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Perverting Evolutionary Narratives Of Heterosexual Masculinity Or, Getting Rid Of The Heterosexual Bug

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Abstract: Focuses on the characters of **evolutionary** stories about male sexuality. Cause of male grief; Discussion on heterosexual masculinity; Information on gay men.

INTRODUCTION: HOW TO PERVERT EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

Anyone questioning the natural and therefore privileged status of heterosexuality today is likely to meet up with an evolutionary narrative: "After all, how could the human species have survived without heterosexuality?" Popular American cultural knowledge about heterosexual masculinity is increasingly informed by evolutionary accounts of human "nature" that are generated formally by scientists and then passed along in the popular press.¹

These evolutionary narratives-representations of the "reality" of masculinity based on a neo-Darwinian theory-provide a framework for making heterosexual behaviors seem more legitimate (more "natural") than others. Paradoxically, the prevailing commitment to heterosexuality serves as the

framework for the interpretation of our evolutionary history. Evolutionary justifications for the dominant status of heterosexuality have nearly replaced, or perhaps extended, Judeo-Christian ones.²

Evolutionary theories, as scientific stories of the biological origin of species, harness an imaginary past and in so doing specify “natural” aspects of contemporary human sexuality-“perversions” of which can be theorized, condemned, or mocked by those who consider themselves properly and primally heterosexual. Since sex, in the essentialist discourse of modernism, has been thought of as a natural essence geared toward reproduction, sexual acts that do not lead to or imitate reproduction (e.g., masturbation, cunnilingus, anal intercourse, sadomasochistic sex) have been considered abnormal and unnatural,” and, by close association of the “natural” with the morally acceptable, immoral.

Although falsely impartial, absolutist frameworks are not necessary for determining the legitimacy of various behaviors, we all need contingent frameworks to argue for or against any practice (Smith). That we need such frameworks is not the problem. The problem is that science has not been an explicitly political discourse, and enjoys a discursive position as absolute authority, as though “objective” knowledge exists and scientific knowledge is it. For example, such presumably neutral knowledge is often invoked to settle political disputes authoritatively, like whether homosexuality is a crime or a psychological disorder.³ Revolutionary narratives persistently appear in popular American cultural texts and have tremendous appeal in a Judeo-

Christian foundationalist culture that tends to justify heterosexual privilege by appealing to falsely impartial scientific versions of nature.

Evolutionary science is far from impartial, however; at present an ideology of heterosexism colors it. Heterosexism is then perpetuated, in a vicious circle, through its grounding in scientific stories whose authority depends upon a refusal to acknowledge their implication in ideology and politics.

Scientists do not think that the evolutionary past that they construct is imaginary. They think they have evidence that supports their construction of our past. This evidence, however, is interpreted through an unacknowledged heterocentrist framework.

My assumption is not that evolutionary theories are heterosexist and bad *because they (mis-)interpret nature* (what some feminists might claim); nor that evolutionary theories make what is *really* cultural out to be what is natural (what some social constructionists might claim); nor that feminists and queers just don't like to admit what evolutionary theories innocently reveal (what some evolutionary theorists might claim). *All* of these statements assume that science is necessarily at odds with constructionism, or that evolutionary theory is necessarily at odds with feminist and queer theories. It is my aim here to undermine the evolutionary naturalization of heterosexuality, but not by arguing that evolutionary theory itself is the enemy. Such an approach would conflate the heterosexist background assumptions in evolutionary narratives with the logic of evolution itself, and ignore the highly consequential character of scientific stories. Nor do I pervert evolutionary

narratives of heterosexual masculinity by advancing some indisputable “truth” of humanity’s queer evolutionary history, an approach that would affirm, rather than undermine, the naturalization of identities and the authority of science to settle political disputes.

I want to expose the values behind heterosexist scientific accounts-to replace them not with an impossibly value-neutral account but, rather, with an equally sensible evolutionary theory laden with values accountable to queers. As Seidman puts it, science is “a powerful practical-moral force” (181). I engage evolutionary stories not to offer the final truth of our evolutionary history, to biologize even more identities, to stabilize identity itself, or to undermine heterosexism through my own infeasibly detached account of nature. Rather, I offer an alternative story that could function as a different, equally plausible consequential evolutionary myth. This myth, unlike the more popular heterosexist one whose consequence is to naturalize heterosexual manhood, might make heterosexuality seem less instinctual. This in turn might pave the way for greater tolerance of queers, of the instability of identities, and, more generally, of the instability of knowledge about those identities.

Scientific storytelling is a consequential political practice. A queer reading of evolution might interrupt the highly consequential scientific discourses of heterosexual manhood. The idea of, and compulsion to live out, “manhood” as a natural category that is essentially heterosexual has rationalized and enabled a whole host of social ills, notably queer bashing and rape.⁴ But the

evolutionary record is not as straight as many think. There is more than one meaning to assign to various species' sexual behaviors, and more than one way to imagine the evolutionary history of homo *sapiens*. A queer evolutionary story might be an effective way to expose now-current evolutionary stories as heterosexist and challenge the social ills that those stories help legitimate. This intervention proceeds from two related axioms: first, from feminist critiques of science, that the generation of scientific knowledge is always a value-laden cultural practice, usually containing unquestioned heterosexist assumptions that naturalize gender and sexuality;⁵ and second, from queer theory, that cultural texts-in this case scientific texts-can be read as queer, and further, that these queer meanings are no more or less value-laden than the straight meanings already associated with them.⁶ "Queering" evolutionary theory involves offering a new scientific story in a way that exposes the political character of all knowledge claims. Insisting upon the legitimacy of another, queer narrative calls into question not only the hegemonic narrative but the stable, "objective" status of identities and scientific representations more generally.

Several pro-gay scientists (Bailey and Pillard; Hamer and Copeland; LeVay) have suggested that homosexuality is linked to biology. Although the idea of a "gay gene" or a "gay brain" might appeal to many who have been expected to simply "unlearn" their deviant sexuality, and to many who have justified discriminatory practices on the grounds that homosexuality is "unnatural," such an approach leaves in place, and even cements, the status of heterosexuality as natural and normative and, further, the status of scientific stories as

value-neutral accounts of human nature. I want to offer a strategy that takes heterosexuality out of its privileged position as natural and grounded in human evolutionary history.

I consider the ways in which the increasingly popular sociobiological discourse on the sexual practices of insects, birds, and mammals enables the construction of naturalized heterosexual masculine identities. In order to convey the consequential character of evolutionary stories about male sexuality, and the political urgency of alternative consequential accounts, I provide several examples of the ways that evolutionary theories explaining male sexuality get taken up in the popular press. I then argue, without wishing to impute conspiracy or stupidity, that heterosexist background assumptions (including an unexamined commitment to heterosexuality as a privileged institution and identity) in evolutionary theoretical interpretation reinscribe evolutionary stories within a heterosexual logic. After that, I employ evolutionary theory with a homophilic rather than homophobic set of background assumptions in order to show that the theory of evolution could undermine as easily as it has enabled the privileged status of heterosexual relationships and sex acts. By exposing the heterosexist assumptions in theoretical and popular interpretations of evolution, I present evidence of the inescapably political character of scientific stories⁷ and thus of the ease with which any political claim can be justified by “nature,” and, further, of the ensuing impossibility of securing any political rights in “nature.” Thus I argue that biological theories of the “gay brain” or “gay gene” do not feasibly secure gay rights precisely because of the inevitably political character of all scientific accounts

of nature, and because those theories fail to dislodge heterosexuality from its position as biologically normative and scientific stories of nature from their position as value-free. I suggest that exposing the political character of falsely naturalized accounts of heterosexual male desire is a more promising strategy for undermining heterosexist knowledge.

