



The Gender Binary and the Invention of Race

Sally Markowitz



THE GENDER BINARY AND THE INVENTION OF RACE

The Gender Binary and the Invention of Race explores a fundamental and often overlooked connection between modern European conceptions of gender and race. Starting in the eighteenth century, these conceptions have intermeshed through a racialized gender-binary ideal for the male-female couple that, supposedly, only Europeans embody.

Through an exploration of various expressions of this racial gender-binary ideal, this book illuminates the deep connections between categories of race, sex/gender, and sexuality and the social hierarchies they support. This book also explores how the racial gender-binary ideal has both shaped *fin-de-siècle* arguments for the respectability of male homosexuality and informed the mid-twentieth-century feminist analysis of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Finally, this book compares its approach to understanding the race-gender connection to that of intersectional theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw.

The Gender Binary and the Invention of Race is an accessibly written book that will be of interest both to undergraduate and graduate students of Gender Studies, as well as to a general audience wishing to learn more about the relationship between the categories of race, gender, and sexuality.

Sally Markowitz is Professor Emerita of Philosophy at Willamette University and the co-founder of Willamette's Women's Studies program. She has taught philosophy and gender studies for many years, and her articles and reviews in the fields of aesthetics, feminism, and gender studies have appeared in a variety of academic journals and anthologies.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

THE GENDER BINARY AND THE INVENTION OF RACE

Sally Markowitz

Designed cover image: hudiemm, Getty Images

First published 2024

by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2024 Sally Markowitz

The right of Sally Markowitz to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The Open Access version of this book, available at www.taylorfrancis.com, has been made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives (CC-BY-NC-ND) 4.0 International license.

Any third party material in this book is not included in the OA Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. Please direct any permissions enquiries to the original rightsholder.

An electronic version of this book is freely available, thanks to the support of libraries working with Knowledge Unlatched (KU). KU is a collaborative initiative designed to make high quality books Open Access for the public good. The Open Access ISBN for this book is 9780429351198. More information about the initiative and links to the Open Access version can be found at www.knowledgeunlatched.org.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 9780367367558 (hbk)

ISBN: 9780367367541 (pbk)

ISBN: 9780429351198 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9780429351198

Typeset in Sabon

by codeMantra



CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>vi</i>
Introduction	1
1 Binary sex and its skeptics	11
2 Whiteness: Gender-binary from the start	47
3 Making (male) homosexuality White	88
4 Orientalism and the gender-binary ideal in <i>The Second Sex</i>	125
5 Intersectionality and the racial gender-binary ideal	147
Afterword	186
<i>Index</i>	<i>191</i>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have helped me formulate the ideas in this book by reading my work, talking to me about the ideas in it, suggesting readings (or, in the darkest days of the pandemic, actually delivering books from the library), translating texts, and generally encouraging me. Thank you all: Shatha Almatawa, Suresht Bald, Emma Bianchi, Anthony Coleman, Gaetano Deleonibus, Leslie Dunlap, Ann Garry, Randal Havas, Myles Jackson, Janine Jones, Morris Kaplan, Lynn Makau, Paul Mattick, Jr., Joe Mendola, Pam Moro, Peg Simons, Omari Weekes, Ivan Welty, Angela Willey, and Naomi Zack. Thanks, too, to my students over the years, who were often a step or two ahead of me. Special thanks to Leslie and Bob for lending me their house on the Oregon coast when I needed a vast expanse of space to stare at. Eternal thanks to my friend and colleague Frann Michel for generously and carefully reading much of the manuscript before it was fit to be read and commenting with great tact, intelligence, and insight. And thanks to George for too much to list.

Some of the ideas in this book were presented in talks at Lewis and Clark College, University of Oregon, Western Oregon University, SUNY Purchase, and Willamette University, as well as at meetings of the Society for Women in Philosophy, Eastern and Pacific Divisions; the American Philosophical Association; the Society for Analytic Feminism; the North American British Studies Association; and the American Society for Aesthetics.

Portions of Chapter 2 first appeared as “Pelvic Politics: Sexual Dimorphism and Racial Difference” in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 6, no. 2, Spring 2001, <https://doi.org/10.1086/495598>

Chapter 4 is a revised version of “Occidental Dreams: Orientalism and History in the Second Sex,” published in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 34, no. 2, Winter 2009. <https://doi.org/10.1086/591235>

INTRODUCTION

The main idea of this book took hold of me almost twenty-five years ago, as I was researching the gendered character of traditional aesthetic categories. The eighteenth-century philosopher Edmund Burke famously characterizes “the beautiful” in a way that evokes femininity, but clearly he had in mind only *some* women; far from being considered paragons of femininity, non-European women, especially African women, were instead sexualized and/or masculinized.¹ Curious about the history of this attitude, I found my way to Sander Gilman’s work, which in turn led me to the writing of the early twentieth-century British sexologist Havelock Ellis.² In Ellis, I found much more than I was looking for. In addition to associating female beauty with fair complexion and pronouncing African women ugly, he added that broad hips, which involve a large pelvis, are “necessarily a characteristic of the highest human races, because the races with the largest heads must be endowed also with the largest pelvis to enable their large heads to enter the world.” And this pelvis, which he believed only European women possessed, he considered to be a primary hallmark of female beauty.³

This passage stopped me short. It not only presented an imagined contrast between European and African women, but it suggested a new (at least, to me) way of understanding how hierarchical racial classifications have interlocked, in the most fundamental way, with those of sex/gender: They have done so through the idea of *binary sex/gender difference*.

That sex/gender and racial classifications, along with the sexism and racism they authorize, are *somehow* interlocked is, of course, not a new idea. Theorists of race and racial hierarchy in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth tended to regard the so-called inferior, darker races as

feminine (or effeminate) and the so-called superior, blond, Nordic ones as masculine.⁴ In addition, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century biological racism often drew an analogy between European females and males of so-called inferior races, groups that supposedly shared (among other deficiencies) similarly small skulls and brains.⁵ Later, various second-wave, and mostly unsatisfactory, feminist theories attempted to understand the connection between sexism and racism, sometimes going so far as to regard misogyny as the root of racism (and so conveniently managing to absolve White women of it).⁶ By the turn of the twenty-first century, mainstream feminist scholarship, increasingly aware of its blind spot about race, had begun to reorient itself around the idea of intersectionality, introduced by the legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw and inspired by a long history of Black women thinkers. Crenshaw has argued that race and gender, or at least racism and sexism, must be analyzed together, and that such an analysis should focus on where these categories, and the oppressions that follow from them, intersect – in the situations of those marginalized by both race and sex.⁷ Crenshaw’s framework, to be sure, has enormous theoretical and practical power and scope. However, a careful reading of Ellis’s pronouncements suggests something further that an intersectional approach doesn’t quite address: classifications of race and gender are connected *through the very idea of the sex/gender binary itself*. For Ellis, the full expression of the distinction between the male and the female, in all of their masculine and feminine glory, has a race as well: White and European, perhaps even Northern European or Anglo-Saxon. Thus, Ellis reveals a conceptual formation in which the connection between race and gender categories is deep and structural, and its linchpin is binary sex/gender difference. The ideal of such difference, in turn, presides over a racial hierarchy in which all non-European or non-White groups are viewed as exhibiting some sort or degree of sex/gender disorder; indeed, these groups are defined by it. The men of such racialized groups might be regarded as not masculine enough, or they may not be masculine in the right way; the women might be too masculine, or not feminine in the right way. Or men and women of a racialized group might be seen as too similar to each other. Sometimes such stereotypes might be internally contradictory, or they might change with changing contexts or circumstances. But when it comes to the sex/gender expression of racialized males and females, along with the relationship between them, something is always thought to be amiss. The structure organized by this racial gender-binary ideal allows for men of all races to be compared to the White male ideal and found wanting, and for females of all races to be compared to the White female ideal and also found wanting. And, above all, it provides a way to categorize and rank a race’s level of civilization according to how well or poorly the intra-racial relationship between males and females of that race conforms – physically, psychologically, morally, and socially – to the gender – binary ideal. And, of course, the only men and women who conform adequately are White Europeans.

This hierarchical framework, with the racial gender-binary ideal at its apex, made sense of many things, including the persistent and widespread negative sexual stereotypes of the men and women of just about all racialized populations. But was Ellis alone in holding such a view? It took very little research to find that he most certainly was not. Indeed, it was ubiquitous and explicit in the roughly thirty years before and after he wrote. It was woven, for example, into Herbert Spencer's highly influential doctrine of social evolution, and in 1865, the famous German sexologist Richard Krafft-Ebing could write, without a word of further explanation: "The higher the anthropological development of the race, the stronger these contrasts [between secondary sexual characteristics] between man and woman."⁸ In 1897, the University of Chicago social scientist William I. Thomas was equally explicit and succinct: "The less civilized the race the less is the physical differences of the sexes." Around the same time, the American physician and scientist Joseph LeConte (1823–1901) wrote, "The tendency of evolution is to make man more and more manly and woman more and more womanly."⁹ According to Friedrich Wilhelm Riehl, the foremost German sociologist of the nineteenth century, the lower a race's level of development, the more muddled its sexual differences will be; in the lower races, he claimed, "the difference between man and woman is thus less pronounced than among civilized peoples."¹⁰ And so on. European expressions of this view – and there are many – seemed particularly focused on the failures of Jewish men and women, while American expressions focused more on Africans and those of African descent. But the general structure organized by the racial gender-binary ideal is maximally flexible, ready to be applied, in one way or another, to the reproductive couple of any group deemed racially Other.

As Chapter 2 will argue, the outlines of the racial gender-binary ideal were already present in the eighteenth century, but, as the statements I quote above suggest, the Darwinian turn lent the view a particularly clear and compelling form. At a time of open and unapologetic White supremacy, what could make more sense than the belief that nature itself, through the process of evolution, had forged a superior, White, sex/gender-binary population, and, indeed, that this population's sex/gender-binary character was a prime measure of its superiority? Of course, what had in fact been forged together were the *ideas* of racial supremacy and of binary sex/gender difference, along with the conviction that the two must be connected.

Finding surprisingly little discussion of any of this, I undertook an analysis of Ellis's version of the racial gender-binary ideal in "Pelvic Politics: Sexual Dimorphism and Racial Difference," published in 2001.¹¹ Subsequently, I became aware of work from the 1990s by the historians Gail Bederman, Antoinette Burton, and Michele Newman that addressed the Darwinian version of the sex/gender ideal and its influence at various historical junctures in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century United States and Britain.

The writing of Sylvia Wynter, Hortense Spillers, and especially Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí also pointed in this direction. In subsequent years, more such work has appeared, including Jay Geller's examination of Freud and antisemitism; Maria Lugones' analysis of the coloniality of gender; and Ladelle McWhorter's and Julian Carter's work on Whiteness, normality, and heterosexuality in mid-century United States. More recently, Roderick Ferguson and C. Riley Snorton, both focusing on the United States, have examined the racial dimension of the White gender-binary structure as it applies to sexuality.

Still, there was no sustained, general discussion of the racial gender-binary ideal in its own right, as a through-line running from the beginning of modern European racial discourse in the eighteenth century to the present. In what follows, my aim is to bring this ideal and the structure it organizes clearly into view, to examine how they shape a number of texts where they appear, and to uncover the complex and sometimes unexpected ideological work they do. I do not explain how this structure arose (although the development of capitalism would surely be central to any such explanation).¹² Nor do I situate particular versions of this structure historically (as, for example, Bederman, Burton, and Newman have done so well). I focus primarily on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because that is the period during which this view came to be expressed most clearly. In some ways, I regard this ideal and the structure it organizes to be as important to understanding the relationship between the ideas of race and gender as second-wave feminist theories have claimed that patriarchy, the identification of woman with body, or the public/private distinction, for example, are to thinking about gender in general. But there's an important difference. Second-wave feminist theories tended to be grandly universal and essentialist (an approach that, indeed, often sidelines race). My aim is much more modest. I focus on the relationship between categories, ones still with us, that emerged and coalesced at a particular historical juncture. And although this relationship was once clearly stated, it now seems nearly invisible although it is still operative.

Indeed, such invisibility is in large part what prompted me to write this book. Some historians who study periods rife with statements like Ellis's and Krafft-Ebing's have clearly discerned the racial gender-binary ideal and understood its importance, at least within a particular historical context. But it is surprising how often even historians of the relevant periods have overlooked this ideal. There are, no doubt, many explanations for this, including the sense that whatever else one might say about them, sex and race are simply two different things. But another reason, I think, is the amnesia that seems to overtake dominant White culture concerning its overtly racist past, an amnesia surely related to that special kind of invisibility that matters having to do with race acquire when a society transitions from being avowedly racist to congratulating itself on not seeing race at all. I think here of the work of the philosopher Charles Mills, who argues that while classical contract theory

in Western political thought is often regarded as the theoretical expression of a firm commitment to human equality, the original contract theorists – Hobbes, Locke, Kant, and Rousseau, for example, all of whom believed in the superiority of White, Christian, European males – had qualms, at best, about applying this doctrine universally. (Indeed, Kant was a major early theorist of modern racial hierarchy – something philosophers have only recently started to come to terms with.) In spite of this – or perhaps because of it – John Rawls, the preeminent late-twentieth-century American contract theorist, managed to write a detailed 560-page tome about justice in modern Western liberal democracies with barely a mention of slavery.¹³ Might a similar amnesia explain why the racial character of the sex/gender binary is so often overlooked, even when considering older writing where this racial character is explicit? And surely the racial gender-binary ideal remains relevant. Sexual stereotypes of racialized males and, especially, females still abound; Beyoncé, Michelle Obama, and Serena Williams, for example, are still masculinized, and the specter of the Black-or dark-skinned rapist has not disappeared.¹⁴ Effeminate Jewish men, masculine Jewish women; hyperfeminine Asian women and effeminized Asian men – these widely acknowledged stereotypes can all be read as manifestations of the racial gender-binary ideal.

Besides a convenient amnesia about racism, another stumbling block to seeing the full significance of the racial gender-binary ideal is the unquestioned confidence that the binary of *biological* sex, at least, is simply a fact of nature. Certainly, “the (present) necessity of male female pairing for reproduction” (as Sara Richardson has put it, her eye on evolutionary time) depends on some people producing ova and some people (usually different ones) producing spermatozoa.¹⁵ But what, exactly, follows from this? Perhaps less than one might think. Even the scientific basis of what one might call the grand binary of sex – which goes well beyond sperm and egg production to claim a sharp, systemic, and exhaustive distinction between male and female bodies and often minds too – has proved exceedingly elusive. Has science *really* established that humans can (and had better!) be divided into two opposite and complementary sexes as neatly and exhaustively as society demands? Increasingly, skeptics argue that biological theories of sex difference often start with the conviction that sex must be understood as grandly binary, and then try – over and over, and without much success – to justify this conviction. Realizing that there may be no objective, verifiable basis for the grand binary of sex, coupled with the similar realization that there are no such things as biological races, clears the way for seeing just how fully the idea of each is constructed in terms of the idea of the other. To this end, Chapter 1 briefly examines the claim that biology, rather than establishing the validity of the grand binary of sex, has largely assumed it, thanks to extra-scientific attitudes about gender difference. But as intersectional theories make plain, race figures into these attitudes about gender difference, too.

Drawing on the work of the sociologist Zune Magubane, I show how, as a consequence, race is implicated in the grand binary of biological sex as well. Finally, I give a reading – and a defense – of the work of Thomas Laqueur, who has argued that although a belief in the binary of biological sex – what he calls the two-sex model of the body – may seem to be simply common sense, it dates from only around the eighteenth century. And in any event, Laqueur argues, a two-sex model is not the sort of thing science could have established in the first place.

Chapter 2, which builds on the analysis I give of Havelock Ellis in “Pelvic Politics,” argues that an early form of the sex/gender-binary ideal informed modern racial theories from the start, although this has sometimes been overlooked by historians. Then I address a version of the ideal cast in post-Darwinian evolutionary terms, especially in Ellis, who used it to resolve a number of thorny paradoxes concerning European women’s simultaneous racial superiority to other females and her inferiority to European men. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of Sander Gilman’s reading of Freud, which understands Freud’s monumentally important theory of gender difference, formulated on the eve of the Nazi horrors, as serving to free Jewish men from the centuries-long emasculation imposed on them by Christendom.¹⁶ Thus, I argue, Freud attempts to de-racialize – at least in part – the gender-binary by blocking its function as a racial ideal.

