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Abstracts

Eva Cantarella
The Androgynous and Bisexuality in Ancient Legal Codes

The word 'bisexuality', unknown to the ancients, is used here in two senses to indicate an individual with male and female sex organs or who copulates with people of both sexes. The phenomenon of bisexuality is then analysed with reference to the Greek myth of Hermaphrodite, a 'bisexual' being, born of a nymph's love for a young man of divine descent: in the guise of a fable, the myth recounts the birth of a 'monster', who raises a question-mark over the fundamental rule of the division between the sexes. As regards behaviour, the paper then shows that in both Greece and Rome bisexual behaviour was the rule for men. The concept of 'homosexuality', in contrast to heterosexuality, was not introduced till the Christian era, and then not without difficulty. Condemnation of the practice as 'against nature' began with the emperor Justinian in the 6th century.

Pierre-Emmanuel Dauzat
The Mythology of Begetting and Sex in the Church Fathers' Writings

The intervention of the divine in human history, more precisely the transition from fiction to incarnation that is peculiar to the origins of Christianity, marks a turning-point in our understanding of the genealogical principle. With a Son of Man who is also Son of God and his Mother's Father, there is no paternity and, more generally, no genealogy that is not reversible. To this questioning of elementary kinship structures we should add the contesting of the hitherto accepted distribution of genders and sexes. The superimposition of the Holy Family and the Trinity created an uncertain sex whose effect is to uncouple sex from its functions, in particular procreation. Hence a circulation and instability of sex. It is from this viewpoint that we should see the notion of an androgynous Christ and the Church Fathers' thinking on the resurrected body.

Moshe Idel
Androgyny and Equality in the Theosophico-Theurgical Kabbalah

Androgyny has more than one meaning. It may refer to the anatomical coexistence of two sorts of sex organs in the same body; or else to the allegory of a form of spiritual perfection. In other cases, it is related to the explicit coexistence of male and female qualities in the same entity. From a study of the various expressions used in the Hebrew of the Bible to evoke the dual nature of the first human, an attempt is made here to show how this theme has been treated in certain theosophico-theurgical schools of Kabbalah, and more particularly with regard to the question of equality between men and women in Jewish tradition.

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Michael Groneberg
Myth and Science around Gender and Sexuality: Eros and the Three Sexes in Plato's *Symposium*

Plato's *Symposium* contains various myths dealing with gender and the erotic, among them Aristophanes' account of the three original sexes, which are here treated from the standpoint of modern science. In particular we see how, since the 19th century, sexology and psychoanalysis have updated concepts of a third sex and androgyny. Similarities with positions in antiquity demonstrate the relevance and force of the general propositions of myths. Differences appear to imply the effective presence of other myths of Judeo-Christian origin. All things considered, the ancient tensions between Aristophanes' and Socrates' attitude are still at work. It is from that viewpoint that the conceptual relationships between androgyny and the third sex are examined.

Wendy Doniger
Bisexuality in the Mythology of Ancient India

Hindu texts call into question our own gender conceptions; they tell us that desire for bisexual pleasure and the wish to belong to both sexes at the same time are very real, but unrealizable, except by those with magic gifts. Many myths bear witness to the existential *perception* of human beings as bisexual and to active bisexual *transformations*. Some may show the desire to be androgynous and, contrary to the dominant homophobic paradigm, present veiled images of a bisexuality fulfilled in happiness and satisfaction. The episode evoking Chudala as a mistress of initiation and some variants in the magical forests of Shiva and Parvati illustrate this carefree, joyous way of crossing the gender barrier.

Laure Murat
The Invention of the Neuter

The third sex, which for a long period of history meant the androgyne and the homosexual, took on a new sense around 1900, when it was applied to emancipated women, who were featured by novelists and analysed by psychiatrists. Assimilated with lesbians, 'desexualized' by their modern way of life, they were labelled 'neuter', worker bees in a hive-state where 'female–male' markers were tending to disappear. Neither men in sex, nor women in gender (at least according to traditional assumptions), they constituted a new 'battalion' which highlighted all the anxieties of the time: the involution of dimorphism, the threat of lack of differentiation and the 'extinction of the race'. But for those who accepted the label, neuterdom evolved from a pejorative concept into an instrument of a kind of liberation and the strategic means to set up creative space cleared of sexual stigma, until political cooption, aware of the resurgence of a 'superior species', changed its meaning and tipped over into the worst sort of excess.

Jean-Jacques Nattiez
The Tetralogy of Richard Wagner: A Mirror of Androgyny and of the Total Work of Art

Of all Wagner's operas, the Tetralogy has a special status. Indeed, beyond the myth related by the plot, the four operas it comprises also contain the presentation of a myth of the origin of music and the total work of art. The latter is based on an androgynous myth uniting poetry and music, seen respectively as the incarnation of male and female principles, symbolized by the different characters – Siegfried, Brünnhilde, Fafner, Mime – who are all tied up with androgyny. The theme appears both in Wagner's theoretical writing penned around 1850 and between the lines of the libretto of the

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Ring, which concludes with the impossible reunification of the sexes on the Platonic model. Nevertheless, even if biological androgyny belongs to the world of utopia, the creative artist does have the opportunity to bring together the opera's two sexualized components, music and poetry, and thus produce the total work of art that Wagner aspired to.