EVOLUTION AND EVOLUTIONARY THEORY ARE ALREADY PERVERTED

Contemporary sexual and gender identities are increasingly wrapped up in a popular Darwinian discourse. For instance, in an interview for a public television series, men's-movement figurehead Robert Bly invokes the evolutionary narrative of man the hunter to explain male grief. This presumably primeval role has influenced the male "collective unconscious." Male grief is thus caused by men's evolutionary past, as Bly put it, "when men were hunters and killed all those animals." So compelling is the evolutionary myth of "man the hunter" that the obvious fact that Americans slaughter countless animals today without hunting and without apparent grief is overlooked. An article in Men's Fitness magazine uses the "man the hunter" story to excuse men's inexpressiveness (Cary). Men went off together away from women to strategize about hunting, and this process evidently requires little emotional expression, which is why women today can expect men to withdraw from rather than talk with them during a conflict. Further, the article explains, men's contemporary social positions, themselves presumably extensions of manly hunting careers, demand being out of touch with one's feelings. (The article asks readers, rhetorically, to imagine what being in touch with one's feelings would be like while attending to people in an emergency room or

building a skyscraper.) Thus we are told: “If you trace male behavior back 40,000 years to the cave, it’s easier to see why men are the way they are” (Cary 67).

Before criticizing specific evolutionary accounts, I want to review, for those less familiar with it, the Darwinian logic of differential sexual psychologies.

Evolution by natural selection is Darwin’s theory that variations that inhibit an individual’s ability to survive to maturity and reproduce will be eliminated.⁸ For example, giraffes with slightly longer necks will survive a “hostile environment” of tall trees, reproduce more giraffes with slightly longer necks, and so on, gradually eliminating variation in giraffe neck length. “All species *overproduce* offspring, not all of which can survive to reproduce in their turn. Thus, there is inevitable competition among the individuals of each species for the means to survive and reproduce, and any inherited advantage in this competition will be naturally selected” (Daly and Wilson 6, authors’ italics). Natural selection works on phenotypes (developmental potentials of genes, appearing as actual traits of organisms in a given environment), but the evolutionary change is transmitted by surviving genes, which are situated on chromosomes.

An adaptation is that which is brought about by differentials among alternative forms, the relative advantage of the feature vis-i-vis its alternative forms playing a significant causal role in its production (Symons). Some things that people do are evolved traits that were put into humans’ nature because at one point, in the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness (the

hunting-and-gathering part of our human history, which ended roughly 10,000 years ago with the spread of agriculture [Wilson 871; hereafter “EEA”), those who had that trait passed on their genes more often. In other words, some physical traits and psychological mechanisms, whether or not they contribute to reproductive success now, are adaptations. “Human nature,” then, is that hodgepodge of adaptations geared toward an Ice Age hunter-gatherer environment that no longer exists (Wilson 196). These adaptations have nothing to do with morality, and may be seen as thoroughly corrupt from various political standpoint.⁹

Sexual reproduction enables gene recombination and thus provides greater genetic variety for adaptiveness in a hostile environment. The fact that humans are a sexually reproducing species, for evolutionary theorists, implies the evolution of two distinct (male and female) human natures or sexual psychologies. The fact that men have many small sperm, while women have few large ovaries, means that women’s parental investment is much greater than men’s: only women can gestate, bear, and nurse the young. In the absence of technology allowing otherwise (e.g., in the EEA), reproduction is “cheap” for men and “costly” for women. The body design that forced our forefathers to invest ovulation, gestation, and lactation time caused in them greater coyness. Our forebrothers, on the other hand, were not forced by their bodily design to invest much of anything and thus could copulate as often as they desired with little physical cost. Evolutionary theorists reason that men’s great number of sperm makes them perpetually sexually interested and carefree. Choosy females were thus a limiting resource for which men

competed against one another (Buss; Daly and Wilson; Symons; Wilson). That such an evolutionary account of heterosexual male desire has captured the popular imagination is obvious in the 1992 Hollywood comedy *Encino Man*, featuring an iced-over caveman who is unearthed and thawed out by two male high school students in Encino, California. Perhaps representing the modern young men's lost (or future) unrestrained masculine (hetero)sexuality, Encino man sniffs out and makes a beeline for an unacquainted young female beauty, climbing over various technological obstacles as if they were trees. The film ends with Encino Man's downward spiral in contemporary California, conceivably revealing human nature to be better suited for life outdoors around a fire, where our hero eventually winds up, with his recently defrosted cave-wife.

A recent issue of *Muscle and Fitness* magazine features an article entitled "Man the Visual Animal" and uses a theory of the evolved difference between human male and female sexual psychologies developed by leading evolutionary psychologist Donald Symons to explain why men leer at women. Ironically, the magazine cover entices readers with "Why Women Lust after Muscular Men." Unfortunately (or fortunately?) for the male bodybuilders reading *Muscle and Fitness*, they learn that women have evolved not to give a damn about the size or shape of men's bodies. Under the subheading "Evolution Happens," the author explains,

Not much has changed in human sexuality since the Pleistocene. In his landmark book *The Evolution of Human Sexuality* (Oxford University

Press, 1979), Symons hypothesizes that the male's sexual response to visual cues has been so rewarded by evolution that it's become innate. (Strote 166)¹⁰

Such stories provide a means by which heterosexual male readers can experience their sexuality as acultural, primal: "The desire to ogle is your biological destiny" (Strote 166). Evolution may "happen," or may have happened, but these stories do not just happen. Their appeal, however, seems to lie precisely in the sense of security provided by the imagined inevitability of heterosexual manhood.

One year after prominent sociobiologist David Barash published his now well known 1977 article in *Science* on the sociobiology of rape in mallards, he published a more general evolutionary adaptationist view of the mating practices of various birds in *Psychology Today*, mentioning the significance of sociobiology for the study of human beings. Editors at *Playboy* eventually saw this and featured an article entitled "Darwin and the Double Standard," with this lead-in: "It has been said that a man will try to make it with anything that moves-and a woman won't. Now the startling new science of sociobiology tells us why" (Morris 109). While providing a vocabulary of motive for adulterous heterosexual male readers, this article's parodic style so thoroughly enmeshes human values with accounts of what's going on in nature" that the possibility of using evolution as an unproblematic foundation to justify or condemn a sexual practice becomes difficult. There are so many different mating habits-such as the female praying mantis's habit of

beheading and eating the male while he mounts her, or the female California seagull's habit of bonding with another female, mounting and being mounted by her, hatching eggs together with her, and using the male gull only for fertilization-that the story could justify any reader's "perversion."