The racial gender-binary ideal, not surprisingly, prescribes norms for sexual desire and behavior; as Randolph Trumbach has argued, by the eighteenth century, the new conception of man and woman as complementary opposites defined same-sex sexual activity as being “against nature.”¹⁷ On its face, such a conception would seem to allow only normative, cross-sexual relations – what we’d now call heterosexuality – and relegate anything else to the fringes of Whiteness (at best). Nevertheless, Chapter 3 shows how the homosexual apologists John Addington Symonds (1840–1893) and Edward Carpenter (1844–1929) each found a way to appropriate the racial gender-binary ideal to argue, against expectation, for the racial respectability of homosexuality – at least among men of the right racial sort.¹⁸

Chapter 4, a slightly revised version of an article first published in 2009, discusses the role that the racial gender-binary ideal plays in Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*. At the time I wrote this article, I was, of course, familiar with the criticism, increasingly aimed at much White feminist writing, that Beauvoir had falsely universalized the situation of privileged European, bourgeois women. But *The Second Sex* was first published in 1949, only a decade after Ellis’s death. Might her work in some way draw on the racial gender-binary ideal? I argue that it does, although Beauvoir both projected this ideal into the realm of philosophy and, like Carpenter and Symonds, refashioned it for her own purposes – in her case, feminist ones.

Moving into the late twentieth century, Chapter 5 compares this book's approach to Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectional one. Both seek to understand the relationship between racism and sexism, and both deny that these are autonomous from each other. But while intersectional approaches, reasonably enough, focus on the situations of those, like Black women, who belong to more than one marginalized group, this book focuses on the categories of race and gender themselves and, especially, on how they are intermeshed through the racial gender-binary ideal. Chapter 5 explores this difference in approach and suggests as well how an approach that starts from the racial gender-binary ideal might reconcile Crenshaw's framework with that of the radical-feminist legal theorist Catharine MacKinnon, a reconciliation that Crenshaw, to the surprise of many, thinks is both possible and desirable.¹⁹ The chapter ends with a theoretical discussion of what might be called the problem of scope in both my own approach and an intersectional one, both of which are very much focused on the modern West. The problem is this: in the absence of a universalistic, essentialist, notion of gender, is there a way to talk intelligibly about gender – and about gender oppression – across historical periods or cultures? I suggest that the work of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein might help solve this problem – at least for the approach I take in this book.

Finally, a word about terminology. These days, the term “sex” is often used to refer to biological matters and “gender” to psychosocial ones. Since – as will become clear – I consider the conceptual terrain here to be contested and complex, I will often use the term “sex/gender binary.” I will also use the more general “gender binary” where that seems appropriate, and I will use “sex binary” when the focus is primarily on the body.

I take it as established that the various classifications of race dreamed up by Europeans around the eighteenth century have no biological basis (a matter I return to briefly in the Afterword); thus, it is not surprising that racial theorists have disagreed about how many races there are and how to draw the lines between them. In light of this, I use the term “White” loosely, to refer to whatever group or groups have been imagined to conform most fully to the gender-binary ideal. To be White in this sense, it is necessary to be European but, as Chapter 2 shows, not sufficient; European Jews, for example, did not count. Complicating matters, until as late as the first decades of the twentieth century, acquired characteristics – whether physical, mental, moral, or cultural – were thought to be heritable. Thus, distinctions between race, culture, and class were not so sharply drawn as they would be later. The religion of one's ancestors was believed to be relevant to one's biological racial inheritance as were their occupations, social stations, and general modes of living. As George W. Stocking remarks, at the time of Darwin race was a vaguely biocultural notion, a view that might seem as strange today as many of the other ones this book will relate.²⁰

Notes

- 1 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of the Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1757] 1990), 107.
- 2 Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).
- 3 Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1905), 1:165.
- 4 Arthur de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, trans. Adrian Collins (New York: Putnam, 1915); Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 99–117; Nancy Leys Stepan, “Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science,” *Isis* 77, no. 2 (June 1986): 261–77.
- 5 Stepan, “The Role of Analogy.”
- 6 Two examples are Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, [1949] 2010) and Nancy Chodorow, “Gender, Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective,” *Socialist Review* 46, no. 9 (1979): 51–70.
- 7 Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241–99; and “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscriminatory Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Policies,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* no. 1 (1989): 139–167. For a good history of intersectional thinking, see Kristin Waters, “Past as Prologue: Intersectional Analysis from the Nineteenth Century to the Twenty-First” in *Why Race and Gender Still Matter: An Intersectional Approach*, ed. Mauve O’Donovan, Namita Goswami, Lisa Yount (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 27–42.
- 8 Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: The Case Histories*, trans. Franklin S. Kraf (New York: Stein and Day [1886] 1965), 28.
- 9 Louise Michele Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford, 1999), 189, 34.
- 10 Jay Geller, *On Freud’s Jewish Body: Mitigating Circumcisions* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 8.
- 11 Sally Markowitz, “Pelvic Politics: Sexual Dimorphism and Racial Difference,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 2 (Winter, 2001): 389–414.
- 12 Ferguson, *One Dimensional Queer* is especially good on this.
- 13 Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).
- 14 Janine Jones, “Reasoning up Front with Race,” in *Why Race and Gender Still Matter: An Intersectional Approach*, ed. Mauve O’Donovan, Namita Goswami, Lisa Yount (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 133–55; Amber Phillips, “‘They’re Rapists’: President Trump’s Campaign Speech Annotated, Two Years Later,” *Washington Post*, June 16, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/06/16/theyre-rapists-presidents-trump-campaign-launch-speech-two-years-later-annotated/>
- 15 Sarah S. Richardson, *Sex Itself: The Search for Male & Female in the Human Genome* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 199.
- 16 Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- 17 Randolph Trumbach, “The Birth of the Queen: Sodomy and the Emergence of Gender Equality in Modern Culture, 1660–1750,” in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. M. Duberman, M. Vicinus, and G. Chauncey, Jr. (New York: Penguin, 1989), 139.
- 18 John Addington Symonds, *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, [1883] 1971); John Addington Symonds, *A Problem in Modern Ethics*

- (New York: Benjamin Blom, [1891]1971); Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1912).
- 19 MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).
- 20 George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 106.

Bibliography

- Beauvoir, Simone de. [1949] 2011. *The Second Sex*. Translated by S. Malovany-Chevallier and C. Borde. New York: Vintage.
- Bederman, Gail. 1995. *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880–1917*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Burke, Edmund. [1757] 1990. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of the Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burton, Antoinette. 1994. *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Carbado, Devon. 2013. “Colorblind Intersectionality.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38 (4): 811–45.
- Carpenter, Edward. [1919] 1975. *Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk: A Study in Social Evolution*. New York: Arno Press.
- Carter, Julian B. 2007. *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1880–1940*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Chodorow, Nancy. 1979. “Gender, Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective.” *Socialist Review* 46 (9): 51–70.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Policies.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1): 139–67.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1991. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6): 1241–99.
- Ellis, Havelock. 1905. *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. 2 vols. New York: Random House.
- Ferguson, Roderick. 2019. *One-Dimensional Queer: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. Medford, MA: Polity Press.
- Geller, Jay. 2007. *On Freud’s Jewish Body: Mitigating Circumcisions*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Gilman, Sander L. 1985. *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Gilman, Sander L. 1993. *Freud, Race, and Gender*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gobineau, Arthur de. 1915. *The Inequality of Races*. Translated by Adrian Collins. New York: Putnam.
- Jones, Janine. 2017. “Reasoning up Front with Race.” In *Why Race and Gender Still Matter: An Intersectional Approach*, edited by M. O’Donovan, N. Goswami, L. Yount. New York: Taylor and Francis, 133–55.
- Krafft-Ebing, Richard von. [1886] 1997. *Psychopathia Sexualis, with Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct*. Translated by Franklin S. Klaf. New York: Stein and Day.
- Lugones, Maria. 2007. “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System.” *Hypatia* 22 (1): 186–209.

- MacKinnon, Catharine. 1987. *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Magubane, Zine. 2014. "Spectacles and Scholarship: Caster Semenya, Intersex Studies, and the Problem of Race in Feminist Theory." *Signs: Journal of Woman in Culture and Society* 39 (3): 761–85.
- Markowitz, Sally. 2001. "Pelvic Politics: Sexual Dimorphism and Racial Difference." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26 (2): 389–414.
- McWhorter, Ladelle. 2009. *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mills, Charles W. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Newman, Louise Michele. 1999. *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States*. New York: Oxford.
- Oyèwùmí, Oyèrónké. 1997. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Phillips, Amber. 2017. "They're Rapists!". June 16. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/06/16/theyre-rapists-presidents-trump-campaign-launch-speech-two-years-later-annotated/>.
- Richardson, Sarah. 2013. *Sex Itself: The Search for Male and Female in the Human Genome*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.
- Snorton, C. Riley. 1917. *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Stepan, Nancy Leys. 1986. "Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science." *Isis* 77 (2): 261–77.
- Stocking, George W., Jr. 1987. *Victorian Anthropology*. New York: Free Press.
- Symonds, John Addington. [1883] 1971. *A Problem in Greek Ethics*. New York: Benjamin Blom.
- Symonds, John Addington. [1891] 1971. *A Problem in Modern Ethics*. New York: Haskell House Publishers.
- Thomas, Greg. 2007. *The Sexual Demon of Colonial Power: Pan-African Embodiment and Erotic Schemes of Empire*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. [1953] 1997. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wynter, Sylvia. 1995. "1492: A New World View." In *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, edited by Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Vera Nettleford. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 5–57.
- Wynter, Sylvia. 2003. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being, Power, Truth, Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3 (3): 257–337.
- Young, Robert J.C. 1995. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*. New York: Routledge.

1

BINARY SEX AND ITS SKEPTICS

Introduction

According to Freud, “When you meet a human being, the first distinction you make is ‘male or female?’ and you are accustomed to making the distinction with unhesitating certainty.”¹ Giving precise criteria for this distinction, however, is another matter. One might be tempted to paraphrase Supreme Court Justice Potter’s famous comment about obscenity and say simply, “I know a male or female when I see one.” But such certainty depends in large part on the diligence of those one meets in announcing their sex, as the feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye once put it: one expects them to dress, groom, move, talk, and generally comport themselves in conformity to the sex to which they were assigned at birth.² But what about this assignment? *Are* there really exactly two complementary, mutually exclusive, and exhaustive biological sexes? What is the basis of this distinction and – just as importantly – what is the point of making it at every turn?

Clearly, the church has an investment here, as does the state; so do marketers of everything from eyeglass frames to cars to vitamins.³ Pledging allegiance to a certain version of this binary distinction also seems to serve as a proxy for a whole suite of other beliefs and attitudes. Why else was United States Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson asked at her Senate confirmation hearings whether she could define the word “woman”? (She wisely answered no, she could not; she wasn’t a biologist.)⁴

This book focuses on another sort of investment in the binary of sex, one involving the racial classifications that were developed in the West about three centuries ago and have held sway ever since. Quite simply, the practice of first dividing people into the sharply binary categories of male and female,

and then judging how well they conform to these categories, has served as a crucial anchor for an idea of Whiteness and the racial hierarchy that it establishes. As I write in the Introduction, the sexologist Krafft-Ebing explained this connection between racial hierarchy and the binary of sex as clearly, unabashedly, and succinctly as one could ask for. I quote him again here: “The secondary sexual characteristics differentiate the two sexes; they present the specific male and female types. The higher the anthropological development of the race, the stronger these contrasts between man and woman.”⁵ Later chapters will examine other instances of this idea and discuss its longstanding and wide-ranging significance.

This chapter, however, focuses on a preliminary issue: the assumption that a sharply and exhaustively binary sex difference is an unquestionable truth of nature, endorsed by commonsense and confirmed by science. After briefly rehearsing some of the doubts feminists have raised about the scientific *bona fides* of the binary of sex, I will discuss the often-overlooked role categories of race have played in securing them. Finally, I’ll examine in some detail Thomas Laqueur’s claim that the binary of sex (what he calls the two-sex model of the body) should be understood as a feature not of the actual physical makeup of humans but rather of a modern, Eurocentric worldview – one, as I hope this book will make clear, that cannot be disentangled from the idea of race and racial hierarchy.

Binary sex: an empirical hypothesis?

One of the great attractions of dividing humankind into male and female, masculine and feminine, has long been its promise of naturalizing and justifying a masculinist social order.⁶ As the biologist Patrick Geddes pronounced in the late nineteenth century, “What was decided among the pre-historic Protozoa cannot be annulled by an act of Parliament.”⁷ Most feminists, of course, have disagreed, believing Parliamentary power to be more relevant than Protozoan genetics in determining women’s place in the social world. However, even some feminists who might be inclined to leave the matter of biological sex difference to the biologists have found it hard to stomach the gendered metaphors that biologists often indulge in when writing about human reproduction. As late as 1977, Thomas Laqueur reports, an otherwise dry, technical gynecology textbook could include this sentence: “Thus to quote an old saying, ‘Menstruation is the uterus crying for lack of a baby.’”⁸ Indeed, for at least half a century, feminists have criticized what seems to be a persistent tendency of biologists: they first project stereotypes of masculinity and femininity (indeed, of *White* masculinity and femininity – but more about that later) onto aspects of reproductive biology, and then, arguing circularly, help themselves to the resulting idea of reproductive biology to explain why men are from Mars and women from Venus (to borrow the title

of a bestselling book from the 1990s).⁹ Sperm are often characterized as active, daring, and competitive; while eggs are passive and receptive, waiting patiently to be awakened. (With a bit of imagination, of course, this metaphor can be reversed, casting the egg as dashing heroine and the sperm as her less dynamic partner.)¹⁰ Such descriptions, the pioneering feminist scientist Eleanor Fox Keller has written, commit a “synecdochic error,” where the part is taken for the whole. Keller explains it like this: first, human bodies are divided into male and female; next, additional, extra-physical properties are attributed to these bodies (e.g., active/passive, independent/dependent); then, the properties that have been ascribed to whole bodies are attributed to the “subcategories of, or processes associated with, these bodies.”¹¹ Finally, closing the circle, the additional, “extra-physical” properties attributed to males and females are themselves explained and justified by the very processes, parts, or products of the bodies (e.g., the inert egg, the active sperm) onto which such properties were projected in the first place.

The assumption that sex difference is sharply and exhaustively binary, on some accounts influencing every system of the body and the mind, has been around since the eighteenth century. What’s more, as Veronica Sanz argues, it has never really been open to question.¹² This unquestioned status has not only reinforced gender stereotypes but also hobbled scientists’ attempts to understand sex difference and human biology generally. Here’s a quick and greatly simplified summary of the excellent account Sanz gives of these attempts – and how they go wrong.¹³ First, genitals, which to this day serve to classify newborns, were taken to be the definitive markers of sex difference. Then, in the late nineteenth century, with the development of gynecology, gonads replaced genitals as the marker of sex. During this Age of Gonads (as Alice Dreger has called it), genitalia no longer mattered: if a person had testes, that person was male; if ovaries, female.¹⁴ But there was a problem. Not only might the sex of a person’s gonads fail to match that of their genitals, but someone might have a single male and a single female gonad, or gonads that were not clearly either male or female. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the discovery of hormones and the development of endocrinology seemed to promise a resolution to this problem. The first hormones were found in extracts from testes and ovaries, so it was assumed that these hormones – estrogen and testosterone – corresponded to the sex of the organ in which they were found. Thus, hormones – so-called “sex hormones” – came to be regarded as the definitive markers of sex difference. But then it was discovered that male bodies produce estrogen and female bodies testosterone! To accommodate this anomaly, the theory was amended to stipulate further that estrogen must be inactive in “normal” men and testosterone inactive in “normal” females; otherwise, men would be feminized, women masculinized, and both sexes at risk of becoming homosexual. But, as Sanz explains, this hypothesis turned out to be mistaken as well. So, too, did the

assumption that estrogen and testosterone were single hormones. Instead, as Sanz writes, “they both are part of a chemically related group – under the umbrella of androgens and estrogens – whose components can easily be transformed into one another and operate many functions in the body.” What’s more, “other hormones, secreted by the adrenal glands rather than the gonads, are also related to reproductive and sexual functions.”¹⁵ So even to call estrogen and testosterone “sex hormones” – as many people continue to do – is something of a misnomer.

