259.
28. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, [1971] 2001). In making this theoretical move, I am, of course,

indebted to Judith Butler, whose use of Althusserian interpellation to theorize processes of sexual intelligibility instructs me: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, [1990] 2007).

29. Clare Hemmings suggests a similar theoretical framework to mine when she suggests that 'The "I" in "I am bisexual" is not simply an insubstantial assumption of fixed identity, as in "I am lesbian" – rather, it signifies transition and movement in itself. To say "I am bisexual" is to say "I am not 'I'".' 'Resituating the Bisexual Body: From Identity to Difference', in *Activating Theory: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Politics*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Angelia R. Wilson (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993), 129.
30. This phenomenon has been most famously theorized by Rick Altman and Virginia Wright Wexman. See Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987); Wright Wexman, *Creating the Couple: Love, Marriage, and Hollywood Performance* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1993).
31. Esther Saxey, *Homoplot: The Coming-Out Story and Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Identity* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), 10, 130. I am grateful to Joseph Ronan for alerting me to Saxey's argument here.
32. I am using the terms intragender and extragender as a means of accounting for same/similar-gender desire and different-gender desire beyond the constraints of the gender and the sexuality binaries. Admittedly, intragender/extragender is itself another binary; however, it avoids reifying the gender/sexuality binaries I am critiquing while attending to the social separation of different kinds of gendered desiring.
33. Beth Carol Roberts, 'Neither Fish Nor Fowl: Imagining Bisexuality in the Cinema', PhD thesis, New York University, 2013, viii.
34. Roberts, 169.
35. Michael Amherst, *Go the Way Your Blood Beats: On Truth, Bisexuality and Desire* (London: Repeater Books, 2018), 46.
36. Miller, 'Elio's Education'.
37. Miller, 'Elio's Education'.
38. Roberts, 'Neither Fish Nor Fowl', 152.
39. Anthony Lane, '*Call Me by Your Name*: An Erotic Triumph', *New Yorker*, 4 December 2017, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/04/call-me-by-your-name-an-erotic-triumph.
40. René Girard theorizes literary romantic triangles as dramatizing a male character's expression of his desire to be like another man through a rivalry over a female object. *Deceit, Desire & the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, [1961] 1976).
41. Catherine Deschamps, *Le Miroir bisexuel: Une Socio-anthropologie de l'invisible* (Paris: Balland, 2002); Marjorie Garber, *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (London: Penguin, 1995/1997); Clare Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces: A Geography of Sexuality and Gender* (London: Routledge, 2002); Maria Pramaggiore, 'Straddling the Screen: Bisexual Spectatorship and Contemporary Narrative Film', in *RePresenting Bisexualities:*

Subjects and Cultures of Fluid Desire, ed. Donald E. Hall, and Maria Pramaggiore, 272–300 (London: New York University Press, 1996); and San Filippo, *The B Word*.

42. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York, NY: Cornell University Press, [1974] 1985).
43. Jamie Tabberer, '*Luca* Star Jack Dylan Grazer Comes Out as Bisexual, Shares Pronouns', *Attitude*, 5 July 2021, https://www.attitude.co.uk/culture/film-tv/luca-star-jack-dylan-grazer-comes-out-as-bisexual-shares-pronouns-303213/; Nikki Onafuye, 'Start Paying Attention to *We Are Who We Are*'s Breakout Star Jordan Kristine Seamón', *gal-dem*, 22 November 2020, https://gal-dem.com/we-are-who-we-ares-jordan-kristine-seamon-is-stepping-into-her-power/.
44. Jaishikha Nautiyal, 'Queer Aesthetics, Playful Politics, and Ethical Masculinities in Luca Guadagnino's Filmic Adaptation of André Aciman's *Call Me by Your Name*', in *The Routledge Handbook of Gender and Communication*, ed. Marnel Niles Goins, Joan Faber McAlister and Bryant Keith Alexander (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2021), 216.
45. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin, ed. Perry Meisel and Haun Saussy (New York: Columbia University Press, [1916] 2011). In my articulation of sexuality's potential for extensibility, I am thinking of the extensibility of the self in the desired other as theorized by Leo Bersani in 'Sociality and Sexuality', *Critical Inquiry*, 26, no. 4 (2000): 641–56.
46. Jo Eadie, '"That's Why She Is Bisexual": Contexts for Bisexual Visibility', in *The Bisexual Imaginary: Representation, Identity and Desire*, ed. Bi Academic Intervention (London: Cassel, 1997), 156.
47. Eadie, '"That's Why"', 155.
48. Eadie, '"That's Why"', 157.
49. Gaius Petronius Arbiter, *The Satyricon*, trans. J. P. Sullivan (London: Penguin, [*c.*64 BCE] 2011), 21–66. If Trimalchio's feast proposes anything, it is that objects may not be as they seem; foods that appear to be one thing are revealed to be something else. This axiom chimes with one proposed across bisexual politics and theory: that sexuality cannot be read solely through the visible, that the potential for bisexual desire can lurk beneath subjects conventionally read as monosexual.
50. Jo Eadie, 'Indigestion: Diagnosing the Gay Malady', in *Anti-Gay*, ed. Mark Simpson (London: Cassel, 1996), 83, original emphasis.
51. Maria San Filippo, 'The Politics of Fluidity: Representing Bisexualities in Twenty-First-Century Screen Media', in *The Routledge Companion to Media, Sex and Sexuality*, ed. Clarissa Smith, Feona Attwood, and Brian McNair (Oxon: Routledge, 2018), 78.
52. Kenji Yoshino, 'The Epistemic Contract of Bisexual Erasure', *Stanford Law Review*', 52 (2000): 388.
53. Yoshino, 399.
54. Yoshino, 362.
55. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (London: University of California Press, [1990] 2008), 9–10.

56. Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces*, 25.
57. See Clifford J. Rosky and Lisa M. Diamond, 'Scrutinizing Immutability: Research on Sexual Orientation and U.S. Legal Advocacy for Sexual Minorities', *The Journal of Sex Research*, 53, nos. 4–5 (2016): 363–91; Jessica A. Clarke, 'Against Immutability', *The Yale Law Journal*, 125, no. 2 (2015): 1–325.
58. David M. Halperin, 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Bisexual', *Journal of Bisexuality* 9, nos. 3–4 (2009): 454. Halperin advocates for the critical functions of both queer and bisexual theory in resisting this tendency, but he does not comment directly on the susceptibility of queer theory to reproducing critical positions synonymous with gayness.
59. Joseph Ronan, '"Sometimes I Fear That the Whole World is Queer": What Bisexual Theories, Identities and Representations Can Still Offer Queer Studies', PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2014, 165.
60. Ronan, 165–66.
61. Ronan, 166.
62. Miller, 'Elio's Education'.
63. Steven Angelides, *A History of Bisexuality* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 16.
64. Mieli primarily draws upon Freud's ideas from 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume VII*, by Sigmund Freud, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, [1905] 1981), 125–248.
65. Mario Mieli, *Towards a Gay Communism*, trans. David Fernbach and Evan Calder Williams (London: Pluto Press, [1977] 2018), 5.
66. Mieli, 254.
67. Here, I am drawing upon Eadie's assertion that what leads to 'gay indigestion' is

> their craving for us [bisexuals] [...] the indigestible morsel that sticks in the throat [...] as with all indigestible food, the blame falls on us: on the way we taste, on the way we make ourselves unpalatable. The problem lies not with the food, but with the appetite: with a body which cannot digest us, but which wants to devour us.

Eadie, 'Indigestion', 72.

68. Mieli, *Towards*, 254.

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de la Iglesia, Eloy, dir. *El Diputado* (*Confessions of a Congressman*). Figaró Films, Ufesa, Prozesa, 1978.

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