Playboy's lampoonish elucidation of evolved mating habits illustrates what people inevitably do with scientific renderings of 'hature": alloy them with their values and visions of social life. For instance, Morris explains the California seagull this way:

JONATHAN LIVINGSTON LESBIAN

California lady gulls are A.C.D.C. When there aren't enough males to go around, females pair up with each other. One even becomes a bull dyke: She mounts the other, defends the nest and does courtship feeding just like a male normally would. (No, she doesn't get a short haircut!) These "odd couples" lay eggs and sometimes they even hatch! Virgin births? Hardly, It seems that there are lecherous males about who, though happily married, are not averse to a bit on the side. And, we're happy to report, our gay females are easily beguiled into accepting even a one-night stand. That way, they get to have some offspring and each other, too. (110)

Morris writes of wild turkeys:

CRUISING

Male wild turkeys travel in pairs. They both cooperate in dancing about

to impress the lady turkeys, but when it's actually time to screw, one of the males consistently lets the other do it all. What's going on here? The association between males clearly benefits the one who gets to do all the mating, but what's in it for the subordinate Alphonse? Is he *really* a turkey? In fact, he is often Gaston's *brother*, so, though not a father, he is at least guaranteed being an uncle to milady's chicks. (111)

While quite heterosexist, these anecdotes frolic in the value-laden character of nature stories. Morris's style winds up using scientific theories less than satirizing them.

A parallel queer (sub)version of evolutionary theory is possible (something I attempt later in this essay), but mating stories usually become reinscribed in a heterosexist language, presupposing and reinforcing a paradigmatically heterosexual position. The cover story of the January 20, 1992, issue of *Time*, "Why Are Men and Women Different?" is illustrative. The article includes a section called "HOW Other Species Do It" and explains that "nature follows more than one script" (Gorman 48). Just after mentioning that some species do not even have two sexes, Gorman explains one such species, cichlids, this way:

These fish come in three sexes: brightly hued macho males, paler females, and male wimps that look and act like females. There are only a few sexually active males in a school. But the minute a piscine Lothario dies, an ambitious wimp rises to the occasion. His brain unleashes sex

hormones that bring color to his scales and make him feisty, but he can revert to pallid impotence if challenged by a more macho fish. (48)

Gorman's description for *Time* fails to escape a male/female conceptual framework.

The third sex can only be called "male wimps that look and act like females." This language also takes male cichlids who are attracted to or actively seek breeding opportunities with females to be the norm, and the more flexible fish to be odd. This story of the cichlid preserves precisely what another description of the cichlid could call into question: our criteria for gender assignment. This account, like those in the popular men's magazines and the less widely read scientific journals, is brimming with the values and discursive categories of a heterosexist patriarchal culture.

A privileged, naturalized heterosexuality-with its concurrent masculine and feminine dispositions, which make up an auspicious nuclear family unit is an implicit part of the framework for sociobiological interpretation and its reiterations in the popular press. Commonly held assumptions about gender and sexuality make up a strong conceptual filter through which scientific evidence is understood.¹¹ This filter, especially when ignored, prevents data that might be taken as evidence that contradicts the privileged status of heterosexuality from being seen as such. For example, *Time* explains men's better scores on tests that require three-dimensional thought by emphasizing "ancient evolutionary pressures related to hunting, which requires orienting oneself while pursuing prey" (Gorman 45). Women's better scores on tests

which require remembering locations of objects are explained by “evolutionary pressure on generations of women who foraged for their food. Foragers must recall complex patterns formed of apparently unconnected items” (Gorman 45). “Orienting oneself” and “recalling complex patterns” are vague enough so that, if the gendered patterns in test scores were reversed, it could be assumed that men needed to “recall complex patterns” for hunting and women needed to “orient themselves” while foraging. The point is that data are not used to question the assumed man-the-hunter and woman-the-gatherer scenario. As Longino has pointed out, the values in scientific inquiry influence the hypotheses for which the data are taken as evidence. *Time’s* evolutionary account of current Western gender differences in test scores supports the heterosexist model because it already assumes it.

HETEROSEXUAL MASCULINITY AS THE ORIGIN OF THE ORIGINS OF HETEROSEXUAL MASCULINITY

Many evolutionary accounts, without even acknowledging the presence of gays and lesbians, focus on characteristics specific to Western heterosexual men such as rape and sexual harassment, explaining heterosexual men’s behavior toward women as evolved aspects of male sexual psychology. In other words, evolutionary theorists take heterosexual male behaviors and theorize the circumstances in the EEA for which they, even if in less extreme form, would have been beneficial.

For example, evolutionary psychologists Studd and Gattiker argue that

the prevalence of sexual harassment in organizations is evidence for the existence of evolved psychological mechanisms: “[T]he workplace environment especially appears to push male behavior toward [the] threshold [for coercive sexual behavior] by increasing the opportunity and stimuli for sexual advances, and by minimizing the opportunity for recipients of unwanted sexual advances to avoid such attention” (287). They claim that their study will “further strengthen the validity and extend the domain of the science of evolutionary psychology” (287). Strengthening the validity of the idea that men’s behavior toward women can be accounted for biologically is their goal; the problem of sexual harassment seems secondary, simply the vehicle used in a search for man’s true nature. Their justification of their endeavor supposes that only such a (presumably) apolitical truth about nature could actually provide a solution to social problems anyway.”¹²

Grounding men’s harassing behavior in evolutionary psychology assumes that sexual harassment is rooted in a drive to initiate copulations, when a significant amount of harassment goes on without an interest in copulation on the part of the harasser and without the result of copulation (e.g., when a man is constantly making sexist jokes, hanging photos of naked women, touching women, looking down a woman’s blouse, etc.; see MacKinnon). Given their assumption that sexual harassment is some sort of courtship behavior, its extremely low success rate provides ample reason to wonder how any harassing males could have had enough successful breeding opportunities to pass this trait on.¹³ The existence of sexual harassment could be, but never is, taken as evidence that heterosexuality is not evolved. But so strong is the heterosexist

bias that Studd and Gattiker instead theorize that there was probably no evolutionary pressure against male “mistakes” of harassment, that is, the initiation of sexual contact when a woman is not interested. They explain how privileged ignorance is an evolved psychological mechanism in men:

[[f]] proceptivity [i.e. showing signs of sexual interest when such interest exists] is an evolved part of female sexual psychology, one would expect males to have co-evolved psychological mechanisms sensitive to this type of female behavior and which motivate the initiation of sexual overtures in response. Males in past environments who lacked this psychological response would have been selected against by missing limited opportunities to pursue matings with interested females. . . . Missing a real opportunity for sexual access would be ultimately more costly than occasionally misreading signals of female availability. Thus, males may have evolved psychological mechanisms that cause them to “deliberately,” but unconsciously, *misinterpret* female signals of friendliness and sociality as sexual in nature. (284)

This view posits an imperceptiveness on the part of men. But recall the *Muscle and Fitness* discussion of evolved male tendencies to ogle at women, which posits a high degree of male perceptiveness with respect to what women look like. Evolutionary theorists reason that men’s great number of sperm renders men perpetually in heat, if you will, since for men reproduction is so cheap. “A man’s genetic stock went up every time he got a woman pregnant. As long as he could do so with low risk and little cost of time or energy,

natural selection favored (quoting Symons) ‘his tendency to be aroused sexually by the sight of women’” (Strote 168). Further, men are always evaluating what women look like, and are attracted to specific types of female appearances, namely those that indicate fertility such as “smooth skin, long hair and fingernails and white teeth” (Strote 168). Because women with acne, short hair, short fingernails and yellowing teeth are not necessarily less fertile, and because the converse traits did not necessarily signal fertility in the EEA, we could question how men’s apparent ability to make such distinctions in women’s appearances could have evolved through natural selection. In April 1995, the ABC news program *Day One* elaborated the theory that men naturally are very particular about whom they want to sleep with.