The story becomes more complicated still as chromosomes, then genes, then brain structure are enlisted to serve as the locus for binary sex difference, all only to fall short. The most recent candidate for the *sine qua non* of binary sex was suggested by the sequencing of the human genome. On this view, the genomic differences between males and females are great enough to suggest that “there is not one human genome, but two: male and female.”¹⁶ Indeed, proponents of distinguishing between male and female genomes – which they call “sexomes” – believe that the male and the female sexome are more dissimilar from each other than the human genome is from that of the chimpanzee. Sarah Richardson, who has examined this genomic approach in depth, claims not only that this account vastly overstates the genetic differences between human males and females, but that even to compare male and female genomes, as one might compare the genomes of humans and chimpanzees, is to make something of a category mistake. True, the human species, because it reproduces sexually, requires both males and females. But a genome describes a species *as a whole* – and a species has only one genome.¹⁷

Sanz’s reaction to this latest, technologically sophisticated attempt to tie down the sex binary once and for all is worth quoting:

When I read Richardson’s description of researches using genomic technologies “to quantitatively characterize sex differences in gene expression in every tissue of the body, from the heart to the brain and the liver,” I cannot help but remember the words of Londa Schiebinger thirty years ago when she explained how nineteenth-century anatomical scientists found sex differences “in every bone, muscle, nerve and vein of the human body.”¹⁸

Nevertheless, the search for the holy grail of binary sex difference has continued unabated. Sanz concludes: “[T]he assumption that sex is a binary was never questioned because it was never a hypothesis: it was the taken-for-granted starting point.”¹⁹ And it rests on a confusion. Sanz suggests that the very term “sex” suffers from an unrecognized imprecision. On the one hand, it functions on the macro-level to characterize whole people, men and women. On the other hand, it functions on the micro-level, through a combination of what Sanz calls the “atomization of body parts” and a mechanistic

view of biological processes, as various parts, aspects, or processes of the body are, in one way or another, “alleged as the new and definitive locus of sex.” Thus, “it is precisely this back and forth between the macro- and microlevels of the organism in the process of assigning sex, together with imprecision in the meaning of sex, that has allowed the perpetuation of the binary.” Biological sex, Sanz concludes, becomes a “tautological network where, when pushed to the limit, sex becomes a signifier for itself.”²⁰

In recent years, at least some biologists, following the lead of Ruth Hubbard and Evelyn Fox Keller (although, as Sanz notes, not always giving them credit), have become more open to what Sanz calls a “multi-factorial, non-deterministic, interactive” model of sex differentiation instead of looking for a single criterion that determines whether one should be classified as male or female, or a single factor or process that controls whether a zygote will become male or female.²¹ And, taking stock of the direction of recent genomic research into sex difference, Richardson argues that while it can’t be denied that “gametic sex is, in two-sex species, dimorphic,” we should resist regarding sex as a binary, which invites thinking in terms of dichotomies, dualisms, hierarchies, polarities, complementarities, and oppositions (not to mention marginalizing those whose bodies are not easily classifiable as either male or female). Instead, she proposes a “gene’s eye view” of gametic sex, which she regards as relational – as a “dyadic kind” whose parts are in “dynamic interdependence and interaction with one another.”²² Such a view does not prescribe regarding the sexes as “fixed and dichotomous subclasses within populations,” let alone reducing people to the gametes they happen to produce.²³ A “gene’s eye view” of sex is surely a far cry from talk of “sexomes.”

There is much more to say about these matters, but even this quick summary suggests that there is a significant gap between what scientists actually know (or don’t know) about sex difference and the certainty about the matter displayed by, for example, Justice Jackson’s questioners. But of course the practice of classifying people as male or female – at birth, according to genitals – was never really about recording a simple, neutral biological fact. If it were only that, the matter would not have been raised during Justice Jackson’s hearings. Instead, such classification is a component of a complex, far-reaching discourse – one, this book will argue, that involves modern European categories of race. And the less attached one is to rigid and unfounded views about the biology of sex difference, the better able one will be to see the role such views have played in fictitious and oppressive racial classifications.

A strictly binary classification of people according to biological sex, of course, is bound to marginalize those who don’t quite conform to whatever criteria are regarded as decisive in determining which sex one is. Obviously, those with intersex conditions of various sorts – ambiguous genitals or gonads, for example – may not fit. Neither will many of those who are transgender. But people who are not (sufficiently) White or European may

be marginalized as well. Consider a group of newborns, classified as male or female on the basis of genitals. Among the group classified as female, it would be reasonable to expect each person to have ovaries and a pair of X chromosomes (although some might not; it is possible to have external female genitals while also having either testes instead of ovaries, or an XY instead of an XX karyotype). It would also be reasonable to expect those in this female group to be far more likely than those designated as males to menstruate when they reach puberty. I focus on menstruation here for a reason; in the eighteenth century, many Europeans believed that female Native Americans did not menstruate, and, well into the twentieth century, that Jewish males did.²⁴ (I discuss these views in the next chapter.) These racist beliefs, of course, are easy enough to disprove. Still, one wonders: might such ideas be implicated somehow in the binary-sex classificatory scheme itself? Clearly, there is much to consider here.

Racing the sex/gender binary

As the previous section discusses, some critics have long suspected that dominant social categories of gender, far from arising ineluctably from some fundamental fact of binary biological sex difference, are instead the reason sex is assumed to be a binary in the first place. If our social world were structured differently, human bodies might well be understood and classified differently, too. This sort of position is often associated with poststructuralism, especially with Judith Butler's work (although Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKenna proposed something similar as early as 1978.)²⁵ It is also argued for particularly convincingly – and without much help from poststructuralist theory – by Jennifer Germon, who revisits an often overlooked chapter in the career of the term “gender” (as it is used in what Germon calls its ontological sense as distinct from its linguistic one).²⁶ As Germon makes clear, this term was coined in the service of shoring up the binary character of the very biological sex that is so often claimed to underlie feminine and masculine role and identity – that is to say, what is now called gender.

The distinction between sex and gender, a staple of second-wave feminism, is widely accepted today; roughly, sex is usually taken to be a matter of biology and gender one of psychology, role, identity, and social relations. And while sex is assumed to be permanently fixed at – indeed before – birth, gender is often regarded as in some sense plastic (although perhaps not quite a simple matter of choice). Certainly something like this distinction can be found in various contexts before the term “gender” is used; for example, in 1949, Simone de Beauvoir famously wrote, “One is not born but rather becomes a woman.”²⁷ But, Germon points out, the sociologist Ann Oakely introduced the term to feminists only in 1972; Oakely, in turn, seems to have borrowed it from John Money, the psychologist and sexologist best known

for shaping how the twentieth-century medical establishment came to understand and manage people with intersex conditions.²⁸ Now widely criticized for subjecting infants with ambiguous bodies to normalizing and too often disabling surgery, Money took himself to be acting in his patients' best interests, giving them the chance to grow into children and adults whose bodies would conform, as much as possible, to one sex or the other – a necessity if they were to be regarded as fully human and to assume their places in society. But there was a problem: Money, unlike many of the researchers Sanz and Richardson discuss, fully recognized that there are multiple markers of sex, and he acknowledged that these don't always line up neatly. As he tells it, the first step of his solution

was to abandon the unitary definition of sex as male or female, and to formulate a list of five prenatally determined variables of sex that hermaphroditic data had shown could be independent of one another, namely, chromosomal sex, gonadal sex, internal and external morphologic sex, and hormonal sex (prenatal and pubertal), to which was added a sixth postnatal determinant, the sex of assignment and rearing. . . . The seventh place at the end of this list was an unnamed blank that craved a name. After several burnings of the midnight oil I arrived at the term, gender role, conceptualized jointly as private in imagery and ideation, and public in manifestation and expression.²⁹

Indeed, on Money's view, this last determinant, gender role, was *better* than the other, biological criteria at predicting whether an infant would identify and present as masculine or feminine. However, to be successful, such assignment and rearing needed to happen very early in an infant's life. Thus, Money arrived at a pragmatic solution to the problem of the sex-ambiguous body: alter it, through surgery and hormones, to become whichever sex promised to be easiest for medical technology to impose and then ensure that the infant was reared as the appropriate gender. As Germon writes, "At a pragmatic level, gender provided a solution to the uncertainty of any absolute somatic sex. Gender served to stabilize what advances in medical technology had rendered more and more unstable."³⁰ So even as debates heated up in some quarters about whether one's gender (as it began to be called, thanks largely to Money) necessarily followed from one's sex, in other quarters a sex was being quietly and pragmatically imposed on ambiguous bodies and then anchored by gender through rearing – or such was the hope. In other words, while feminists increasingly insisted that gender need not be determined by sex, Money and his cohort sought to determine sex by imposing gender.

Germon's genealogy shows that feminists were neither the only nor even the first ones to distinguish between gender and sex. And it's worth noting that while most feminists agreed with Money that gender role and identity

were malleable, many differed from him in accepting without question that biological sex was an objective, stable, and binary characteristic. But, like many analyses of the binary character of sex, Germon's account leaves out one crucial issue: the role that race plays in the construction of an idea of biological sex as sharply and exhaustively binary. In much the same way as German does, this book will regard the grand binary of sex not as a fundamental, unquestionable biological fact, but rather as a component of the larger discourse of gender. But I will argue further that this discourse of gender is itself governed by the racial gender-binary ideal. Put in very schematic terms, the idea is this: before people can be measured against White, European bourgeois standards of mind and body, they must first be *classified by sex* – understood, rightly or wrongly, as a sharply binary biological category. Infants are assigned a sex at birth, normally on the basis of their genitals. As these infants grow into children, adolescents, and adults, they are, of course, measured – by themselves, by those around them, by the world – against sex-specific ideals; obviously, what counts, for example, as an ideal, or even an acceptable, face and body is different for males and females. But these sexed ideals are also racially coded; they describe (idealized) White bodies. In this way, such ideals help constitute categories of race. Thus, for a male or female to be classified as non-White is, among other things, to imply that this person will not quite meet the relevant sex/gender ideal.

This sort of racialization of sex/gender ideals, of course, is widely acknowledged, and much has been written about the gender stereotypes associated with various racialized populations – men and women who are Black, Jewish, Asian, Latinx, Native American, Arab or Muslim, for example. But much less attention has been paid to the overarching structure in which these stereotypes function. This structure is organized by the gender-binary couple, raced as White, who serve as a model against which differently racialized male-female pairs are measured and found wanting. Indeed, for a male-female pair to be sorted as non-White is to imply that their relationship – their social relationship, their domestic relationship, the relationship between their bodies – will not make the grade. Specific racialized groups, moreover, are often stereotyped as falling short in specific ways, and so such failings become a means of racial classification.

However, already a complication arises. One might assume that even if race is involved in judgments about how well males and females meet the norms of their gender (understood as psychosocial matter), at least their *bare classification according to sex* would seem to be race-neutral, whatever criterion is used. Indeed, even if, because of some biological shortcoming thought to be characteristic of their race, males and females of so-called lower race might fail to qualify as exemplary specimens of their biological sexes (the Jewish male might menstruate, for example, or the Native-American woman

might not), surely such males and females are, at least, no less classifiable *as* males and females than their White counterparts.

But the matter is not so simple. Earlier in this chapter, I discuss the argument that a particular understanding of gender difference underlies the idea of binary sex difference. If this conception of gender really *does* underlie the idea of binary sex difference, and if race, in turn, informs this conception of gender, it should be no surprise if the question of race comes into play *even in classification according to sex*. And, indeed, it does come into play: if one's body makes such classification difficult *and one is not White*, this difficulty itself has long been regarded as a kind of racial marker. The much-discussed case of Caster Semenya is instructive here. Semenya is a South African Olympian whose sex was famously called into question in 2009. Not only was it unclear on inspection what Semenya's sex was, it was also unclear how to settle the matter. Even the *New York Times* sports page was forced to confront the conundrum.³¹ Binary-skeptical feminists used the case as an occasion to question the sex binary in general,³² but, as the philosopher Janine Jones has argued, race was an unacknowledged subtext in the discussion from the start; the widespread suspicion that Semenya was not *really* female and, indeed, the breathless coverage of the affair cannot be separated from the fact that Semenya is Black. Indeed, the masculinization of Black women, as Jones writes, has a long history, resurfacing recently not only in Semenya's case, but in similar reactions to Black female celebrities such as Serena Williams, Beyoncé, and Michelle Obama. While the abuse heaped on these women for not conforming to dominant feminine ideals is surely an instance of misogynoir (to borrow Moya Bailey's brilliant term), it points to a deeper epistemological issue.³³ Jones cites an empirical study that shows the propensity of a predominantly White group of college students actually to *mistake* Black women for men.³⁴

The sociologist Zine Magubane has analyzed the Semenya affair from a wider angle, homing in not just on the masculinization of Black women but also on the racialized character of the category of intersex – and, correspondingly, of the sex binary itself. While race might not at first seem to have anything to do with intersex conditions, such conditions not only have been racialized but racialized in different ways depending on whose bodies are being considered. On the one hand, sex-ambiguous bodies have long been associated with racial otherness, an association, indeed, that is a corollary of the White sex/gender – binary ideal itself. Thus, the imperative felt by Money to normalize sex-ambiguous newborns should be read as aimed at *White* infants – otherwise, “correcting” such intersex conditions would not have been considered a priority.³⁵ But, Magubane argues, intersex as an *identity category* is a different matter; it is raced as White, having been forged by many of Money's patients as a way of rejecting the traumatic normalization imposed on their (White) bodies. Such complexities seem not to have

been in the purview of the sex-binary-skeptical feminists who were so eager both for Semenya to “come out” as intersex and for others to acknowledge her as such. Semenya’s native South Africa was another matter. The popular response there, Magubane writes, was simply to insist that Semenya was a woman and leave it at that. There was little interest championing her as a living counterexample to the binary of sex. Feminist scholars’

intersectional analyses and poststructuralist critiques are only put to use to answer the question, Why did Semenya and her defenders reject the identity label “intersex”? Intersex—as a classificatory schema, object of knowledge, and technology of subject formation—was treated as though it had an ontological status in all times and places. . . . The identity became a holy grail of sorts, seen as inherently worth striving for, as it would prove that the ANC [African National Congress] and its publics had finally achieved modernity. In the process of proclaiming its inherent progressiveness, however, feminist scholars emptied intersex of racial or national history.³⁶

Magubane, then, reads race back into the genealogy of intersex identity – and so also into the idea of binary sex. Germon, as we saw, shows how Money enlists binary gender categories to anchor an unstable binary of sex (if too often at the expense of those with intersex conditions). But, Magubane argues, race is crucially involved here as well, because Money’s turn to gender anchors not only the sex binary, but also racial classifications and the social order they support; indeed, it anchors both at once. In the pre-emancipation United States, Magubane writes, even before the surgical alteration of intersex conditions was available, the civil status of citizens followed from their designation as male or female:

The *American Journal of the Medical Sciences* proclaimed “the right to be considered as belonging to this or to that sex comes into consideration at the period of baptism, education, doubtful paternity, and the possibility of marriage.” The authors of *Elements of Medical Jurisprudence* provide still more examples: “The question may be important in deciding the employment in the life of an individual, the descent of property, and the judicial decision concerning impotence or sterility.” The authors underscored their point with the story of a “young nobleman laboring under a dubious conformation, who, if a male, as was commonly believed, would inherit a considerable estate but to which he could have no right if he belonged to the other sex.”³⁷

No such consequences followed if one were enslaved; regardless of sex, enslaved people couldn’t vote, couldn’t marry or divorce, couldn’t inherit,

couldn't choose an occupation to pursue. Before the 1880s, when surgical "fixes" for intersex conditions were not yet available, physicians would decide on the sex of patients with non-dimorphic bodies and instruct them to fashion a life appropriate to the sex which the physician assigned them, for example, by acquiring a new, gender-appropriate wardrobe, a new occupation, perhaps a new start in a new location. But, Magubane writes, "even "after emancipation, models of gender based on white norms were disallowed to blacks," and it "goes without saying that no black female slave needed to dress like or impersonate a man to be allowed to work in the field."³⁸

In the United States, then, both during slavery and after, White bodies were "summarily and hastily normalized" to conform to gendered modes of civil and social life while "black intersex bodies were treated with callous indifference."³⁹ The situation in South Africa was similar. Magubane quotes this pronouncement from a 1973 article by two South African physicians:

Hermaphrodites have frequently been found among the Negro peoples of Africa and their descendants in the West Indies, and also in mixed races who share Negro ancestry. In Caucasoid races, however, hermaphroditism is rare and hitherto has not been described in a White South African.⁴⁰

On Magubane's view, then, Money, like other physicians and civil authorities before him, was actually concerned only with the sexual legibility of *White* bodies. Not only were Money's patients in all likelihood White, Magubane argues, but Whiteness was encoded in his very remedy for intersex conditions: the establishment of either masculine or feminine gender identity – both already understood as White:

To suggest that any black person—never mind one of questionable sexual status—was capable of assimilating to the normative American standards and status of whiteness would have been unthinkable. Hence, the archetypal intersex patient—the patient who most successfully adapted to the optimal gender of rearing model and whose story might appear in the *Bulletin of the Johns Hopkins Hospital*—had to be white.⁴¹

Magubane is surely correct to claim that the implications for feminism are enormous. Certainly, the notion of gender that had such profoundly negative consequences for many of Money's surgically altered patients (White patients, as Magubane argues) had a very different effect on feminists, many of whom welcomed a distinction between the body one was born with and the life one chose to live.⁴² But Magubane sees a further consequence: Money's idea of gender, which feminists imported eagerly into their theoretical

frameworks, was already coded as White. No wonder, then, that feminism has had so much trouble confronting race:

even when the idea that the truth of sex is anchored in the body is thrown radically into doubt, race still provides an anchor. Since the 1970s, black feminists have been expressing frustration at the seeming blindness of feminist theory to their histories and experiences—the insufficiency of the theoretical models, the unbearable whiteness of the assumptions. Whereas before we might have chalked this up to another manifestation of white privilege—the power and ability to willfully ignore the other—this journey through intersex’s historical twists and global travels suggests that it is not simply the intractable nature of white feminism that is the problem but rather that the concept of gender . . . had an exclusionary racial impulse written into it at its very inception.⁴³

The “exclusionary racial impulse” of the very concept of gender, a concept understood in binary terms, has proved to be even more difficult to see than the racial content of dominant Eurocentric ideas of masculinity or femininity – that is, their *Whiteness* – when considered separately. The difficulty, I suspect, owes at least in part to the grip of a binary, two-sex model of the body, a model that still “runs behind, above, and beyond particular theories and research projects.” But even while binary sex difference may be touted as absolute fact, it, like gender difference more generally, turns out really to function as a norm or ideal – and one that White Europeans are presumed to meet better than everyone else. When White Europeans fail to meet it, protocols like Money’s provide a fix for the problem. By contrast, when people who are *not* White fail to meet it, there is really no problem to fix, just further confirmation of their supposed racial inferiority. Thus, it turns out that binary sex difference – that purportedly sharp, exhaustive, objective distinction between male and female – was never really imagined to apply fully to *all* humans, after all. And if those who are not White are assumed to fail this binary test more often than those who are, one can only conclude that this is, as they say, a feature of the system, not a bug.