Cécile Ladjali
'When I Write, I am Sexless'

The intention of this paper's title is not to position the notion of androgyny solely on the side of women writers, even though they are the most quoted. I have considered the phenomenon among both sexes, and the authors who 'forgot' their sex early on, in order to create. This 'forgetting' even seems to be the condition for genius. Indeed the androgyne, who is more an idea than a character, becomes for many writers the complete expression of that compulsory mixture of strength and grace without which art and its claims remain incomplete. In fact authors have showcased themselves and have certainly thrown the dice for their own lives by creating an androgynous character, since that character has very often been a pretext for finding themselves through words and poetry.

Vanessa Rousseau
Eve and Lilith: Two Female Types of Procreation

Here we are dealing with the two central figures of the female gender in the Judeo-Christian tradition of Holy Scripture, or at least the texts that apply to the narrative of the first couple. The paper focuses on procreation and its symbolic implications in the Genesis narrative. There is a great difference between Eve and Lilith, the opposite archetypes of the female gender. So examining the forgotten existence of Lilith compared with the creation of Eve is an attempt to understand the schema of reproduction and distinction between the sexes.

Wolfgang Wackernagel
The Mystical Marriage of the Blessed Henri Suso

This paper is interested first of all in the gender polarities (male–female), as well as the doctrinal ones (heresy–orthodoxy), present in *Sicut aquila*, that is, the last eight chapters of Suso's *Life*. However, the theme of heresy had already been touched on in a text from his youth, in particular with regard to Suso's encounter with a 'nameless wild thing', whose sex is somewhat uncertain. Various earlier legends evoking similar 'androgynous encounters' help us to see that in the Middle Ages the theme of the androgyne also had something to do with the philosopher's stone of the alchemists. In Suso's writing this stone is embodied by Christ, whose iconography contains androgynous characteristics. But the gender polarity of *Sicut aquila* is expressed above all through a romantic metaphysical flight written in the form of a lovers' dialogue between Suso - sometimes called *Frater Amandus* - and his beloved spiritual daughter.

Nicole G. Albert
From Myth to Pathology: Perversions of Gender-Types in Late 19th-Century Literature and Clinical Medicine

Contrary to accepted ideas, questions of gender started to be raised around the end of the 19th century. The characters of problematic sex and sexuality who abounded in literature at that time had the function of emblems of the fears aroused by the erasure and divorce between the sexes in a civilization in disarray. The figure of the androgyne was used to name and depict those condemned to indecision. But its closeness to the invert led to the decline of the myth, which in the meantime

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was taken over by turn-of-the-century clinical medicine. Just like homosexuality, hermaphroditism became an anomaly, and those affected by it were depicted as deviant, incomplete beings. However, it was from the explosive superimposition of those two denigrated figures – the homosexual and the androgyne – that the concept of gender emerged in its true nature, that is, as a mental construction as much as an anatomical destiny.

Catherine Vidal
Brain, Sex and Ideology

Since the 19th century, and despite tremendous progress in science, the topic of 'brain and sex' remains a matter of misleading interpretations, far beyond the field of science. The media are not solely responsible for this situation. Some scientific circles still actively promote the ideology of biological determinism in their attempt to explain differences in behaviour and cognitive abilities between men and women. Experimental data from brain imaging studies, cognitive tests or the discovery of new genes are often distorted to serve deterministic ideas. As biotechnologies and genetic engeneering represent today a new economic and lucrative challenge, the question of what is innate and what is acquired is becoming more and more significant, requiring vigilant scrutiny from us all.

Bernard Saladin d'Anglure
The 'Third Gender' of the Inuit

The author introduces us to the mythology, system of thought and social practices of the Inuit in an attempt to discover their conception of social sex (or gender). Unlike the binary conception that predominates among westerners, the Inuit have a tripartite system in which some individuals, men or women, straddle the social frontier between the sexes/genders. This third social sex, which is prominent in mythology and among the great mythical figures, is also found at the heart of shamanistic mediations, as well as in many families, where the identity of dead relatives is transmitted to the 'newborn', regardless of their sex. When the sex is different, the children are cross-dressed till puberty, after which time they have to take on the gender corresponding to their sex, but a number of these young people used to become shamans and so continued to assume the mediations of the third social sex. This construction occurs without any reference to sexual orientation.

Pierre-Emmanuel Dauzat
Prevarication over the Sex of Stones: Caillois and Myth (Postscript)

Anyone who might be surprised to find an issue on the figures of myth and gender appearing under the aegis of the poet of *Pierres* or *Récurrences dérobées* can only be referred to his mineral 'mythology', where all possible permutations of the sexes have a place, as in a Mendeleyev table. But Roger Caillois' interest in myths and the notion of gender, which is found in early texts from his youth, crops up unchanged in those from his maturity, such as *Le Fleuve Alphée*, and the precious, rare fictions, like 'Récit du délogé'. To sum up in a word his intellectual journey, in the beginning there was stone, at the end stone remained. Within that parenthesis the space of sex and its myths unfolded.

Malek Chebel
The Lineaments of Desire in Arab-Muslim Culture: A Conversation with Nicole G. Albert and Lydia R. Ruprecht

Malek Chebel talks to Nicole Albert and Lydia Ruprecht about gender questions in Islam: androgyny, homosexuality, and relations between the sexes in traditional and changing Muslim societies.

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