Reporting on evolutionary psychologist David Buss’s new book, *The Evolution of Desire*, the show presents us with supermodel Cindy Crawford and Barbie (the doll), who presumably represent what men are wired to find desirable. As Buss elaborates in the interview, our evolutionary forebrothers who did not prefer women with high cheekbones, big eyes, lustrous hair, and full lips did not reproduce. Buss explains that those men who happened to like someone who was older, sicker, or infertile “are not our ancestors. We are all the descendants of those men who preferred young healthy women and so as offspring, as descendants of those men, we carry with us their desires.” On that same show, *Penthouse* magazine publisher Bob Guccione says that men are simply biologically wired to enjoy looking at sexy women: “This may be very politically incorrect but that’s the way it is. . . . It’s all part of our ancestral conditioning.”

Buss's view simply assumes that men in the EEA had particular preferences for mates, and then mated with only those types of people. In other words, it assumes that men who mated with infertile people never mated with fertile people. The theory of sexual harassment based on the assumption that men have evolved to read sometimes the nonsexual signals of women as sexual works by presuming that the men with less keen sensitivities toward women would have had the evolutionary edge. In other words, the sex harassment theory reasons that it must have been better for men to just go for it than to be cautious about whom they are mating with, while the ogling theory presumes that it must have been better to be cautious or choosy about appearances than to go for sex with anyone.

Male ogling can be explained evolutionarily only if we assume first that men can, or could ever, spot fertility accurately, and second that men who had such a keen ability to make such distinctions among women actually had more offspring who lived to reproductive age. But if men's great number of sperm make their ejaculations so nugatory, evolution could have conceivably favored men who find all women physically appealing or who mate without regard to appearance or fertility. There would have been no cost for male "mistakes" of ejaculating into infertile bodies, and thus no selective pressure against men who did not distinguish between fertile and infertile people.¹⁴ Men who mated licentiously may have wound up with more of their genes in the population. The men who mated with both fertile and infertile people would have reproduced this "tendency." Men may not have mated exclusively

with fertile females, or exclusively with females. Indeed, ancestral men may have made no distinction between fertile and infertile females as objects of sexual desire; they may have made no distinction between males and females as objects of sexual desire.

The behavior of today's average Western heterosexual man cannot provide uncomplicated evidence of a specific evolved sexual psychology or of what the

EEA was like, any more than people's sugar cravings (whether or not these cravings are considered biological) provide evidence that there were candy bars in the EEA (a mistake evolutionary theorists make when talking about male sexuality, but not when talking about eating sweets).¹⁵ If people in the EEA were not particularly focused on sex and matings, or if such occasions were not readily available to them, then there would not have been any selective pressure limiting sexual capacity. Thus men's current sexual capacities do not imply that most men in the EEA sought the sexual attention of women specifically or very often, or that doing so would have made one more reproductively competitive. Assuming this from any of today's heterosexual male behaviors and/or expressed desires is like assuming that there must have been lots of candy in the EEA, that those who ate lots of sweets were more reproductively successful, and that the reason we eat sweets today is because our ancestors got to eat a lot and it must have been good for them.

Consider the men to whom the *Muscle and Fitness* article may have been speaking. Its suggestion that men are wired to look lustfully, combined with

the magazine cover that purports to explain “Why Women Lust After Muscular Men,” may offer a veiled evolutionary justification for gay male readers who lust after or “cruise” muscular men. Evolutionary theorists could admit that there are plenty of men who are not particularly interested in women sexually and/or who do not express sexual interest as ogling and harassing. Deplorable behaviors common among Western heterosexual men, like sexual harassment and rape, could be taken as evidence for an entirely different set of hypotheses about the sorts of male and female sexual psychologies for which there was selective pressure in the EEA.

HOMOSEXUALITY AS HETEROSEXUALITY . . . AS HOMOSEXUALITY

Another way evolutionary theorists continue to privilege heterosexuality is by explaining homosexual behaviors in terms of their breeding potential or “adaptive value.” For instance, Barash tells *Psychology Today* readers how rape, even homosexual rape, is rather common in animals “when fitness demands it” (“Sexual Selection” 84). The anthocorid bug “rapist” “forces” his sperm into the storage organ of his male “victim,” sometimes while the “victim” copulates with a female, so that the “victim” transfers the “aggressor bug’s” sperm, rather than his own, the next time he copulates with a female (who presumably desires such copulations). Barash (“The Sociobiology of Rape,” “Sexual Selection”) provides no evidence that such copulations are forced, which suggests that he is guided by the heterosexist assumption that a *manly* bug would not allow another male bug to do this to him. Further, Barash presents the male bug “rapist” as if he only copulates with other males in order to gain indirect access to female bugs.

But when the language that attributes intention to the evolutionary process or to individual bugs is suspended, we see that natural selection operated in a way that favored the selection of male bugs who go for sex with other male bugs or sex in groups. By way of analogy, consider cats as they scratch their claws on various objects. While most usually assume that cats are trying to “sharpen their claws,” cats scratch at things with little regard to how sharp their claws are getting—in fact, a declawed house cat will still “scratch” at furniture. Cats have sensitive pads on the bottoms of their paws that, when pressure is applied, produce a pleasurable sensation. The cats that felt pleasure during acts that wound up sharpening their claws may have been favored through natural selection, because they would have had sharper claws (enabling them to climb trees, defend themselves, etc.). Thus, cats don’t intend to sharpen their claws, and male bugs don’t intend to inseminate females (or to “rape” males). The behaviors in question just feel good.

(Darwinists say that those behaviors in the EEA that helped an individual survive and reproduce and that were also pleasurable ensured their enactment.)

The evolutionary story of anthocorid bugs could make homosexuality and other so-called perversions seem more “natural” (and therefore more moral, in modernist, foundationalist logic). Instead, however, homosexual acts become reinscribed in a heterosexist logic, such that anything homosexual must really be for heterosexual/reproductive purposes.

Yet, a scientist might argue, this is simply, innocently, adaptationist logic.

If something leads to the reproduction of an individual, then those traits will

eventually be selected for. Everything must ultimately be explained heterosexually, if you will, since this is the way the beings in question reproduce and traits are selected. However, evolution does not work like an omnipotent designer. Evolution is a bunch of “odd arrangements and funny solutions” (Gould 20). Evolutionary theorists’ common use of metaphorical shorthand (noted by Gould) that imputes conscious action or heterosexual intent to genes, natural selection, or individual bugs engaged in “perverted” behavior reinforces the heterosexism of the accounts. A logic of reproductive intent enables the privileging of heterosexuality, and the social impact of such scientific stories serves to make homosexuality “natural” only if it will ultimately be properly heterosexually mating-oriented. But, like the declawed house cat “scratching” at the furniture, humans are left behaving in ways that passed on our genes in the EEA but now just feel good, and may or may not contribute to reproductive success. In other words, ejaculations-heterosexual, homosexual, alone or in groups-just feel good.