One sex or two? Reading (and misreading) Laqueur

One way to raise questions about what now passes as common sense is to show that people once thought very differently. In *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, Thomas Laqueur argues that the two-sex model of the human body – what I have been calling the grand binary of sex – became ascendent in Western thought only in the late eighteenth century. Laqueur argues that before that, from Aristotle on, the ideal human body was thought to be male and the female body essentially an inferior version of

it. Of course, if modern science had really established, once and for all, that the two-sex view of the body were the true one, the one-sex view could be dismissed as an historical curiosity, the benighted belief of a prescientific era. But Laqueur, like Sanz, argues not only that science has established no such thing, but that it is incapable of doing so even in theory.⁴⁴

Laqueur doesn't say much about race in *Making Sex*, but since I aim to show a fundamental connection between the idea of race and the idea of the gender binary, it would be significant if the two-sex model of the body arose at the very same time as racial thinking did. For this reason, I drew on Laqueur's work when, many years ago, I first formulated the ideas I develop here.⁴⁵ Since then, *Making Sex* has attracted a good deal of criticism, and so a reconsideration of Laqueur's work seemed to be in order. Upon rereading Laqueur and his critics, I found that much criticism of him not only misses its mark but takes an approach that discourages any inquiry into how conceptions of sex/gender may be related to other fundamental ways of organizing the natural and social worlds – including ways that involve racial classification.

Laqueur's claim, in short, is that only in the eighteenth century, with the advent of modern biology in combination with various other economic, social, and political developments, do male and female human bodies come to be regarded as radically dimorphic, complementary, and incommensurable, as well as the basis and explanation for the array of phenomena now commonly called gender. According to Laqueur, before this two-sex conception of the body took hold, the higher social status of males was thought to be a manifestation of a more general hierarchical metaphysics, one also embodied in the perfection of male bodies and the imperfection of female ones. From Aristotle on, male perfection was taken to be expressed by the male's greater heat, or *energeia*. This belief in the male's superior heat, a belief which lasted for centuries, also informed the view, discussed at length by Laqueur, that female genital organs are really just inferior versions of male ones. In particular, the vagina was seen as a kind of inverted, interior penis, its failure to descend a consequence of the female body's lack of the necessary heat.⁴⁶

Although Laqueur's account has been highly influential, criticism of it has been fierce from the start. My primary focus here will be on Helen King's recent book-length rebuttal of Laqueur, aptly titled *The One Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence*. Taking special issue with what she sees as Laqueur's over-emphasis of the penis-vagina homology, King regards his analysis as simplistic – a quality, she suggests, that explains its popularity. King also criticizes Laqueur for his "selective use of 'evidence', his lack of close reading of the material he does use," and his ignorance, willful or otherwise, of textual material that might cast doubt on his claims.⁴⁷ That Laqueur has attracted so much criticism is hardly surprising. His analysis spans centuries, and historians who specialize in particular periods might well be

expected to quibble with him about his timeline or his selection and dating of texts – not to mention his general “from Plato to Nato” approach, as King calls it.⁴⁸ But King goes further. Besides accusing him of misrepresenting the texts he analyzes, she cites others’ claims that the shift from a one- to a two-sex perspective – insofar as there was one – came well before the eighteenth century. Indeed, King argues, two-sex conceptions have always vied with one-sex ones. As for the one-sex conception’s dominance, King compiles the criticisms of historians specializing in various periods and concludes that the one-sex model reigned for a grand total of only about fifty years, from 1500 to 1550.⁴⁹ Thus, King concludes, Laqueur is mistaken to claim such a radical discontinuity between conceptions of sex difference, let alone to insist that the break occurred in the eighteenth century.

King suggests a reason Laqueur might have chosen the eighteenth century as the watershed for the break: this is the period when Michel Foucault claims the idea that everyone has a “true sex” first appears. More generally, it also “enabled Laqueur to provide this supposed shift between models of the body with a ‘why’, a social and intellectual context, by tying it to the emergence of ‘modernity’,” also a concern of Foucault’s. She quotes Laqueur as saying that “it is a sign of modernity to ask for a single, consistent biology as the source and foundation of masculinity and femininity,” a claim central to Laqueur’s thesis.⁵⁰ But if the shift can be located earlier – or, as King argues, if a robust two-sex tradition can be traced back to the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates himself – then the conception of binary sex difference can be extricated from a Foucauldian “constructionist” framework.

I suspect that Foucault, hardly universally revered among historians and classicists, is the real target of some of the criticism leveled at Laqueur. But while Foucault may be an important influence on Laqueur, I am more interested in another, somewhat unexpected one: that of the preeminent mid-twentieth-century American philosopher W.V.O. Quine. Although understanding, much less evaluating, Laqueur’s argument would seem to require addressing Quine’s influence, King and the critics she discusses do not so much as mention it. As a result, Laqueur and King seem to be talking past each other; or, more precisely, King, having failed to address Laqueur’s Quinean argument, seems to be talking past *him*. Indeed, one sometimes gets the impression that Laqueur is showing what is wrong with King’s views rather than the other way around.

Central to Laqueur’s argument is his claim that the two-sex conception of the body could not have displaced the one-sex conception without the development of the modern science of biology, which conceived of itself as an autonomous discipline, dedicated solely to empirical investigation rather than to the elaboration of an earlier metaphysics of hierarchy, whether one authorized by Aristotle or the Church. By contrast, Laqueur emphasizes, Aristotle’s one-sex conception assumes from the start a hierarchical metaphysics

in which the male is the model of human perfection, a model through which physical differences between men and women must be understood. (Although his critics sometimes imply otherwise, Laqueur never denies that such differences were noticed by proponents of the one-sex model – a matter I return to later.) Aristotle’s influence, of course, would be felt for centuries. Indeed, Laqueur argues, just as the discourse of modern biology has provided the framework for the modern West’s notion of sex difference (especially with respect to what it means to be female), Aristotle’s explicitly hierarchical metaphysics shaped the one-sex model from his time until the advent of modern biology.

According to Aristotle, all human bodies possess, as a fundamental component, a basic fluid capable of transformation. Because of its heat (*energeia*), the male body is capable of working this fluid up into spermatic seed, a superior substance that contains within it no less than the form of humanity itself; this form constitutes the soul (i.e., the organizing principle) of the new human infant. Female bodies, however, lack sufficient heat to accomplish this. In females, this fluid instead takes the form of menstrual blood or milk. Laqueur understands this conception of sex difference to express clearly a one-sex perspective, complete with its characteristic masculinism. Although females may be necessary and well suited for their reproductive function, there is nothing elevated about milk or menstrual blood. Male seed, however, contains the very form of humanity, concocted by the male body – the only sort of body capable of producing such a splendid thing.⁵¹

The one sex-body has another notable characteristic, according to Laqueur: its “processes – digestion and generation, menstruation and other bleeding – are not so easily distinguished or so easily assignable to one sex or another as they became after the eighteenth century.”⁵² Aristotle understood reproduction on the model of digestion, as the renowned Greek physician Galen continued to do five centuries later. And, Laqueur writes, although Galen may sometimes have talked about the opposition of the sexes, he and the medical tradition that followed nevertheless “were prepared to ignore entirely not only the specifically female but also the specifically reproductive quality of the female reproductive organs, not to speak of their relationship to male organs” For example, rather than focus on the reproductive function of the uterus, Galen saw it “as the archetype for a group of organs” that are hollow and large, like the stomach; he likened gestation to digestion.⁵³ Similarly, menstrual blood was thought to be the consequence of excess nutrition, which explained why nursing mothers did not menstruate; their excess was instead transformed into milk. As the Spanish scholar and cleric Isadore of Seville (560–636 CE) understood the process, after birth, the blood that has not been used by the womb flows to the breast, which whitens it and turns it to milk.⁵⁴

The male's seed, by contrast, was of another order entirely: "The insensible differences between the sexual heat of men and women turns out to represent no less a difference than between heaven and earth. The very last stage in the heating sperma comes from the friction of the penis during intercourse," and this heat is like the elements of the stars, "which are themselves not fired but create warmth in the things below them."⁵⁵ The male provides the form of the new human, the female provides the matter, and form always is superior to the matter to which it gives form. No wonder that feminists have argued that Aristotle's hierarchical metaphysics was gendered from the start.⁵⁶

This metaphysics, of course, would cast a very long shadow. So too would Aristotle's conception of heat and its connection to male superiority. In particular, the widespread understanding of the vagina as an inverted penis involves the idea that heat causes the descent and extrusion of the penis, just as, for Aristotle, it concocts the male's soul-giving sperm. Indeed, Laqueur claims that even when Renaissance scientists, responding to a new emphasis on empirical observation, were careful to note physiological differences between males and females, these differences were fitted into a larger, hierarchical one-sex framework. As Laqueur says of Galen, who regarded the vagina as an inverted penis:

The topographical relationships about which Galen writes so persuasively and with such apparent anatomical precision were not themselves to be understood as the basis of sexual hierarchy, but rather as a way of imagining or expressing it. Biology only records a higher truth.⁵⁷

On occasion, Galen may have been happy to correct others who carried the one-sex model a bit too far. For example, he expressed surprise that "so careful an observer" as his predecessor the Greek physician and early anatomist Herophilus (335–280 BCE) could have regarded the Fallopian tubes "as growing into the neck of the bladder as do the spermatic ducts in men. They very clearly do not." Nevertheless, according to Laqueur, Galen's correction "had no effect on the status of the model as a whole."⁵⁸

The eighteenth century, however, saw an enormous shift, in which

reproductive organs went from being paradigmatic sites for displaying hierarchy, resonant throughout the cosmos, to being the foundation of incommensurable difference. . . . Here was not only an explicit repudiation of the old isomorphisms, but also, and more important, a rejection of the idea that nuanced differences between organs, fluids, and physiological processes mirrored a transcendental order of perfection. Aristotle and Galen were simply mistaken in holding that female organs are a lesser form of the male's and by implication that woman is a lesser man. A woman is a woman, proclaimed the "moral anthropologist" Moreau in one of the

many new efforts to derive culture from the body, everywhere and in all things, moral and physical, not just in one set of organs.⁵⁹

Female and male skeletons and nervous systems became differentiated in new ways, and reproductive organs were given different names. Reproductive processes and systems, especially female ones, came to be understood more fully as specialized physiological systems; no longer were pregnancy and ovulation likened to digestion and circulation, or menstruation to hemorrhoidal bleeding. And while it had been thought for centuries that the female's orgasm, like the male's, was necessary for conception, sexual pleasure became associated with the male and sexual passivity with the female.⁶⁰

It is important to note that for Laqueur the hallmark of the earlier perspective involved not just a one-sex rather than a two-sex conception of the human body but also the hierarchical – and masculinist – metaphysical framework on which this conception rested. The new two-sex perspective, by contrast, took itself to be based purely on empirical observation, and while it certainly continued to be masculinist, it broke free from the hoary metaphysics of the ancients. Biology now provided the basis for difference rather than merely expressing a difference – and a male superiority – located elsewhere, in an extra-biological cosmos. In short, “[a] notion of order and coherence is replaced by corporeal wiring.”⁶¹

However, Laqueur denies that biology, by cutting its ties to an outmoded metaphysics, succeeded in grounding its new conception of sex difference solely in the objective, empirical observations of a neutral science – regardless of its claim to do exactly that. Instead, Laqueur is at pains to point out that the actual empirical discoveries that might have suggested a two-sex conception most strongly were not available until well after the two-sex conception had taken hold. For example, Laqueur writes, in 1844 the French physician Achille Chereau wrote, “Propter solum ovarium mulier est id quod est” (it is only because of the ovary that woman is what she is). But this pronouncement came “forty years before there would be any evidence for the real importance of the organ in a woman's life.” Nevertheless, by the early 1870s the removal of healthy ovaries had become a popular cure for a “wide variety of ‘behavioral pathologies’” – hysteria and excessive sexual desires as well as aches and pains that had eluded diagnosis.⁶² As for ovulation, it remained a scientific mystery into the twentieth century, and even the most rudimentary understanding of hormonal control of ovulation had to wait until the 1930s.⁶³ If anything, modern science seemed to be in league with the one-sex rather than the two-sex model. “A stranger surveying the landscape of mid-nineteenth century science,” Laqueur writes, “might well suspect that incommensurable sexual difference was created despite, not because of, new discoveries.” For example, the new science of embryology, which endorsed the view “that the penis and the clitoris, the labia and the scrotum, the ovary

and the testes, begin from one and the same embryonic structure,” certainly would seem to suggest a one-sex model.⁶⁴ So even as biology took itself to rest squarely on empirical experience, the two-sex model, much like the one-sex model it challenged, was guided by a framework largely untethered to such experience.

King disputes Laqueur’s claim that the move to a two-sex model of the body occurred before such discoveries as might have motivated it. Whether she is justified depends in part on just what, exactly, should be counted as such a discovery – not to mention what should be counted as a two-sex model. But Laqueur is also claiming something deeper here:

No discovery or group of discoveries dictated the rise of a two-sex model, for precisely the same reasons that the anatomical discoveries of the Renaissance did not unseat the one-sex model: the nature of sexual difference is not susceptible to empirical testing.⁶⁵

This is where Laqueur enlists the philosophy of W.V.O. Quine, and although Laqueur devotes only a page or so to discussing him, his influence is felt throughout the book. Here, Laqueur draws on Quine’s essay “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” a landmark of twentieth-century analytic philosophy:

Evidence bearing on the empirically testable claims of the one-sex model failed to dislodge them not because such data were silenced but because these claims were part of a far more general, intricate, and many stranded conception of the body which no observations, singly or in combination, could directly falsify. Willard Quine suggests why this should be the case on philosophical grounds. The totality of our beliefs “is a man-made fabric which impinges on experience only along the edges.” So-called knowledge, switching metaphors, “is like a field [which] is so underdetermined by its boundary conditions, experience, that there is much latitude as to what statements to reevaluate in the light of any contrary experience. *No particular experiences are linked with any particular statements in the interior of the field.*”⁶⁶

(Emphasis added)

What Quine understands as constituting an experience here is, roughly, a direct observation of the senses: a shape, a size, a color, a temperature, the rate at which something moves. On Laqueur’s view, neither the one-sex nor the two-sex model is observable in this way; they have at least that in common. Using Quine’s metaphor, one could say that each occupies a place not at the edge of the epistemological field, as direct observations do, but rather further in toward the interior. Thus, neither of these models is directly dependent on observations. But, although Laqueur does not spell this out, there

is a crucial difference between these models: only the two-sex model is *taken by its proponents* to be based directly on empirical experience and duly confirmed by science – a mistaken assumption, according to Laqueur, but one that reflects its time (and, indeed, our own).

One important point should be emphasized, however: Laqueur by no means rejects biology's discoveries about the nature of reproduction, let alone science generally. But here, too, he follows Quine, whose criterion for truth in science is strictly pragmatic. As Quine writes in "Two Dogmas," "As an empiricist I think of the conceptual scheme of science as a tool for predicting future experience in the light of past experience." Physical objects, for example, "are conceptually imported into the situation as convenient intermediaries – not by definition in terms of experience, but simply as irreducible posits comparable, epistemologically, to the gods of Homer." And although as "lay physicist" Quine regards believing in Homer's gods to be a "scientific error,"

in point of epistemological footing the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind. Both sorts of entities enter our conception only as cultural posits. The myth of physical objects is epistemologically superior to most in that it has proved more efficacious than other myths as a device for working a manageable structure into the flux of experience.⁶⁷

Laqueur's view is similarly pragmatic. We have made clear progress, Laqueur writes,

in understanding the human body in general and reproductive anatomy and physiology in particular. Modern science and modern women are much better able to predict the cyclical likelihood of pregnancy than were their ancestors; menstruation turns out to be a different physiological process from hemorrhoidal bleeding, contrary to the prevailing wisdom well into the eighteenth century, and the testes *are* histologically different from the ovaries. Any history of a science, however much it might emphasize the role of social, political, ideological, or aesthetic factors, must recognize these undeniable successes and the commitments that made them possible.⁶⁸

Indeed, by the early twentieth century,

the power of science to predict and effect successful mating in humans and animals was considerably enhanced. In short reproductive biology progressed in its understanding of sex and was not merely an "immature" enterprise that served competing social interests.

But – and this is essential – Laqueur also argues that this "new knowledge about sex did not in any way entail the claims made about sexual difference

in its name.” Progress in understanding reproductive physiology “did not cause a particular understanding of sexual difference, the shift to the two-sex model.”⁶⁹

Indeed, the shift from a one- to a two-sex model would seem to be even less justified on pragmatic grounds than the sorts of shifts Quine uses to illustrate his general point. For example, Quine sees a clear pragmatic basis for dethroning Aristotle’s system in favor of Darwin’s, or Ptolemy’s in favor of Copernicus’s; the views of Darwin and Copernicus simply explain our observations better than Aristotle’s and Ptolemy’s do (although Quine also acknowledges that one can remain loyal to Aristotle or Ptolemy as long as one is prepared to make the necessary, and no doubt disruptive, epistemological adjustments).⁷⁰ On Laqueur’s view, by contrast, neither a one- nor a two-sex model is better at explaining or predicting what he takes to be specific empirical discoveries in the biology of human reproduction.

In part, that may be because of a peculiarity of the one-sex versus two-sex quandary: it depends on a judgment about the degree of similarity and difference between the male and female body. Is the female body more like, or more unlike, the male body? Is the penis more like, or more unlike, the vagina? While it may be true that judgments of *all* sorts reflect the perspectives and interests of the judge, those about similarity and difference tend to do so in a particularly pronounced way. As Laqueur writes, “difference and sameness, more or less recondite, are everywhere; but which ones count and for what ends is determined outside the bounds of empirical investigation.”⁷¹ Whether one starts with a one-sex or a two-sex model makes all the difference when one decides whether the vagina is more like or more unlike the penis: “A whole world view makes the penis look like a vagina to Renaissance observers.”⁷² And this works both ways. Why are most people today likely to see the penis and vagina as so very different from each other? Is it because they simply *are*? Or is this way of seeing a consequence of how deeply entrenched the two-sex paradigm has become? In the end, however, when it comes to what Laqueur takes to be genuine progress in understanding reproductive anatomy, physiology, and biology, such judgments about similarity and difference are simply otiose.

Of course, these considerations are not likely to persuade someone who holds firmly to the idea that the two-sex model, endorsed by commonsense, is also confirmed by science.⁷³ This is not King’s position; she acknowledges that Laqueur’s view here is in line with most historians of medicine, who believe that science “constructs rather than discovers.”⁷⁴ But she ignores the Quinean distinction Laqueur makes between beliefs at the interior and those at the boundary of the epistemological field – that is, between beliefs based on direct observation and those more interior ones that may be held independently of such observations or even in spite of them. Because of this, much of her argument against Laqueur relies on simply pointing to what might seem

to be pre-modern recognitions of binary sex difference – indeed, some of the very ones Laqueur himself discusses in *Making Sex*. In other words, while she may not insist that the two-sex model is *true*, she presents a catalogue of pre-modern observations of differences between male and female bodies as evidence that a two-sex model was *accepted* – and accepted from the beginning.

On Laqueur's view, though, such observations establish nothing of the sort. Not that he denies that such observations were made; as he writes in the Introduction to *Making Sex*, while working on the book he was "faced with the startling conclusion that a two-sex and a one-sex model had always been available to those who thought about difference and that there was no scientific way to choose between them."⁷⁵ King notes this comment approvingly but faults him for abandoning this position in later chapters, where he insists that the two-sex model emerges only in modernity. But Laqueur by no means abandons it. In addition to making similar general statements both throughout *Making Sex* and elsewhere after its publication, he repeatedly discusses in *Making Sex* how various premodern observations that might seem, especially to a contemporary reader, to support a two-sex model were nevertheless incorporated into a one-sex one.⁷⁶ King notes that Renaldus Columbus claimed to have discovered the clitoris and Fallopius the Fallopian tubes well before 1700; both discoveries might seem to suggest a two-sex model.⁷⁷ But, Laqueur points out, Columbus writes that if you touch the clitoris, it becomes "a little harder and oblong to such a degree that it shows itself as a sort of male member" – which seems to be an invocation of the one-sex model.⁷⁸ As for the Fallopian tubes, Laqueur notes that Fallopius describes his discovery not as the

tubes that convey eggs from the ovaries to the womb, but twin protuberances of sinews (nervei) which do penetrate the peritoneum, are hollow, and do not have an opening into the uterus. Fallopius remained committed to the male-centered system and, despite his revolutionary rhetoric, assumed the commonplace that "all parts that are in men are present in women," Indeed, if they were not, women might not be human.⁷⁹

King also suggests that Laqueur may have been unaware of a group of ancient, untranslated Hippocratic *Gynaikeia*, or *Diseases of Women* treatises, dating from the late fifth- or early fourth-century BCE, which emphasize menstruation's centrality to woman's nature and became especially influential in the sixteenth century. King speculates that Laqueur's ignorance of these texts (as well as, she implies, his inability to translate them) might explain why he instead focuses on ideas about comparative physiology and anatomy rather than on the economy of bodily fluids.⁸⁰ I am not certain this last charge is quite fair, since Laqueur does discuss the economy of bodily fluids at length, menstruation in particular. However, he does so in the

context of the one-sex model, which emphasizes the transformation of bodily fluid. On this model, such fluid is thought to be sloughed off as menstruation in bodies that lack the heat typically generated by males. For example, Laqueur writes, Lauren Joubert believed that “Brazilian women never menstruate, no more than female animals,” while men who lacked sufficient heat (and who, it was thought, lived “mostly in the east”) might have milk in their breasts.⁸¹

King may well be correct in claiming that the terrain here is more complex than Laqueur makes it out to be, but her examples do not refute his analysis. For him, the crucial question is: did the Hippocratic tradition King emphasizes subscribe to the idea of a basic fluid, the form of which depended on a body’s level of heat? What about menstrual blood specifically? To what extent was it thought to be part of the same bodily economy as nosebleeds, hemorrhoids, and food? Moreover, even if King’s examples do suggest something like a pre-modern, proto-two-sex model, such cases do not necessarily constitute a model of the two-sex body in Laqueur’s sense, a model held, as Quine might say, as an interior belief. Certainly they do not add up to the modern two-sex view. That would have to wait for modern biology – and for modernity itself.

Thus, when Laqueur’s critics point to such premodern observations of differences between male and female bodies as evidence against him, they miss his point. He never denies that such differences were observed before, say, 1700; instead, he argues that even when they *were* observed, they did not dislodge the one-sex model but were instead either accommodated by it or simply ignored. From Laqueur’s Quinean perspective, that such differences could be – and, indeed, were – folded into a one-sex conception is no surprise:

The ancient account of bodies and pleasure was so deeply enmeshed in the skeins of Renaissance medical and physiological theory, in both its high and its more popular incarnations, and so bound up with a political and cultural order, that it escaped entirely any logically determining contact with the boundaries of experience or, indeed, any explicit testing at all.⁸²

Only later, when political and cultural realities changed along with beliefs about them could the two-sex view take hold. And, once established, it was similarly immune from experience.

As we have seen, Laqueur, following Quine, rejects the idea that observations at the boundary of the epistemological field must determine interior beliefs. Quine suggests something further that Laqueur doesn’t spell out, but that is also central to understanding his view. Although some sensory observations may seem germane, in some important sense, to beliefs relatively close to the periphery, these peripheral beliefs do not necessarily follow directly, if at all, from the observations germane to them. (Think, for

example, about the sensory observation that the sun moves from east to west each day as it relates to the belief that the earth moves around the sun.) Beliefs situated still further toward the interior have an even more attenuated relation to what might seem to be the relevant observations. But if such interior beliefs do not get their support from observations, where does this support come from? Such beliefs, certainly, are strongly held – that is part of what it means for a belief to be an interior one. Quine’s epistemological holism suggests that interior beliefs *themselves* tend to cohere; they give support to each other. Indeed, his metaphors of the fabric of knowledge and the web of belief both suggest a complex interrelationship between *all* beliefs – including between those similarly situated toward the interior of the field. So, too, does his observation that while one may accommodate a recalcitrant belief (i.e., a belief that does not fit well with other beliefs) in numerous ways, one is most likely to do so in way that creates as little epistemological disturbance as possible – that is, in a way that leaves beliefs toward the interior intact. Such beliefs might, for example, concern the existence of physical objects, or evolution, or the earth’s moving around the sun (rather than vice versa).

The idea that interior beliefs support each other is central to Laqueur’s analysis. Consider again the belief in the one-sex model, dating back at least to Aristotle. It both supports and is supported by other interior beliefs, foremost among them the belief in a masculinist, metaphysical hierarchy. Here, the one-sex model and a masculinist metaphysics work together powerfully to shape understandings of any differences that might be observed between male and female bodies. Can an observed difference between the male and the female body be understood as, or explained by, some sort of female lack or failure to embody a male norm? If so, that difference, even if it is presented as an opposition between male and female (as Aristotle sometimes presents it), can be understood as an inferiority, a falling short of the male ideal. But once thought of as an inferiority or lack, such a difference can be understood in terms of the one-sex model. Interior beliefs may get much of their support, as well as their stability, close to home; they work together to render recalcitrant experiences less recalcitrant.

Laqueur expresses a view along these lines in his explanation of the move from a one-sex to a two-sex perspective – an explanation that King, in fact, pronounces “maddeningly vague.”⁸³ Directly after his brief discussion of Quine, Laqueur writes:

If [the one-sex model’s] stability can be attributed to imbrication in other discursive modes its collapse will not need to be explained by a single dramatic discovery or even by major social upheavals. Instead the construction of the two-sex body can then be viewed in myriad new, and new kinds of, sexual and other discourses.⁸⁴

In the Introduction to *Making Sex*, Laqueur says further:

New ways of interpreting the body arose from the new biology, which itself emerged at precisely the time when the foundations of the old social order were shaken once and for all. But social and political changes are not, in themselves, explanations for the reinterpretation of bodies. The rise of evangelical religion, Enlightenment political theory, the development of new sorts of public spaces in the eighteenth century, Lockean ideas of marriage as a contract, the cataclysmic possibilities for social change wrought by the French revolution, postrevolutionary conservatism, postrevolutionary feminism, the factory system with its restructuring of the sexual division of labor, the rise of a free market economy in services or commodities, the birth of classes, singly or in combination – none of these things *caused* the making of a new sexed body. Instead, the remaking of the body is itself intrinsic to each of these developments.⁸⁵

(It is striking that Laqueur has not mentioned it, but the new discourse of race and racial hierarchy – the subject of this book – surely deserves a prominent place on this list.)

King fails to address any of these matters. Perhaps she comes closest to indicating why in her Introduction to *The One-Sex Body on Trial*, where she remarks, somewhat in passing, that while Laqueur’s historical thesis is faulty, there may be some use to understanding the contrast between a one-sex and a two-sex framework as a contrast of “ideal types,” along the lines suggested by Max Weber. By

taking and merging features of various real examples, these imaginary constructs could then be used as a basis from which to compare the different examples that can be found in the “real world.” However, it is central to [Weber’s] methodology that the ideal type itself has never existed. . . . If we were to take them as ideal types, the two stages of Laqueur’s model would have some value; but this is not how they have been read. Instead of using them as conceptual, comparative tools to make similarities and differences clearer, the two stages have been reified and the alleged movement from one to the other attached to a specific period, and to other real changes in that period.⁸⁶

Thinking in terms of such ideal types may certainly have its uses, but this sort of approach is likely to miss – indeed, seems designed to miss – exactly the sort of shift Laqueur wants to highlight. King seems to regard the modern two-sex conception of sex difference, grounded in modern biology, as just another variant of a general two-sex conception, to be found throughout Western history and perhaps even universally. Laqueur’s project, however, is to show that modern two-sex thinking depends on a biological reductionism

that takes itself to explain and justify why men and women are the way they are. (This book argues that race is also implicated in such thinking.) By contrast, King's approach seems poorly suited to understanding different conceptions of the body as deeply embedded in the fabric of beliefs and values contemporary to them. Perhaps this is not surprising. Thinking in terms of "ideal types," whatever else it involves, requires a certain sort of abstraction from particular contexts – the sort of reification that King prefers? – and such abstraction may not always mesh well with understanding a specific conception of sex difference as part of an equally specific "web of belief" (although, of course, a commitment to an ideal-types approach may itself be a strand of some such "webs").

In any event, such an ideal-types perspective may explain two otherwise puzzling readings King gives to texts Laqueur discusses. The first is of Herophilus, the third-century BCE Greek medical writer. Laqueur, as discussed earlier, writes that Herophilus, clearly a proponent of the one-sex model, likened the Fallopian tubes to the spermatic ducts in men, both growing into the neck of the bladder. King agrees that Herophilus held a one-sex view, and she acknowledges that he used the same Greek word for both ovaries and testicles. But, seizing on his observation that the ovaries "differ only a little from the testicles of the male," she concludes, "Even here it is worth noting that 'only a little'; this is not a perfect match."⁸⁷

But why is this significant? Laqueur nowhere claims that the one-sex model recognizes *no* differences between males and females. Indeed, as I suggest above, simultaneous commitments to a one sex-model and to male supremacy work in tandem. If the ideal of the human body is taken to be male and females are believed to fall short, it is not surprising that such female failures will appear as differences, just as any perceived differences may be understood as failures. However, an ideal-types approach, which is less well equipped than Laqueur's holism to handle this kind of complexity, may obscure this link between a one-sex perspective and a masculinist one, a link that blurs the distinction between feminine difference and feminine failure. Instead, an ideal-types approach might well regard *any* difference between males and females as a departure from a one-sex model – just as King seems to have done.

The other puzzling reading King gives is of *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, an anonymous poem with many versions. Laqueur quotes it both in *Making Sex* and in a prior article, and it figures prominently in King's critique of him.

Aristotle's Masterpiece

Thus I the Womens Secrets have survey'd
 And let them see how curiously they're made;
 And that, *tho' they of differente Sexes be,*
Yet in the Whole they are the same as we;

*For those that have the strictest Searchers been,
Find Women are but Men turn'd Out-side in:
And Men, if they but cast their Eyes about,
May find they're Women with their in-side out.*
(Italics in King, indicating the portion
quoted by Laqueur)⁸⁸

King objects that Laqueur misdates the poem; its first version, she says, appears in 1678 and so it is not, as he claims, evidence of the continued survival of the one-sex conception. But she accuses him not only of carelessness but also of intentionally misleading his readers by leaving out the last couplet. As King understands it,

the penultimate couplet, which he includes, suggests that there is a single male sex, of which women are a variant, but the final couplet, which he omits, originally served to restore the balance, proposing that neither sex is primary: each is the other, topsy-turvy.⁸⁹

This image, King claims, is also presented by Galen, who may in fact be the poem's original source and whom Laqueur regards as one of the main proponents of a one-sex body. Here is the Galen passage in question:

All the parts, then that men have, women have too, the difference between them lying in only one thing, which must be kept in mind throughout the discussion, namely, that in women the parts are within [the body], whereas in men they are outside, in the region called the perineum. Consider first whichever ones you please, *turn outward the woman's, turn inward, so to speak, and fold double the man's, and you will find them the same in both in every respect.*⁹⁰

King objects that

the section in italics forms the epigraph to Laqueur's Chapter 2, "Destiny is Anatomy," but, despite this passage from Galen being so central to his argument, he never quotes it in full. . . . The neutral approach of the *Masterpiece* poem, in which women are men, but men are also women, recalls Galen's "Consider first *whichever ones* you please" – omitted by Laqueur. Instead, for Laqueur, this becomes a hierarchical relationship in which, in his own words, "man is the measure of all things" . . . Already, Laqueur's "one-sex" body is not the same as that of his sources.⁹¹

King's contention, then, is that because they do not explicitly mention the superiority of the male genitalia – instead implying that, inside or outside, male and female equipment are pretty much the same – Laqueur intentionally

ignores these passages, thus distorting both the textual and historical record to support his case.