Even sociobiological explanations of human homosexuality wind up naturalizing heterosexuality by holding up homosexuality as a challenge for evolutionary theorists to explain-as if the legitimacy of evolutionary theory itself depends upon an evolved heterosexual human nature! A common minoritizing sociobiological account of human homosexuality assumes that people who become gay are from large families and thus can “afford,” in terms of their inclusive fitness, to live a life without breeding, since they have so many siblings who will be passing on some of their genes (see Wilson 14445). However, this is an explanation of leading an exclusively gay lifestyle rather

than an explanation of homosexual attraction or having homosexual experiences. Furthermore, this almost suggests that homosexuality is a choice made once one's siblings are counted, while evolutionary psychology does not assume that decisions are made with reproductive success in mind. Evolutionary theory can only argue that current decisions are made based on preferences that would have contributed to one's reproductive success back in the EEA. Besides, the argument rests on the assumption that those with a heterosexual identity reproduce and gays and lesbians do not. (Perhaps even more gays and lesbians would have children if heterosexist custody and other laws did not discourage them [see Rubinstein] .) Finally, such sociobiological explanations of homosexuality marginalize it-and in so doing naturalize heterosexuality-by simply assuming that the adaptive value of heterosexuality needs no elucidation.¹⁶

Evolutionary psychologists Donald Symons and David Buss both discuss gay men, but only to prove the evolutionary roots of heterosexual male attraction. They argue that the allegedly gay male emphasis on youth, on physical attractiveness, on variation in sexual partners without emotional or financial investment, and on genitally and orgasmically focused sex provides evidence for the hypothesis that a male sexual psychological nature exists and is being played out today. Because they reason that gay men do not have to compromise with women's very different sexual psychological nature (as straight men do), Symons and Buss investigate gay male sexuality in order to test their evolutionary theory that men who were attracted to reproductively healthy, fertile-looking females and copulated with as many of these females

as possible whenever possible with a minimum of resource investment would have had greater reproductive success. In other words, they use gay men as “an acid test for the evolutionary basis of sex differences in the desires for a mate” (Buss 60). However, so strong is the underlying heterosexist bias that both Symons and Buss seem to miss the obvious irony in studying gay men to provide evidence for the natural basis of heterosexual men’s desires.

Assuming that the premises of the argument are correct—that the depiction of tastes properly represents gay men, and that such tendencies do have a biological base—the existence of homosexual men shows that evolution may have selected for men who like uncommitted sexual relationships with a variety of good-looking young people, which supports the bisexual or gender irrelevant hypothesis. Symons and Buss study gay male sexuality, but assume that ancestral men sought youth and beauty in women, rather than in men or without regard to gender. The unacknowledged commitment to the privileged, natural status of heterosexuality precludes taking homosexuality as evidence for a hypothesis that ancestral males were bisexual. For these theorists, what could be evidence against the naturalness of heterosexuality winds up as more evidence for it.

Symons merely remarks that the existence of gays “attests to the importance of social experience in determining the objects that humans sexually desire” (304; emphasis mine). Symons does not argue that “social experience” is necessary for men to be visually stimulated by and want to copulate with a variety of young, beautiful women, now or in the EEA. Buss simply

dismisses the issue by saying, “The origins of homosexuality remain a mystery” (61). For a scholar who makes his living explaining the evolutionary basis of current sexual desires, this is a curious omission.

These theoretical attempts take place in a cultural system in which homosexuality is silenced, denied, and wished not to exist (Sedgwick). But homosexuality is simultaneously necessary for those who define themselves against it (Sedgwick), and must be seen either as a problem to be explained in evolutionary theory or as some kinky variation that occurs only when certain environmental conditions do not allow for heterosexuality, the default mode. The continued implication of animals as strategists, despite the fact that Darwinian psychology asserts a view of adaptation that does not imply that contemporary human action is “rational” in the evolutionary sense, reinforces the heterosexist assumption. Although the commitment to heterosexuality means that bisexuality is not taken as an hypothesis for which to seek evidence, evolutionary theory could legitimate a variety of sexual practices, and bisexuality could be considered an adaptation.

SETTING THE EVOLUTIONARY RECORD QUEER

I have suggested that heterosexual attraction in human beings, and its adaptive value, goes unquestioned by evolutionary theorists. Consider, though, how easy it is to make a sound evolutionary argument that human bisexuality is evolved.¹⁷ It is not as though human beings needed to mate exclusively with members of the opposite sex in order to survive and reproduce their own genes. For example, evolutionary theorists could take the absence of vaginal

orgasm in women as evidence for the existence of an evolved distaste for men or penis-vagina intercourse.¹⁸ Women's capacity for multiple clitoral orgasms could indicate that our forefathers may have sought nonpenetrative sexual encounters with men and/or women. Since it was to women's evolutionary advantage not to be pregnant all the time, this set of desires could have been selected for. Or, it could simply mean that no selective pressure existed to cap off female sexual capacity.

Edward Wilson, contemporary figurehead of the sociobiology movement and enemy of many progressive academics, notes that the primary function of sexual pleasure in human beings is not insemination but bonding. "All that we can surmise of humankind's genetic history argues for a more liberal sexual morality, in which sexual practices are to be regarded first as bonding devices and only second as means for procreation" (Wilson 142). Wilson, however, assumes that men and women bond through sexual relations, whereas men bond with men only because women's year-round sexual "receptivity" makes for less competitive relations between men (due to reduced competition for sexual access to women; 141-142). But why not imagine the evolutionary benefits of male-male sexual bonds, and postulate the rich sex life that our forebears might have had with one another—perhaps while away on those hunts?

It is commonly assumed that the men who had a preference for mating with women rather than men (assuming that this is something that could have a genetic component and that such a genetic variation existed among men in

the EEA) would have wound up with more offspring, thereby reproducing a trait of male sexual attraction to females. But men have so many expendable sperm that those who were not partial to either sex may have had less competitive relations with other men, and as a result more “breeding opportunities” with females. Wilson assumes that if same-gender sexual bonding occurred it must have been in a small number of people, reasoning that as long as the relatives of a homosexual, who share many of the same genes, were reproductively successful, then the homosexual trait would have been passed on (14445). This, while more appealing than theories that ignore homosexuality altogether, is what Sedgwick might call a minoritizing account of homosexuality.¹⁹ The status of heterosexuality as innate and naturally statistically normative, as a biological-majority orientation, still goes unquestioned.

I want to suggest an account that does not minoritize sexual deviation but universalizes it: our ancestors’ matings could have been random with regard to genitals. If so, pregnancies would have occurred, babies would have been born, and individuals would have passed on their bisexual tendencies. Heterosexuality would not have been the dominant orientation with homosexuality a deviant variation practiced by a minority (statistical or otherwise).

Gender categories for sexual practices may not have been as distinct as they are today. We simply do not know. The maintenance of a social system in which people must identify with one of two distinct sexes is bound up with the system of compulsory heterosexuality (see Butler; Dworkin; Rich).

Why don’t evolutionary theorists argue that ancestral males must have

sought opportunities to copulate with either gender? It would not be unreasonable to argue that our heterosexist society-arguably an evolutionarily novel environment-inhibits the options for sexual expression. Within the terms of evolutionary theory itself, bisexuality could be seen as an adaptation, and a society of compulsory heterosexuality as, well, perverted.

DO “GAY BRAINS” MAKE BETTER POLITICS?