This reading complements the one King gives of Herophilus. There, although she acknowledges the existence of a one-sex view, she implies that unless a text explicitly claims that female and male reproductive organs, indeed whole bodies, are the same in every way, there is no evidence of a one-sex view in the sense Laqueur claims. My response was that when understood from the perspective of masculinism, noting such differences between male and female bodies does not imply endorsing, or even moving toward, a two-sex model; female difference can instead be understood as lack. The point she makes in her reading of *Aristotle's Dream* seems to be that a one-sex perspective is not necessarily a masculinist one. But do the texts she cites show this? If, following the Aristotelian line, something like heat is responsible for the male's protruding genital and a lack of heat for the woman's recessive one; and if, further, greater heat signifies something like greater agency or perfection – a perfection necessary, on Aristotle's view, for the transmission of soul – then the egalitarian symmetry between male and female that King sees here is far from obvious, last couplet or no. If the reason that the male genital is exterior and the female interior is that the male has more of what makes a human superior, then this would seem to be a masculinist conception after all. It might have been better if Laqueur had used the full quotation, attributed it accurately, and taken more care with the poem's chronology and provenance. But King's reading is not convincing. She emphasizes repeatedly that she (unlike Laqueur?) is a proponent of "close reading." But as the literary theorist Terry Eagleton has remarked, close reading implies a limiting as well as a focusing of concern:

to call for close reading is to do more than to call for due attentiveness to the text. It inescapably insists on attention to this rather than that: to the words on the page rather than the contexts that produced and surround them.⁹²

Indeed, in this instance, what the poem can tell us about its context would seem to be the point, rather than the other way around. So the crucial question is: was Aristotle's hierarchical metaphysical system, including the view that males have greater heat, still widely accepted in Galen's time? Laqueur says that it was; King is silent on the matter. But if, at that time, the female genital's inversion would have been associated with her lack of heat, and her lack of heat associated with her inferiority to the male, then the poem need not have belabored the point. In fact, its failure to do so may just as easily tell *against* King's reading as for it.

King's reading of *Aristotle's Masterpiece* is significant for another reason. Since she actually seems to *agree* with Laqueur that the poem expresses a one-sex conception of the body, initially I wondered why she focused so much attention on his discussion of it. Perhaps her aim was simply to point

out his scholarly failings? But there is another, more interesting explanation: the reading she gives reflects an understanding of one- and two-sex conceptions of the body as *ideal types* rather than as historically situated frameworks. Drawing on Quine again, one might understand such Quinean frameworks as consisting of one or more “beliefs interior to the field,” each the sort of belief that supports, and is supported by, other interior beliefs. As I note above, King seems willing enough to accept that the poem expresses a one-sex model, but only if this model is pried loose from a connection to masculine superiority – the very connection Laqueur finds so important. Certainly, if the “ideal types” one has in mind are simply the one-sex and two-sex models, there is no *logical* reason that a one-sex perspective need also be a masculinist one. Perhaps there could conceivably be a one-sex (or a no-sex?) conception – somewhere – that is not masculinist. But in light of the long history of the-vagina-as-inverted-penis and the usual explanation for this inversion (to wit, the female’s lack of heat), that possibility distracts from the fact – hardly news – that in the Western tradition, a one-sex model is very likely to be a male-supremacist one. And this leads back once more to Laqueur’s Quinean approach. Unlike King, Laqueur reads this poem in the context of a one-sex conception of the body that has itself been bound up for centuries with a network of other interior beliefs, including a commitment to a metaphysical, masculinist hierarchy.

It will come as no surprise that this book is more in line with Laqueur’s perspective than with King’s. To be sure, there are many ways of reading texts and of relating the past to the present, and the approach one chooses will, of course, depend on one’s aims and sensibilities. Laqueur finds that the one-sex conception of the human body, as he traces it from Aristotle, through Galen, and up to modernity, is a masculinist conception. Along the same lines, I will suggest that the two-sex model, as it developed in the modern West – still tied to masculinism – is inextricably tied to the idea of race and racial hierarchy. That there might be some two-sex conception, in another time or place, that is not tied to race is not relevant here (although I will say something more about this in Chapter 5). The two-sex conception of the body in the West is linked to other important beliefs contemporary to it, just as the one-sex view was. But that is just another way of putting Laqueur’s point.

King somewhat dismissively attributes the popularity of *Making Sex* to the vogue when it was published for antiessentialism: “The message – of difference between ‘then’ and ‘now’, of the primacy of social construction over essentialism and of the instability of gender – was one that people wanted to hear.”⁹³ King may be correct about Laqueur’s bias in choosing texts that further his argument, but her counterarguments are plausible only if one starts with what appears to be *her* bias, one surely widely shared, towards believing that the two-sex conception of the modern West is not so new after all. However, really to weaken Laqueur’s argument, his critics must do more

than produce a catalogue of pre-modern texts in which differences between male and female bodies are noted or even emphasized. They must show that Quine's approach is mistaken, or that Laqueur has misapplied Quine, or perhaps that Laqueur's application of Quine cannot handle counterexamples to his analysis. Or all of these.

King calls Laqueur's emphasis on the penis-vagina isomorphism sensationalist, but that this image evokes such incredulity today would seem to justify Laqueur's claim, with a nod to Virginia Woolf, that something really *did* change "in or about the late eighteenth century."⁹⁴ If he is right about this, his view bolsters the one I will argue for – that modern categories of race are thoroughly enmeshed with the two-sex model and arose with it. But my view also bolsters his. Even if King has a point in insisting that some sort of two-sex model has been around since Hippocrates, this model becomes significantly different from what came before once it is thoroughly saturated with racial meanings.

Like many theorists writing in the 1990s, Laqueur regards eighteenth-century discourses of race and sex as analogous: with the new idea of the universal rights of "man," some justification was needed for making exceptions in the cases of European women and non-European men. (Non-European women, unable to claim rights based on either their sex or their race, seem not to have posed a challenge.)⁹⁵ Biology would fill the breach in both cases; the new discourses of sex difference and of race are similar in this respect. But this book makes a stronger claim: these discourses are not only analogous but structurally connected. At various points in the development of my argument, the distinction Laqueur draws between a one-sex and a two-sex model of the human body will be helpful in examining just what this connection comes to. But once race enters the picture, the relationship between one- and two-sex models becomes more complex. Laqueur notes in several places how the logic of the new two-sex model of the body departs from that of the older one-sex model:

Thus, the old model, in which men and women were arrayed according to their degree of metaphysical perfection, their vital heat, along an axis whose telos was male, gave way by the late eighteenth century to a new model of radical dimorphism, of biological divergence. An anatomy and physiology of incommensurability replaced a metaphysics of hierarchy in the representation of woman in relation to man.⁹⁶

He adds further:

While the one flesh did not die – it lives today in many guises – two fleshes, two new distinct and opposite sexes, would increasingly be read into the body. No longer would those who think about such matters regard woman

as a lesser version of man along a vertical axis of infinite gradations, but rather as an altogether different creature along a horizontal axis whose middle ground was largely empty.⁹⁷

The next chapter will treat such claims in more detail. Here I will say just that what Laqueur calls the “middle ground” of the horizontal axis dividing male from female seems empty only if we are talking about those ideal exemplars of the two sexes, the *European* man and woman, at either end. They were the only males and females, in fact, imagined to exhibit such perfect dimorphic complementarity in the first place. What Laqueur calls the “vertical axis of infinite gradations” will be repurposed to apply to races, and the ranking organized by the racial gender-binary ideal will coordinate both axes in a way that allows them to work together.

A final point: Laqueur presents a sustained argument against the view that science has proven, once and for all – or even is capable of proving – what common sense, supposedly, has always known: that there are exactly two opposite, mutually exclusive, incommensurable sexes. If Laqueur, Sanz, and others, in spite of everything, are mistaken about this and some strong version of the binary of sex *were* true – and, again, I mean here something grander than particular, verifiable facts about reproductive biology, anatomy, or physiology – then the thesis of this book would extend only so far. That is to say, if what is taken to be the binary of sex really is a brute fact of nature, embodied equally by males and females of all races, then the only problem would be the racism of White Europeans who presume that this binary characterizes only themselves – in contrast, for example, to the Jewish men who were once believed to menstruate or the Brazilian or Native American women who were once believed not to. This, surely, would be problem enough. But if the grand binary of sex is both unverifiable and of relatively recent vintage, we have reason to consider whether the very idea of this binary may have played a significant role in the construction of modern racial categories – and vice versa.

Notes

- 1 Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey (New York: N.N. Norton, 1965), 113.
- 2 Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1981), 17–40.
- 3 For the church’s interest, see, e.g., Andrea Salcedo, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/03/15/kansas-teacher-lawsuit-gender-pronouns-religion/>; for the interests of various state agencies (who disagree about how to make this distinction) see Paisely Currah, *Sex Is as Sex Does: Governing Transgender Identity* (New York: NYU Press, 2022).
- 4 Jonathon Weisman, “A Demand to Define ‘Woman’ Injects Gender Politics into Jackson Confirmation Hearings,” *New York Times*, March 3, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/23/us/politics/ketanji-brown-jackson-woman-definition.html>

- 5 Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: The Case Histories*, trans. Franklin S. Klaf (New York: Stein and Day, [1886] (1965), 28.
- 6 Fry, *Politics of Reality*, 11–40.
- 7 Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thompson, *The Evolution of Sex* (London: Walter Scott, 1889), 266, quoted in Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 7.
- 8 William Francis Ganong, *Review of Medical Physiology*, 8th ed. (Los Altos, CA: Lang, 1977), 332. Quoted in Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 225.
- 9 John Gray, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus: A Practical Guide for Improving Communication and Getting What You Want in Relationships* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).
- 10 Emily Martin, “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles,” *Signs* 16, no. 3 (1991): 485–501; Mary Ellman turns the tables wittily in *Thinking about Women* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1968), 13–14.
- 11 Eleanor Fox Keller, “The Origin, History, and Politics of the Subject Called ‘Gender and Science,’” in *Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*, ed. Sheila Jasanoff et al. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 87.
- 12 Veronica Sanz, “No Way Out of the Binary: A Critical History of the Production of Sex,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43, no. 1 (Autumn 2017): 1–27.
- 13 For an older but excellent book-length account of these matters, see Ann Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).
- 14 Alice Dreger, “A History of Intersexuality from the Age of Gonads to the Age of Consent,” *Journal of Clinical Ethics* 9, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 345–55.
- 15 Sanz, “No Way Out,” 4–6.
- 16 Sarah S. Richardson, *Sex Itself: The Search for Male & Female in the Human Genome* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013), quoted in Sanz, “No Way Out,” 20.
- 17 Richardson, *Sex Itself*, 181–97.
- 18 Richardson, *Sex Itself*, 213, and Londa Schiebinger, “Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustration of Female Skeletons in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy,” *Representations*, no. 14 (Spring 1986): 42, both quoted in Sanz, “No Way Out,” 20. (I was struck by the same echo of nineteenth-century views.)
- 19 Sanz, “No Way Out,” 20.
- 20 Sanz, “No Way Out,” 22–23; see also Berenice L. Hausman, “Ovaries to Estrogen: Sex Hormones and Chemical Femininity in the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of the Medical Humanities* 20, no. 3 (1999): 165–76.
- 21 Sanz, “No Way Out,” 11–12; Ruth Hubbard, *The Politics of Women’s Biology* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 80; Evelyn Fox Keller, “Feminism and Science,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7, no. 3 (1982): 589–602.
- 22 Richardson, *Sex Itself*, 198–99.
- 23 Richardson, *Sex Itself*, 197–99.
- 24 Irven Resnick, “Medieval Roots of the Myth of Jewish Male Menses,” *Harvard Theological Review* 93, no. 3 (July 2000): 241–63; Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body*, 124–25; Sander L. Gilman, *The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siècle* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, 1993), 88–89.
- 25 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Suzanne J. Kessler and Wendy McKenna, *Gender:*

- An Ethnomethodological Approach* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
- 26 Jennifer Germon, *Gender: A Genealogy of an Idea* (London: Palgrave, 2009), 1.
 - 27 Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Knopf, 2009), 283.
 - 28 Germon, *Genealogy*, 94–96.
 - 29 John Money, “Lexical History and Constructionist Ideology of Gender,” in *Gendermaps: Social Constructionism, Feminism, and Sexosophical History*, ed. John Money (New York: Continuum, 1995), 21.
 - 30 Germon, *Genealogy*, 35.
 - 31 Alice Dreger, “Where’s the Rulebook for Sex Verification?” *New York Times*, August 22, 2009.
 - 32 Judith Butler, “Wise Distinctions,” London Review of Books Blog, November 20, 2009, www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2009/11/20/judith-butler/wise-distinctions/.
 - 33 Stephen J. Lewis, *Northwestern Now*, May 2, 2023. <https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2023/05/professor-coins-new-word-misogynoir/>
 - 34 Janine Jones, “Reasoning up Front with Race” in *Why Race and Gender Still Matter: An Intersectional Approach*, ed. Mauve O’Donovan, Namita Goswami, Lisa Yount (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 133–55; Phillip Atiba Goff et al., “‘Ain’t I a Woman?’ Towards an Intersectional Approach to Person Perception and Group-Based Harms,” *Sex Roles* 59 (2008): 392–403.
 - 35 Zine Magubane, “Spectacles and Scholarship: Caster Semenya, Intersex Studies, and the Problem of Race in Feminist Theory,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 39, no. 3 (2014): 767–68.
 - 36 Magubane, 767–68.
 - 37 Magubane, “Spectacles,” 771–72; Theodrik Romeyn Beck and John Brodhead Beck, *Elements of Medical Jurisprudence*, Vol 1 (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1863), 181; J. Bierbaum, “Upon the Legal and Social Rights of Malformed Beings,” *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, XXVII (July 1854): 276–77.
 - 38 Magubane, “Spectacles,” 773.
 - 39 Magubane, “Spectacles,” 776.
 - 40 Magubane, “Spectacles,” 779–80; H.J. Grace and W.E.B. Edge, “A White Hermaphrodite in South Africa,” *South African Medical Journal* 47 (September 1973): 1553–54.
 - 41 Magubane, “Spectacles,” 778.
 - 42 David A. Rubin, “‘An Unnamed Blank that Craved a Name’: A Genealogy of Intersex as Gender,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 37, no. 4 (Summer 2012): 883–908.
 - 43 Magubane, “Spectacles,” 782.
 - 44 Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
 - 45 Sally Markowitz, “Pelvic Politics: Sexual Dimorphism and Racial Difference,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 2 (Winter 2001): 389–414.
 - 46 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 1–24.
 - 47 King, *One Sex Body*, xi–xii.
 - 48 King, *One Sex Body*, 15.
 - 49 King, *One Sex Body*, 18.
 - 50 King, *One Sex Body*, 4; Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 61.
 - 51 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 28–32; 35–37.
 - 52 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 19–20.
 - 53 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 26–27.
 - 54 Isadore de Seville, *Etymologiarum*, ed. José Oroz Reta and Marcos Casquero (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Christianos, 1983), quoted in Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 36.

- 55 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 55.
- 56 See, for example, Judith Butler, "Bodies That Matter," in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* ed. Judith Butler (New York: Routledge, 1993), 27–55; and Emanuela Bianchi, *The Feminine Symptom: Aleatory Matter in the Aristotelian Cosmos* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).
- 57 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 26.
- 58 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 5.
- 59 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 149; Jacques L. Moreau, *Historie naturelle de la femme*, 2 vols. (Paris: Duprat, 1803) 1, Chapter 2.
- 60 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 149–50.
- 61 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 154.
- 62 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 175–76; Achille Chereau, *Memoires pour servir à l'étude de maladies des ovaires* (Paris: Fourtin, Masson, et cie, 1844), 91.
- 63 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 9.
- 64 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 169.
- 65 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 153.
- 66 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 69; W.V.O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," in *From a Logical Point of View: Logico-Philosophical Essays*, ed. W.V.O. Quine (New York: Harper Row, 1963), 42–43.
- 67 Quine, "Two Dogmas," 44–45.
- 68 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 16.
- 69 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 153.
- 70 Quine, "Two Dogmas," 43.
- 71 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 12.
- 72 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 82.
- 73 See, for example, Richard A. Posner, *Sex and Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 39.
- 74 King, *One Sex Body*, 7.
- 75 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, viii.
- 76 For example, Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 9–10; also, Letter to the Editor, *London Review of Books*. December 1990, 8.
- 77 King, *One Sex Body*, 63.
- 78 Matteo Realdo Columbus, *De re anatomica* (Venice: Nicolai Bevilacqua, 1561), 193; quoted in Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 64.
- 79 Fallopius, *Observations anatomica* (Venice: Marco Antonio Ulmo, 1561), 193; quoted in Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 97.
- 80 King, *One Sex Body*, xi, 44–46.
- 81 Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs populaires*, (Bourdeaux: S. Milanges Imprimeur du Roi, 1579), 159–60, quoted in Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 105–6.
- 82 Laqueur *Making Sex*, 69.
- 83 King, *One Sex Body*, 3.
- 84 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 70.
- 85 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 11.
- 86 King, *One Sex Body*, xi.
- 87 King, *One Sex Body*, 40.
- 88 King, *One Sex Body*, 10.
- 89 King, *One Sex Body*, 10–11.
- 90 Galen, *De Usu Partium*, 114.6 (ed. Kuhn, 4. 159–59), trans. Margaret Tallmadge May, Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), 628; quoted in Laqueur, 25–27; also quoted in King, *One Sex Body*, 11. King remarks that the Tallmadge translation was available in 1968, "and so used by Laqueur."
- 91 King, *One Sex Body*, 11.

- 92 Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1983), 44.
- 93 King, *One Sex Body*, 6.
- 94 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 5.
- 95 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 158.
- 96 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 6.
- 97 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 148.

Bibliography

- Beauvoir, Simone de. [1949] 2011. *The Second Sex*. Translated by S. Malovany-Chevallier and C. Borde. New York: Vintage.
- Beck, Theodric Romeyn, and John B. Beck. 1863. *Elements of Medical Jurisprudence*. Vol. 1. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott.
- Bianchi, Emanuela. 2014. *The Feminine Symptom: Aleatory Matter in the Aristotelian Cosmos*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Bierbaum, J. 1884. "Upon the Legal and Social Rights of Malformed Beings." *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, July. XXVII, 276–77.
- Butler, Judith. 1993. "Bodies that Matter." In *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* edited by Judith Butler. New York: Routledge, 27–55.
- Butler, Judith. 2009. *London Review of Books Blog*. November 20. Accessed October 10, 2023. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2009/november/wise-distinctions>.
- Chereau, Achille. 1844. *Memoires pour servir a l'etude les maladies des ovaires*. Paris: Fourtin, Masson, et cie.
- Columbus, Matteo Realdo. 1561. *De re anatomica*. Venice: Nicolai Bevilacqua.
- Currah, Paisley. 2022. *Sex Is as Sex Does: Governing Transgender Identity*. New York: NYU.
- Dreger, Alice. 1998. "A History of Intersexuality from the Age of Gonads to the Age of Consent." *Journal of Clinical Ethics* 9 (4): 345–55.
- Dreger, Alice. 2009. "Where's the Rulebook for Sex Verification?" *New York Times*, August 22.
- Eagleton, Terry. 1983. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Ellman, Mary. 1968. *Thinking about Women*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World.
- Fallopis. 1561. *Observations Anatomica*. Venice: Marco Antonio Ulmo.
- Fausto-Sterling, Ann. 2000. *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books.
- Fox-Keller, Evelyn. 1982. "Feminism and Science." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7 (3): 589–602.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1955–1974. *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. 24 vols. London: Hogarth.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1965. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. Translated by James Strachey. New York: N. N. Norton.
- Frye, Marilyn. 1981. *The Politics of Reality*. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press.
- Gagnong, William Francis. 1977. *Review of Medical Physiology, 8th ed.* Los Altos, CA: Lang.
- Galen. 1968. *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*. Edited by Translator Margaret Talmadge May. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Geddes, Patrick, and J Arthur Thompson. 1889. *The Evolution of Sex*. London: Walter Scott.

- Germon, Jennifer. 2009. *Gender: A Genealogy of an Idea*. London: Palgrave.
- Gilman, Sander. 1993. *The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siecle*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press.
- Goff, Phillip Atiba, Margaret A. Thomas, and Matthew Christian Jackson. 2008. "Ain't I a Woman?" Towards an Intersectional Approach to Person Perception and Group-Based Harms." *Sex Roles* 59: 392–403.
- Grace, H.J., and W.E.B. Edge. 1973. "A White Hermaphrodite in South Africa." *South African Medical Journal* 47: 1553–54.
- Gray, John. 1992. *Men Are from Mars, Women are from Venus: Practical Guide for Improving Communication and Getting What You Want in Relationships*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Hausman, Berenice L. 1999. "Ovaries to Estrogen: Sex Hormones and Chemical Femininity in the Twentieth Century." *Journal of the Medical Humanities* 20 (3): 165–76.
- Hubbard, Ruth. 1990. *The Politics of Women's Biology*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Jones, Janine. 2017. "Reasoning up Front with Race." In *Why Race and Gender Still Matter: An Intersectional Approach*, edited by M. O'Donovan, N. Goswami, and L. Yount. New York: Taylor and Francis., 133–55.
- Joubert, Laurent. 1579. *Erreurs Populaires*. Bourdeaux: S. Milanges Imprimeur du Roi.
- Keller, Evelyn Fox. 1982. "Feminism and Science." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7 (3): 589–602.
- Keller, Evelyn Fox. 1995. "The Origin, History, and Politics of the Subject Called 'Gender and Science'." In *Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*, edited by Sheila Jasanoff et al. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 80–94.
- Kessler, Suzanne J., and Wendy McKenna. 1978. *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- King, Helen. 2016. *The One Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence*. London: Routledge.
- Krafft-Ebing, Richard von. [1886] 1997. *Psychopathia Sexualis, with Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct*. Translated by Franklin S. Klaf. New York: Stein and Day.
- Laqueur, Thomas. December. "Letter to the Editor." *London Review of Books*. 1990.
- Laqueur, Thomas. 1990. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lewis, Stephen J. 2023. *Northwestern Now*. May 4. <https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2023/05/professor-coins-new-word-misogynoir/>.
- Magubane, Zine. 2014. "Spectacles and Scholarship: Caster Semenya, Intersex Studies, and the Problem of Race in Feminist Theory." *Signs: Journal of Woman in Culture and Society* 39 (3): 761–785.
- Manheim, R., translated by R.F.C. Hull. 1988. *The Freud-Jung Letters*. Edited by W. Maguire. London: Hogarth.
- Markowitz, Sally. 2001. "Pelvic Politics: Sexual Dimorphism and Racial Difference." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26 (2): 389–414.
- Martin, Emily. 1991. "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16 (3).

- Money, John. 1995. "Lexical History and Constructionist Ideology of Gender." In *Gendermaps: Social Constructionism, Feminism, and Sexosophical History*, ed. John Money. New York: Continuum, 15–32.
- Moreau, Jacques L. 1903. *Histoire naturelle de la femme*. 2 vols. Paris: Duprat.
- Pellegrini, Ann. 1997. "Whiteface Performances: "Race," Gender, and Jewish Bodies." In *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Studies*, edited by Jonathon Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 108–49.
- Posner, Richard A. 1994. *Sex and Reason*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Quine, Willard Van Orman. 1963. "Two Dogmas of Empiricism." In *From a Logical Point of View: Logico-Philosophical Essays*, edited by W.V.O. Quine. New York: Harper Row, 42–43.
- Resnick, Irvén. 2000. "Medieval Roots of the Myth of Jewish Male Menses." *Harvard Theological Review* 93 (3): 241–63.
- Richardson, Sarah. 2013. *Sex Itself: The Search for Male and Female in the Human Genome*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.
- Rubin, David A. 2012. "An Unnamed Blank the that Craved a Name": A Genealogy of Intersex as Gender." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 37 (4): 883–908.
- Russett, Cynthia Eagle. 1989. *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Salcedo, Andrea. 2022. *A Christian Teacher Was Suspended for Failing to Call Students by the Pronouns They Use*. March 15. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/03/15/kansas-teacher-lawsuit-gender-pronouns-religion/>
- Sanz, Veronica. 2017. "No Way out of the Binary: A Critical History of the Production of Sex." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43 (1): 1–27.
- Schiebinger, Londa. 1986. "Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustration of Female Skeletons in Eighteenth-century Anatomy." *Representations* (14): 42–82.
- Weisman, Jonathon. 2022. "A Demand to Define 'Woman' Injects Gender Politics into Jackson Confirmation Hearings." March 3. Accessed October 10, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/23/us/politics/ketanji-brown-jackson-woman-definition.html>.

2

WHITENESS

Gender-binary from the start

Introduction

It might be said that some categories are born White, some achieve Whiteness, and some have Whiteness thrust upon them. What should be said about the gender binary? The project of this book is to show that the binary of gender is raced as White, and has been so since the inception of the modern discourse of race. This suggests that this category was, indeed, born White – at least insofar as Thomas Laqueur is correct in claiming that the two-sex model of the human body, which views sex (and consequently gender) as sharply and exhaustively binary, arose only around the eighteenth century. By contrast, a view like Helen King's, which instead insists that a two-sex model of the body has been around at least since Aristotle, suggests that this binary became White around the eighteenth century, with the advent of racial discourse – or, in light of the racial theories I will discuss in this chapter, perhaps it would be better to say that the gender binary had Whiteness thrust upon it. What is certain is that this binary, including even the binary of biological sex, was used to elucidate a conception of racial difference and hierarchy from the very start – just as a conception of racial difference and hierarchy helped consolidate the modern idea of the gender binary.

Making race

The modern theories of race that took shape in the eighteenth century can be roughly divided into two groups. The first, widely (but not universally) held in the eighteenth century, was committed to the unity of mankind. Although various human populations might look different, speak different

languages, and have different modes of life, all are descended from Adam (and Eve, although she isn't mentioned as often), whom God created in his image. Still, there were questions. What accounted for the striking variety in physical, mental, and moral qualities among the peoples scattered across the globe? Why were certain groups – Europeans, to be precise – the most civilized and all others less so? And why did different groups look so different – Europeans, again, considered (at least by themselves) to be better looking than everyone else? The task, then, was to trace how some human groups – most, in fact – had degenerated from those who, depending on the favored version, passed on the mark of Cain, disembarked from Noah's Ark, or fled from the Tower of Babel, settling in the far-flung corners of the earth and giving rise to the various native populations European travelers and missionaries would encounter in Africa, Asia, and the Americas thousands of years later – but no more than thousands of years, since the imagined timeline here was a Biblical one.¹ Following a line of reasoning dating back to the ancient Greek myth explaining the dark skin of Ethiopians by the Sun's chariot going rogue one day, these differences were often thought to be caused by changes in environment, especially climate; again, these changes had to have happened quickly to conform to Biblical time.² Such views were both monogenic (i.e., they claimed for humankind a single genesis) and degenerationist (i.e., they posited the degeneration of non-European populations from the ideal state of the original pair). Georgius Hornius (1666), a German professor, claimed that of Noah's progeny, the Japhetites became the White races, the Semites became the Yellow ones, and the Hamites became the Negroes (God having cursed Ham with black skin).³ England, not to be outdone, boasts of an antiquarian tradition, dating back to the sixteenth century, that sought to “establish a genealogical connection between some putative national ancestor and the family of Noah.”⁴ There are, here and there, some echoes of the eighteenth-century idealization of the Noble Savage, but by the nineteenth century, few savages were regarded as noble.⁵

However, not everyone was so certain about humankind's unity. The polygenists argued that different races had different origins, were, in fact, different species. Liberal interpretations of Scripture allowed that God might have created not only Adam and Eve but other, lesser couples as well – Cain, after all, took a wife, and she must have come from somewhere. As early as 1520, the famous Swiss medical scientist Paracelsus proposed that the inhabitants of the “American Islands” had descended from their own Adam, different from the one described in *Genesis*. Along the same lines, the sixteenth-century Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno suggested that humankind was descended from Enoch, Leviathan, and Adam; Adam, created last, was the progenitor only of the Jews.⁶ The German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz speculated that Teutonic languages were closer than Hebrew to humankind's lost root language. In that case, the *first* Adam (whose name, then, would not have been the Hebrew “Adam” but something more Teutonic sounding)

would have spoken a Germanic language.⁷ By the nineteenth century, such polygenetic views, including secular versions of them, became even more popular. George Samuel Morton, the nineteenth-century American physician known for his collection of crania, pronounced that three thousand years had not “made any difference in the skin and hair of the Negro,” and that “the characteristic features of the Jews may be recognized in the sculpture of the temple of Luxor and Karnak, in Egypt, where they have been depicted for nearly thirty centuries.”⁸ The Swiss biologist Louis Agassiz (1806–1873), who had originally believed that all humans descended from Adam and Eve, decided, after a visit to the United States, that Africans and Europeans must belong to different species, each created by God in a different location.⁹

Darwin’s theory of evolution, along with a new understanding of the earth’s great age, resolved some of the differences between the monogenists and the polygenists. On Darwin’s view, the monogenists were correct in believing that humans had evolved from a common ancestral species. However, the divergence had taken place so long ago that polygenists could also insist on there being great, inborn differences between the races, differences that neither environment nor education could overcome. But even this compromise was not enough to satisfy some polygenists. Unlike the Christian faithful, who objected to the idea that humans had evolved from the ape, these polygenists objected to the idea that the superior races had evolved from the *same species* of ape as had their racial inferiors. The German scientist Karl Vogt, for example, accepting Darwin’s evolutionary approach but rejecting his monogenism, went so far as to insist that each human race must have had a different species of ape as an ancestor.¹⁰

But regardless of what sort of story was told – whether naturalistic, theological, degenerationist, evolutionist, monogenist, polygenist, or some inventive combination of these – all agreed that the civilized European was superior to everyone else. Indeed, as the historian of anthropology George Stocking emphasizes, before the twentieth century, anthropology had no robust idea of differences between human cultures that weren’t also measures of superiority or inferiority, of a greater or lesser degree of civilization – Europe, of course, always assumed to be the most civilized. There was no real talk of *different* cultures in the contemporary sense; until the twentieth century, when the American anthropologist Franz Boas and his students argued otherwise, culture was seen as something various groups had either more or less of. As Stocking writes, “since culture was essentially one, differences tended to be conceived as erroneous superstition or irrational survival.”¹¹

Beauty, domesticity, and the racial gender-binary ideal

The idea of racial superiority, however it was understood, was bound up with the gender-binary ideal from the beginning. Although early racial theorists thought of themselves as engaging in objective, scientific inquiry,

complete with precise instruments for measuring skulls, pelvises, and other parts of the human skeleton, their researches were driven by their ideal of human beauty – as George Mosse has written, a visceral, visual expression of a peaceful, “settled, happy, and healthy middle-class world without violent upheavals,” a state only Christian Europe had achieved.¹² Christoph Meiners (1745–1810), an early German racial theorist, simply divided humankind into two main racial lineages, the beautiful and the ugly; all great men, he opined, came from the former.¹³ Pieter Camper, the late-eighteenth-century Dutch painter and anatomist, developed an admirably scientific instrument for precisely measuring the facial angle (from upper lip to forehead and across the face horizontally) in order to compare it against an ideal based on Greek sculpture, in which this angle is ninety degrees. According to Camper, while European faces approximated this angle, those of Negros fell far short, supposedly exhibiting a facial structure more similar to that of dogs and apes.¹⁴ Johann Kaspar Lavatar (1741–1801) expressed a common view in his *Essai sur La Physiognomie*, where he claimed that “one can judge the whole man by observing the exterior intuitively, for it is in total harmony with a man’s soul,” and stipulating as well that “blue eyes, a broad nose nearly parallel [to the facial angle] but a little bent back, a round chin, and short brown hair” were especially desirable.¹⁵

This idea of physical beauty is central to the degenerationist perspective, according to which the original exemplars of humanity were the most perfect and hence the most beautiful human specimens, later degenerations being caused by climate, lack of civilization, and general moral turpitude. As the eighteenth-century German philosopher and theologian Johann Gottfried Herder wrote:

[I]t is obvious to everyone, that the region of the most perfectly formed people is a middle region of the Earth, lying, as beauty itself, between two extremes....[I]t was of no small advantage to the human species, not only to have commenced its existence in this region of perfect forms, but to have derived its principal cultivation thence. As the deity could not make the whole Earth the feat of beauteousness, he permitted mankind to enter it at least through the gate of beauty, and have its features imprinted on them for a considerable time before they repaired to other countries. It was one and the same principle of Nature, which caused those nations, that excelled in form to operate with most beneficence and activity upon others: for she gave them that quickness and elasticity of mind, adapted equally to form the body, and to act thus beneficently upon other nations.¹⁶

(The section from which this quotation comes is called, fittingly, “Organization of the Region of Wellformed Nations.”) Likewise, Johann Friedrich

Blumenbach, the eighteenth-century German anthropologist who coined the term “Caucasian” along with the five-part classificatory system of which it is part, traces humankind to the southern slope of Mount Caucasus, “which produces the most beautiful race of men” with “the most beautiful form of the skull, from which, as from a mean and primeval type, the others diverge.” Although there was some disagreement about this, these paragons were widely thought to have had white skin, since it would have been far easier for white skin to have degenerated into brown than the other way around.¹⁷

Not surprisingly, this thoroughly racialized discourse of beauty is entwined with a thoroughly gendered one. Along with the eighteenth-century notion of feminine difference and complementarity (rather than simple inferiority) came the codification and elevation of an ideal of a feminine beauty different from the masculine sort. As the historian Londa Schiebinger has noted, in spite of a medical tradition that long considered the male as the human ideal, “Blumenbach chose from his vast anthropological collection the skull of a young Georgian woman to represent ‘the Caucasian.’”¹⁸ In painting and sculpture, the genre of the female nude, which had started its ascendancy with Rafael in the sixteenth century, by the nineteenth century had completely overtaken that of the male.¹⁹ And in the realm of aesthetic theory, Edmund Burke’s analysis of beauty implicitly associates the beautiful with the feminine; beautiful things, he writes, are small, smooth, “not angular but melted, as it were, into each other,” of “a delicate frame, without any remarkable appearance of strength.” He contrasts the beautiful with an opposing aesthetic category, the sublime, which evokes masculine power and inspires fear and awe.²⁰

This is not to say that the earlier idealization of the male form disappeared altogether, especially in racialist discourse.²¹ But once one thinks about bodies in terms of both male *and* female perfection, racial characteristics fuse with gendered ones, and what emerges, in visual, embodied form, is nothing less than the racial gender-binary ideal itself: the most beautiful races are those in which males conform to manly norms and females to feminine ones. The Scottish physiologist Alexander Walker (1779–1852) presents a good example of such thinking. Disagreeing with Burke’s identification of beauty with femininity, Walker argues that both men and women can properly be said to be beautiful – as long as each sex is understood to have its own sex-specific beauty; in other words, he presents a two-sex ideal. But once this pair of gendered ideals is established, evaluations of how well various populations meet it might be expected to follow. Walker does not disappoint:

[I]n most countries, one of the sexes excels the other in beauty.... Thus, in some parts of the highlands of Scotland, we find the men as remarkable for beauty as the women for ugliness; while, in some eastern counties

of England, we find precisely the reverse. The strong features, the dark curled hair, and the muscular form of the highlander, are as unsuitable to the female sex, as the soft features, the flaxen hair, and the short and tapering limbs of the woman of the eastern coast, are unsuitable to the male.