Does this new account of human evolution mean, then, that **10** percent of the human population is naturally homosexual? This does not make sense evolutionarily (such a homosexual “trait” would never have reproduced itself, nor do we have evidence that any, let alone 90 percent of, ancestral males were exclusively heterosexual) or sociologically (the categories homosexual and heterosexual, and their concomitant personal identities, are recent historical constructions [Weeks]). Thus, studies that attempt to legitimate homosexuality by grounding it in biology wind up reifying socially constructed identities and maintaining naturalized boundaries for identification that may not have existed in the human EEA at all. Simon LeVay’s research, touted in the media as the “gay brain” study, is worth examining because it represents a hopeful attempt to link homosexual desire to biology.²⁰

LeVay suggested that the hypothalamus, a small area over the brain stem which he believes regulates male-typical sexual behavior in nonhuman animals, might account for differences in sexual preference. LeVay found that out of 41 autopsied brains, a small group of cells called the third interstitial nucleus of the anterior hypothalamus (or INAH-3) was on average twice as

large in “heterosexual” men as in either women or “gay” men (Gorman 45; LeVay). (The language of size itself might reinforce heterosexist values, construing women and gay men as deficient. But is bigger better, or are straight men fat-headed?) Even though studies of tropical fish have shown the hypothalamus to be something that is not fixed but changes with environmental variations (Gorman 48), LeVay mentions only the male rat, whose preoptic nucleus seems to stabilize prenatally; this suggests that he is wedded to the promise of a clear and distinct natural homosexual minority. Newsweek’s report was advertised with a white baby on the cover and the question, “Is This Child Gay?” But the complexity and modesty of the scientific project, and the tendency of its conclusions to get lost, or perverted, in the translation from scientific journals to the popular press, are not the only problems.²¹

All 41 brains in LeVay’s study were obtained from people who had died from complications associated with AIDS. LeVay assumed that the men in his study who reported being infected with HIV through homosexual intercourse were homosexual, and that the men who reported that the source of HIV transmission was intravenous drugs were heterosexual. The sexual orientations of the women did not interest LeVay. Of course, having homosexual sex does not mean that someone is or identifies as homosexual: one might have been paid for homosexual sex, have had it once as a youth, or have performed it secretly while identifying as heterosexual, for instance. Even if the deceased had identified themselves as homosexual, though, LeVay cannot infer anything about how much homosexual sex they had or desired, or how much heterosexual sex they had or desired, which is what he claims the

INAH-3 size correlates with. LeVay tries to circumvent this problem by suggesting that INAH-3 correlates with the direction of either feelings or behavior.

Further problems in the attempt to find a biological basis for sexual identities arise when modern technology is considered. A woman might get a sex change operation and live as a man, having heterosexual sex with women. What size might the INAH-3 region of his hypothalamus be? What of variations in sexual preference other than object-choice—such as scripted vs. nonscripted sex, sex in public vs. sex in private, orgasmic vs. nonorgasmic sex, sex with one person vs. more than one (Sedgwick 8)? These variations seem not to concern evolutionary theorists precisely because such preferences are assumed to be less intrinsic or fundamental to our being than the gender of object-choice. That variations in sexual preference that do not revolve around sex categories are ignored suggests that evolutionary theorists presume and perpetuate a sex binarism that queer theorists and “postmodern” feminists have analyzed as central to a disciplinary regime of heterosexuality (see Butler; Sedgwick).

Studies like LeVay’s take for granted a sexually desiring agent as their subject of analysis. In this framework, INAH-3 would never be hypothesized to correlate with, for instance, the genders (or some other features) of those people who tend to be attracted to the agent. Instead, it is the subject who is thought to have a substance in his brain that directs his desire to specific others.²² Halperin (27) has pointed out that many premodern and non-

Western cultures did not individuate people at the level of sexual preference and no more assumed that sexuality was categorizable or innate than modern people consider dietary preferences to be. From this vantage point, scientific studies looking for links between sexual orientation and biology could be questioned not only for their assumption that an individual's sexuality is directed toward a specific gender category but for their assumption that individuals have an intrinsic component of their subjectivity that we call "sexuality" at all.

Since sexual identifications change across history, cultures, and an individual's life span, any attempt to ground an identity in nature is suspect.²³

Only relatively recently and in the West has a homosexual/heterosexual division become such a salient dichotomy for identification (Halperin; Sedgwick).

In the Mexico/Latin American system, a man's sexual identity is based on a preference for certain acts rather than on the gender of object choice (Almaguer). The argument that one could be biologically wired for a position in a sexual categorization system that is itself culturally and historically constructed arrogantly presumes the universality of particular modern and Western identities.

LeVay and other pro-gay essentialists are not only sociologically and scientifically undiscerning, but, if hopeful that establishing homosexuality as biologically based will protect it, politically short-sighted as well. They and their adherents might anticipate that, because the "unnaturalness" of homosexuality has been historically used in order to condemn it politically, scientifically establishing

its “naturalness” may be what convinces homophobes to change their views. The attempt to secure gay rights through scientific claims about nature, however, contains many pitfalls.²⁴ Not only are the arguments for a “gay brain” or “gay genes,” however well intended, nonsensical in evolutionary terms (there is no reason to assume that human heterosexuality was adaptive), and asociological in their insistence that such a historically and culturally constructed category for identity could be inborn, but the hope to secure gay rights through such an argument, even if successful, has other political problems. Namely, it authorizes scientific knowledge to settle political disputes, as though it were value-free; reproduces the same foundationalist logic that has historically been used against gays;²⁵ ignores other sexual minorities (celibates, shoe fetishists, and strappers-on, for example), leaving them in the marginalized dust until someone proves that they, too, are born that way; ignores the ways in which biology is increasingly dissociated from the unchangeable (think of the well-funded Human Genome Project and other technologies for altering what was once considered destiny); and, finally, in positioning homosexuality as a biological-minority orientation, solidifies rather than dissolves the natural and normative status of heterosexuality.

CONCLUSION: LEARNING TO LIVE WITH PERVERSION

A naturalized heterosexuality is troublesome because it does not innocently describe reality but creates it-and the ritual enactments of the evolutionary myth of natural manhood (something that, precisely because it is not real or natural or automatic, must be relentlessly rehearsed and reestablished) have defined and restricted life chances for anyone who is not a “natural” man. I

suggest that we approach scientific stories the way queer theorists have approached other cultural texts. This involves embracing the instability of knowledge and identities, undermining that “organic” feeling straight men, however precariously, preserve. Evolutionary stories naturalize heterosexuality not because the “facts” of evolution simply force us to accept our soiled (heterosexual) animal natures but because an unexamined commitment to the privileged, universal status of Western heterosexual masculinity has influenced the kind of evolutionary psychologies theorists have imagined and projected onto our past.²⁶ Further, the status of scientific knowledge as producer of authoritative accounts of the real conceals the politics of naturalizing heterosexuality.

I have not questioned the legitimacy of the theory of evolution itself (although others, creationists for instance, would), or its specific assumptions about natural selection or the genetic basis for sexual predilections. I have taken the theory of evolution on its own terms, and constructed a new interpretation of sexual behavior based on an alternative set of background assumptions. To construe evolutionary theory itself as the enemy of women and queers concedes too much to popular cultural assumptions of the evolutionary advantage of predatory heterosexual male desire and the stability of scientific texts. I have tried to argue that we can use evolutionary theory to pull the nature rug out from under straight men’s feet, and to undermine the establishment of heterosexism and scientific authoritarianism more generally.

Queer interpretations of cultural texts destabilize straight texts, the apparent

stability of which many bank on. Queer interpretations are no more biased than straight interpretations. No story of the meaning of animal mating habits or of human evolutionary history could ever be independent of political commitments. Nondominant perspectives can point to new directions for research and to new interpretations of nature. The new stories that result have different social consequences but are still value-laden stories. The belief that some sort of neutral “truth” exists and can arbitrate political conflicts is based on the tired old distinction between knowledge and politics (see Brown; Smith), one which holds up scientific knowledge as a promising foundation for moral meaning, the truth that will set us free.

But scientific accounts of sexuality and mating can never represent the world independent of human values. The conventional, objectivist philosophy of scientific knowledge, which presupposes a nature “out there” that we can describe neutrally, assumes that talking about birds and fish in terms saturated with human meanings masks what is going on in nature. In other words, we should beware of the panda’s “thumb.” (Stephen Jay Gould tells us that what appears to be a sixth digit of the giant panda is not a finger at all but a bit of elongated bone.) Feminist critics of sociobiology have condemned the use of terms like “rape,” “homosexual,” and “adultery” to describe practices of nonhuman animals, arguing that such words in a sociobiological context are “jargon” and have “possible social repercussions” and that less emotionally evocative terms should be used (Gowaty 630). Such critiques have been important for exposing the values in scientific descriptions. But it is time to move beyond these critiques, since they too privilege certain stories on epistemological rather

than political grounds, preserving a distinction between knowledge and politics. The stories feminists privilege are not jargon- or metaphor-free, nor are they less distorted representations of nature. As Williams notes, feminists have not objected to saying that animals practice “courtship,” “fasting,” and “migration” (or “bonding,” “friendship,” etc.). And while the use of “forced pair copulations” rather than “rape” might sound more technical, such terminology does not make scientific stories free of human values or social repercussions; it simply does a better job of hiding them. Perhaps we should also beware of the mallard’s “forced pair copulations.”

Since scientific stories about animal behavior are inescapably value-laden, making values more invisible only enables irresponsible storytelling. I have attempted a critique that acknowledges the impossibility of describing nature neutrally. Queer interpretations try to make conspicuous the values and political commitments that inform them, and promise to undermine dominant knowledge regimes without making the same mistake of offering an impossibly innocent discourse. Thus, I have engaged evolutionary theory not to reinstitute the hegemony of scientific discourse but to undermine it, showing how scientific stories, straight and queer, have political bases and political consequences. My alternative account of men’s evolved sexual psychology is no less, and no more, a ‘just-so story’ than heterosexist evolutionary narratives.

Although any strategy for disrupting the dominant sexual system is risky,²⁷

I am convinced that the strategy that discommodates the method of privilege-legitimation is more promising than the strategy that preserves the traditional

relationships between essentialism and morality. In making Science our Bible, the traditional approach forecloses responsible dialogue over political commitments and rights for sexual minorities whose deviance does not necessarily or exclusively revolve around object-choices of the “wrong” gender.

The “gay brain” approach, while it promises to mess with the minds of many homophobes who have justified their discrimination on biological grounds, fails to loosen heterosexuality from its privileged place as natural and inevitable.

That approach also fails to challenge the position of science as an authoritative arbiter of political conflicts. After all, what counts as ‘perversion’ is a matter of politics, not nature. The attempt to ground homosexuality in nature therefore holds less promise than a queer theory approach that undermines the naturalized sex binarism, the mythic naturalness of heterosexuality, and the authority of science altogether.

Exposing the heterosexist assumptions that have been an implicit part of evolutionary theorizing might complicate “innocent” attempts to naturalize heterosexuality, and make scientists, feminists, and queers consider new possibilities for theorizing. Unfortunately, many, with straight or queer commitments, engaged in scientific knowledge production or its critique have not challenged the distinction between knowledge and politics. Until they do, beware of the heterosexual bug.

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NOTES

1. Often representations of heterosexual femininity rely on a neo-Darwinian discourse as well. The solidification of a natural femininity appears to be less common in the popular press, however, and is probably relatively less necessary politically. Politically privileged heterosexual men have a relatively greater need for narratives that legitimate their behaviors and privileged positions-both of which have been challenged by women's and lesbian rights activists, a climate of economic and national decline, and a series of public debates about sexual harassment, rape, hate crimes such as gay-bashing, and gays in the military. Because of the higher political stakes of essentializing manhood, these representations are more common as the subject of both evolutionary theorizing and commentary in the popular press. Nevertheless, a companion essay that perverts evolutionary theories of femininity is underway.
2. It should be noted, though, that evolutionary theorists themselves are by and large more liberal socially and politically than, say, the Catholic Church. Edward Wilson, leading proponent of the sociobiology movement, states that the natural-law theory of the Catholic Church wrongly assumes that the biological significance of sex is the insemination of wives by husbands (141). As I discuss later, Wilson claims that the biological function of sexual pleasure in human beings is not insemination but bonding. Thus to a large extent it is the cultural context in which these matters get taken up that make evolutionary theories into secular extensions of Judeo-Christian heterosexism.
3. While the Bible has been the more common authoritative version of human nature used to settle political disputes, the authority of scientific accounts of human nature now competes to replace that of biblical accounts (see McCaughey).
4. A student of mine recently suggested that feminists are naive for "forgetting" the evolutionary basis for men's sexual violence against women. "C'mon," he insisted confidently, "I saw *Quest for Fire*"-as though that film's depiction of humanity's "cave days," in which men butted up behind women for quick nonconsensual copulations, is not imaginary. See Berril and Herek, and Herek, on how ideas of natural manhood perpetuate queer bashing, and Stoltenberg on how ideas of natural manhood perpetuate rape.
5. See, e.g., Haraway; Longino; and the essays in Harding and Hintikka; and in Tuana.
6. See, e.g., Doty; Warner; and the essays in the "Queer Theory" issue of *differences* (Summer 1991).
7. For more examples of the sexual politics of scientific stories, see Haraway on primate stories; Longino on sex differences research; and Martin on egg and sperm stories.

8. See Daly and Wilson. Evolutionary biology provides the conceptual framework within which psychological, evolutionary, and genetic developments are logically integrated. Sociobiology is “the scientific study of the biological basis of all forms of social behavior in all kinds of organisms, including man [sic]” (Wilson 216, 222).

9. The ideas that evolution had no moral logic, that any old trait could have emerged through selective pressure, and that living things were not guided by the divine undermined the inclination to ground moral or political claims in some absolute framework (specifically Christianity) and was the subject of much worried debate in Darwin’s day. See McCaughey for a discussion of the anxieties Darwin’s theory incited and how evolution eventually was reworked into a new foundation for political goals.

10. It should be noted that this popular understanding of “innate” is itself a perversion of an evolutionary theorist’s understanding, which is not that a trait will always occur but that a trait will always occur *in a certain environment* (Wilson).

11. I do not wish to imply, with the filter imagery, that there is an objective lens behind the filter. Uncommonly held assumptions, such as feminist or queer meanings of gender and sexuality, are also conceptual filters through which scientific evidence is interpreted.

12. Although many feminists assume that sociobiologists theorize sexist male behaviors as a way to provide biological justifications for the behaviors that feminists have worked so hard to condemn, evolutionary theorists adamantly deny this accusation. Evolutionary psychologists hold that an evolved tendency is not something that is necessarily adaptive now, but was adaptive in the EEA and may now be completely inappropriate or even driving us to extinction because it is being played out or practiced in an evolutionarily novel environment. Arguments that something is an evolved tendency is not an argument that it is good, that it is at present adaptive, or that it should be tolerated. Symons notes,

It is not the business of Darwinism to dash people’s hopes for less suffering and more happiness with gloomy pronouncements about the intransigence of human nature. Neither the Darwinist nor anyone else can predict the limits of human invention. . . . It is the business of Darwinism, however, to emphasize that human inventiveness is made possible by the richness and complexity of human nature. A human being has more scope than an amoeba has precisely because a human being has more nature than an amoeba has. (142)

Yet the commitment to “discovering” the “nature of man” is not innocent. Indeed, such an endeavor establishes the importance of itself more than anything else. The social problems wind up as an excuse to engage in the discipline. Studd and Gattiker remind readers that they do not mean to imply that women should begin to forgive sexual harassers: “It is

simply our hope that the more we understand about the evolution of human psychology, the closer we will be to developing appropriate and effective solutions for such unfortunate and deplorable side effects of human nature and behavior as sexual harassment” (287). Their solution involves changing “the structure of the organizational environment which would reduce the stimulus and opportunity for evolved male sexual psychology to motivate the initiation of sexual advances, and allow women more freedom to change jobs or change their working environment, as they feel is necessary” (287). (Perhaps harassers should be allowed more “freedom” to get fired.) Equal pay is not mentioned as a solution, although earlier the authors state that women’s economic position relative to men’s makes this male strategy come out (the way, we might say, lots of gardening makes calluses come out). They conclude by righteously proclaiming that “with the knowledge provided by an understanding of the evolutionary psychology of human behavior, we have the opportunity to make a positive contribution toward the management of sexual harassment . . .” (287). No doubt this would *manage* sexual harassment rather than end it.

13. The fact that offices and other modern workplaces did not exist in the EEA might mean, for evolutionary theorists, that coercive male sexual behavior in the EEA did result in reproductive success, whether or not it does today. However, these theorists use the modern workplace as evidence that coercive sexual behavior was rewarded (in terms of reproductive success) in the EEA. I am suggesting that what goes on in the modern workplace could be taken as evidence for a different hypothesis about the behavior that was rewarded in the EEA.

14. That men do not universally find visibly pregnant women unattractive, even though copulating with them is a guaranteed reproductive dead end, is evidence against the theory that men have evolved with particularly keen abilities to distinguish between, through differential sexual attraction to, fertile and infertile bodies.

15. Donald Symons furnished this useful observation about sugar in his 1989 seminar on human nature at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

16. As Darwinism emerged as a “threat” to Christian meaning systems, even an evolutionary view of heterosexuality was troubling since it implied that heterosexual reproduction was a haphazard meeting of sperm and egg (a view that threatened the dominant Judeo-Christian understanding). That an evolutionary account of heterosexuality is now employed in a way which anchors people’s imagined heterosexual essences shows, as I argue elsewhere (McCaughey), how contemporary Darwinism has been turned into the cure for the very social anxieties and problems that were, a century ago, attributed to Darwin’s theory in the first place.

17. I do not mean to imply that no scholar has ever argued that humans might be bisexual. Certainly Freud and others are well known for just such an assertion (although they did not base their arguments on now-current versions of evolutionary theory). My point is that *evolutionary theorists* have not entertained bisexuality as a hypothesis for which to provide evolutionary evidence, even though nothing about the theory of evolution automatically implies a heterosexual human nature in any individual or in the majority of humans. My interest in evolutionary theory, then, derives not from the idea that it is the one theory that holds the promise of positing humans as bisexual, but rather from the fact that it has so consistently been used in recent years to undermine bisexual hypotheses, replacing them with one of innate male heterosexual predation.

18. This could be because copulation need not be pleasurable to be adaptive, however. Recall our poor beheaded male praying mantis; his decapitation could not have been selected against if the copulation usually resulted in a fertilization. In any case, evolutionary theorists have not offered a story in which our foresisters bonded sexually together.

19. Given Wilson's terrible reputation among many academics, it is worth noting that his claims do not dismiss homosexuals as evolutionary misfits or dysfunctional perverts. For instance, Wilson suggests that homosexual men in some of the "more primitive cultures" often became shamans, peacemakers, and advisors to tribal leaders, and in Western society score higher than heterosexuals on intelligence tests, select white collar professions disproportionately, are generally well adapted in social relationships, and often enter careers in which they deal directly with other people (146). Wilson also remarks that it would be both unfortunate and illogical to make past genetic adaptedness a necessary criterion for current acceptance (147).

20. LeVay is one of several recent studies which have been reported in the media. See also Bailey and Pillard; and Hamer and Copeland. My concern here is not to review or critique all of these studies but rather to point to the ways in which studies that search for a biological substratum for homosexual preference, desire, or identity reify a sex binarism that is, paradoxically, part and parcel of heterosexism.

21. Another example of the press's extending and twisting the modest message of a scientific study is the *National Inquirer's* report of Hamer's research that suggested a link between DNA markers on the X chromosome and male sexual orientation: "Simple Injection Will Let Gay Men Turn Straight, Doctors Report" (Hamer and Copeland 18).

22. The conflation of sexual activity/penetration/agency and heterosexual manhood masculinity may account for the frequency with which scientific studies focus on explaining men's sexuality and not women's (in addition to the reasons already mentioned in note 1). In our cultural logic, it is more difficult to imagine women as active,

desiring sexual subjects whose genetic or biochemical structure explains the direction of their amorous attentions. The construction of men as first-class citizens who are active sexual agents, and the construction of penetration as an act by which a first-class citizen establishes himself as superior to the person being penetrated, means that getting penetrated makes one a woman/second-class citizen/fag/degraded. Here it should be obvious how sexism and heterosexism work together through the construction of the meaning of penetration. To penetrate means, culturally, to degrade—for men and women—but is thought to be appropriate to do to women, since they lack the entitlement to first-class citizenship status. If a man wants to be penetrated, or wants to penetrate someone socially deemed impenetrable (i.e., another man), he threatens the order by which male privilege is defined and legitimated. See Bersani; and also Halperin (30-33) for discussions of these issues.

23. Hamer remarks that his search for the “gay gene” accounted for an individual who may have, say, identified as heterosexual until the age of 21 and then came out as gay. His research presumes that a man might change his sexual *behavior* but not his sexual *orientation* (Hamer and Copeland 65).

24. See Stein for a more detailed argument that scientific research on sexual orientation is irrelevant for advancing the moral and civic entitlement of gay men and lesbians. Dean Hamer, of the “gay gene” study, was dismayed when the father of two gay sons wrote him to say that Hamer’s work that said homosexuality might be genetic finally allowed him to forgive himself for having gay sons. Hamer explains: He decided to forgive his sons because we found a genetic link to homosexuality. But what if the experiment had failed? Or what if we gave his family a blood test and found they didn’t have the “gay gene,” that the sons were gay for some other reason? Then would this father go back to blaming himself for raising two gay sons, and would they be less worthy of his love? (Hamer and Copeland 19)

25. Certainly gay rights lawyers have tried to use, or appeal to, foundationalist logic in courts, hoping to secure gay rights by presenting evidence for the naturalness of homosexuality. I do not have space in this essay to debate the pros and cons of foundationalism, but see Halley for a discussion of the legal strategy and Barbara Herrnstein Smith for a discussion of the problems with foundationalism.

26. These stories deal with femininity relatively infrequently. The construction of man as heterosexual predator, though, positions woman as the naturally passive other in this heterosexual equation.

27. See Franklin for a discussion of the way the AIDS epidemic and new reproductive technologies could have disrupted the “natural” basis for the nuclear family and heterosexual privilege but instead reconsolidated it.

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