If the soil, climate and productions of these countries be considered, we discover the causes of the differences alluded to. The hardships of mountain life are favourable to the stronger development of the locomotive system, which ought more or less to characterize the male; and the luxuriance of the plains is favorable to those developments of the nutritive system, which ought to characterize the female.²²

Thus, a population *as a whole* can be said to be beautiful when its men fulfill the male beauty ideal and its women fulfill the female one. This will require living in the appropriate climate and doing gender-appropriate work, lest the male become too languid or the female too muscular.

Walker confines his rather naive analysis to the inhabitants of England and Scotland, but this passage demonstrates how once one leaves “the region of wellformed nations,” the rigors of climate and geography, along with modes of life and labor – especially those that keep men and women from living and working in ways deemed gender appropriate – may take their toll. (And having too much sex poses a danger, too, according to Christoph Meiners: “The more the two sexes indulge in vicious gratifications, the weaker, or rather the more enervated the men become, and the bolder and the more masculine the women....”²³)

The English surgeon Charles White (1728–1813) would not have had such degenerationist worries; a polygenist, he regarded racial types as permanent. But gendered beauty plays a role in racial classification for him as well. He punctuates an otherwise scientific-sounding treatise by this paean to the White, European male. Where else, he asks, can one find

that nobly arched head, containing such a quantity of brain...? Where... those long, flowing, graceful ringlets, that majestic beard? Where that erect posture of the body and noble gait?

When it comes to the European woman, White (whose medical specialty was obstetrics and gynecology) can hardly contain himself, as this often-quoted passage demonstrates:

In what other quarter of the globe shall we find the blush that overspreads the soft features of the beautiful women of Europe, that emblem of modesty, of delicate feelings...? Where that nice expression of the amiable and

softer passions in the countenance; and the general elegance of features and complexion? Where, except on the bosom of the European woman, two such plump and snowy white hemispheres, tipped with vermilion? ²⁴

Later evolutionary accounts of racial gender-dimorphic beauty would rely on the processes of nature rather than on an original racial perfection; according to such views, ideal gender-binary couples are the product of evolution. I will discuss such evolutionary accounts in a later section of this chapter, but first a related aspect of racialized gender-binary perfection deserves mention: the origin of the institution of marriage. Could it have evolved naturally? Or is the state of holy matrimony inconceivable apart from God's plan?

As George Stocking writes, the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* describes marriage as one of God's most important gifts to man, "an 'Honorable estate, instituted of God in paradise, in the time of man's innocency,'" to be used not 'to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly' for the procreation of children, the avoidance of fornication, and for 'mutual society, help, and comfort.'" ²⁵ Some thought this institution could only have come from God. The British jurist and historian Henry Maine (1822–1888), for example, wrote that human history had begun with "with perfect marriage, conjugal fidelity and the certainty of male parentage." ²⁶ Others, like the Scottish ethnologist and evolutionist John Ferguson McLennan (1827–1881), disagreed. McLennan argued that the ideas of "kinship, fatherhood, wifehood and Property" had evolved from earlier social stages characterized by promiscuity, polyandry, and matriarchy, stages in which non-European peoples were still mired. ²⁷ But once again, regardless of whether the favored view was theological or secular, evolutionist or degenerationist, the superiority of European marriage was not at issue. Indeed, it was regarded as something of a truism that the level of advancement of a race could be measured by the relationship between men and women of that race. In "On National Characteristics" (1777), Immanuel Kant put it this way:

If we examine the relation of the sexes in these parts of the world [outside of Europe], we find that the European alone has found the secret of decorating with so many flowers the sensual charm of a mighty inclination and of interlacing it with so much morality that he has not only extremely elevated its agreeableness but has also made it very decorous. The inhabitant of the Orient is of a very false taste in this respect. Since he has no concept of the morally beautiful which can be united with this impulse, he loses even the worth of the sensuous enjoyment, and his harem is a constant source of unrest.... In the lands of the black, what better can one expect than what is found prevailing, namely the feminine sex in the deepest slavery? ²⁸

This 1838 French version of the view explicitly contrasts the difference between colonizers and colonized:

On the one hand, polygamy, harems and seraglios, from which [spring] venereal excesses, barbarous mutilation, revolting sodomy, a population that is small, inactive, indolent, ignorant....On the other hand, monogamy, Christian austerity, a more equal sharing of domestic happiness, increasing freedom, equality, well-being, rapid reproduction, a dense population, that is active, hard working.²⁹

And then there is Herbert Spencer's famous pronouncement: "Perhaps in no way is the moral progress of mankind more clearly shown than by contrasting the position of women among savages with their position among the most advanced of the civilized."³⁰ The higher the level of civilization, the better women are treated. Indeed, tying together evolution, feminine beauty, and bourgeois marriage, Spencer adds that ill treatment

makes these relations of the sexes difficult to change; since chronic ill-usage produces physical inferiority, and physical inferiority tends to exclude those feelings which might check ill-usage. Very generally among the lower races, the females are even more unattractive in aspect than the males.³¹

For woman to be treated well, then, depends on her developing a physical and moral difference from man. Maine offers another reason why the position of woman is such a good measure of civilization: it is also a measure of the same (male) self-control that produces wealth by "subduing the natural appetite of living for the present" and that subordinates "a material and immediate to a remote, intangible, and spiritual enjoyment."³²

It's worth noting that Victorian and early twentieth-century feminists made their own use of such views. As the historian Antoinette Burton writes, British feminists relied on evolutionary versions like Spencer's to argue that the most evolved relationship between man and woman – i.e., the relationship between European man and woman – grants women not only suffrage and other civil rights but also a role in Britain's imperial rule. Other feminist views had a degenerationist flavor. Burton writes that the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century feminists Charlotte Carmichael Stopes and Helen Blackburn both invoked a "golden age" of woman's civic participation among the earliest Britons. Thus, they could argue that "female emancipation was really just the recovery of lost rights" – rights recognized long ago by their racially superior Anglo-Saxon forbears.³³

The proper treatment of women, then, was widely seen as the cornerstone of human advancement – a view that would be expressed as well by Marx in the closing pages of his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and

much later by everyone from liberal feminists like Susan Moller Okin to the former first lady Laura Bush.³⁴ If Western, mainstream feminism has not yet managed to extricate whatever might be valuable about this view from its racial triumphalism, its paternalism, and the imperialist ends it has served for centuries, perhaps the problem lies in the gender-binary ideal itself.

The racial gender-binary ideal: hiding in plain sight?

By the late nineteenth century, Darwinism would reframe the debate about racial hierarchy, and the general evolutionary discourse about civilization and racial advancement that emerged would allow the racial gender-binary ideal to be articulated more explicitly, sometimes supported by argument and sometimes taken as established. The basic idea is simple: as humans evolve, the differences, mental and physical, between man and woman increase. (The Introduction gives a number of formulations of this view.) But although perhaps not stated quite so explicitly, the rudiments of this racial gender-binary ideal are apparent well before Darwin – if one is looking for them.

Nancy Leys Stepan and Londa Schiebinger, two influential historians of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century race and gender science, seem not to have been looking, even though the racial gender-binary ideal is in evidence not only in the views they discuss, but also in their own discussions of these views. And when they *do* note the presence of this ideal, they don't seem to recognize its import.

In “Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science” (1986) Stepan uses what she calls the biosocial sciences of race and gender to demonstrate the unrecognized role metaphor and analogy play in science.³⁵ In the eighteenth century, it was accepted that women were inferior to men, and the belief that non-European races were inferior to European ones was even stronger. European women, men of “lower race,” and, indeed, all manner of “others” were analogically connected:

the sexually deviate, the criminal, the urban poor, and the insane were in one way or another constructed as biological “races apart” whose differences from the white male, and likenesses to each other, “explained” their different and lower position in the social hierarchy.³⁶

According to Stepan, science, guided by an already well-established association between European women and so-called lower-race men, looked for something observable and objective that could explain – and justify – the similarly inferior status of both groups. Biology provided what was needed: the skull. Developing complicated instruments that could take precise measurements (and perhaps fudging the data where necessary), craniologists pronounced the skulls of both non-European males and European females to be similarly inferior in size and structure compared to those of European males.

Smaller skulls contain smaller brains, they reasoned – and when it comes to brain size, bigger was surely better.

However, the analogical connection Stepan points out should not obscure another sort of connection, a structural one anchored by the racial gender-binary ideal and implied in Stepan's own discussion. That she overlooks this connection may be because she focuses narrowly on what Laqueur calls the one-sex model of sex difference. As Laqueur points out, this model is never completely dislodged by the two-sex one, and, as Stepan's analysis demonstrates, its persistence complicates matters considerably. Insofar as the one-sex model is assumed, any *prima facie* claim of European woman to full civil rights must overlook her gender and depend only on her race. To point to her smaller skull, then – the sort of skull she supposedly shares with men of “lower race” – is, on Stepan's view, to show why her claim is without merit, her race notwithstanding. In a sense, this measure of European woman's inferiority pushes to the side the new idea of femininity-as-incommensurable-difference, since such femininity, even if understood as an amalgam of superior race and inferior gender, cannot fully and unequivocally be shared with non-European men (although, as I'll suggest, such sharing is sometimes implied). The metaphor Stepan analyzes, then, through its invocation of the older, one-sex masculinist ideal, mitigates any claim European women might have to equal rights on the basis of race. In short, the superior skull is a large one with a certain shape, and only European males have it.

On the other hand, femininity-as-complementarity – i.e., the femininity of the European woman – connotes not the simple female inferiority of the one-sex model but instead (or perhaps as well?) one half of the gender-binary, two-sex human ideal. This ideal, moreover, is emblematic of Whiteness. So once feminine difference is invoked, the terms of the debate about European women's status change. That Stepan does not consider this racial gender-binary ideal perhaps accounts for this comment:

One novel conclusion to result from scientists' investigations into the different skull capacities of males and females of different races was that the gap in head size between men and women had apparently widened over historic time, being largest in the “civilized” races such as the European, and smallest in the most savage races. The growing difference between the sexes from the prehistoric period to the present was attributed to evolutionary, selective pressures, which were believed to be greater in the white races than the dark and greater in men than women. *Paradoxically, therefore, the civilized European woman was less like the civilized European man than the savage man was like the savage woman.* The “discovery” that the male and female bodies and brains in the lower races were very alike allowed scientists to draw direct comparisons between a black male and a white female.³⁷

(Emphasis added)

Stepan finds this view paradoxical, it would seem, because the racial gender-binary ideal is not in her purview. Indeed, the claim that the civilized European woman is less like the civilized European man than the uncivilized woman is like the uncivilized man is simply a statement of this ideal: the more advanced the race, the greater the difference between male and female. There is no surprise here.

It is true, however, that regarding the increasing difference between males and females as a consequence of females' failure to evolve engages the racial gender-binary ideal less completely than a view that insists on the evolution of distinctively *female* traits. I will discuss this further below, but a related wrinkle is worth noticing here: while the smaller, inferior skull of the European woman may be shared with the "lower-race" male and thus is not an exclusively feminine trait, once folded into the new conception of femininity this skull takes on a special aspect. Granted, the European woman's small skull has links to the older idea of simple inferiority. Consequently, it serves to temper any new talk of women as complementary rather than simply inferior; men are still in charge. But this skull is also linked to traits that are valued in the European woman in a way they ordinarily are not valued in "lower-race" men. Darwin would later claim that emotionality, intuition, and closeness to nature characterize both the "lower races" and (European) women.³⁸ But while these traits are signs of inferiority in inferior men, they also signify femininity – and hence racial advancement – in European women. Indeed, Stepan herself gives a perfect example of this contrast: the prognathous jaw. The angle of the face to the top of the skull was thought to indicate not only intelligence but also beauty; the ideal perpendicular angle, found in Greek sculpture, contrasted sharply with the prognathous (or projecting) lower jaw that European women supposedly shared with "the lowest races of man" – and, indeed, with the ape. As Camper wrote: "The idea of stupidity is associated, even by the vulgar, with the elongation of the snout, which necessarily lowers the facial line."³⁹ But, as Stepan herself points out, two centuries later Havelock Ellis could find much to admire in this very same prognathous jaw. Although a "savage character," it is

far from being a defect; it frequently imparts...a certain piquancy to a woman's face. Perhaps the naive forward movement of slight prognathism in a woman suggests a face upturned to kiss; but in any case there is no doubt that while not a characteristic of high evolution it is distinctly charming.⁴⁰

Context, apparently, is everything.

That the same feature that is prized in European women also signifies inferiority in non-European men would seem to complicate somewhat the analogical connection Stepan draws between the two groups. What's more, this different valuation begins to suggest a two-sex rather than a one-sex

ideal: what is ideal in a European female is not ideal in any male, European or otherwise. Perhaps the belief that evolution has caused the civilized male's skull to become larger than his female mate's, even while the skulls of uncivilized males and females have remained similar in size, can be thought of as a bridge between the older idea of simple female inferiority and the newer one of feminine complementarity as a characteristic of advanced race. Indeed, the American suffragist and clergywoman Antoinette Brown Blackwell faulted Darwin, her contemporary, for clinging to the older view; she accused him of focusing only on the male's "acquisition of additional masculine characters" through evolution even though, she insisted, the female has developed "equivalent feminine characters."⁴¹ Such evolved feminine traits, moreover, are not shared with "lower-race" men, "lower-race" women, or European men. (Nor, as we'll see, do such traits necessarily have to do with the brain.)

Londa Schiebinger, writing several years after Stepan, seems on the verge of considering the racial gender-binary ideal, and, as I'll discuss below, she even gives a wonderful example of its expression. Nevertheless, she denies that there was any interest in the relationship between males and females of "lower race." She also argues that a hierarchy based on race is simply incommensurable, as a matter of logic, with the new ideology of binary, complementary sex difference. On the one hand, she writes, the eighteenth-century revolution in views of sex difference "offered a new picture of the middle-class European female" – and only of her.⁴² On the other hand, the understanding of racial hierarchy focused on the interracial comparison of males:

To the extent that comparative anatomists in this period devised a scale of being, it emerged from the comparison of male virtues across races, especially the virtues of male skulls. In most instances, sexual differences were considered secondary to racial differences.... Europeans were not particularly interested in whether African females were physically and morally superior or inferior to African males, rather both sexes were compared to Europeans. Females in general were considered a sexual subset of their race; unique female traits only served to confirm their racial standing. In eighteenth-century Europe, the male body remained the touchstone of human anatomy.⁴³

Furthermore, Schiebinger argues, the gradated scale of racial hierarchy could not be reconciled with the binary division of humans into male and female:

Scientific racism and scientific sexism both taught that proper social relations between the races and the sexes existed in nature. Many theorists failed to see, however, that their notions of racial and sexual relations rested on contradictory visions of nature. Scientific racism depended on a chain of being or hierarchy of species in nature that was inherently

unilinear and absolute. Scientific sexism, by contrast, depended on radical biological divergence. The theory of sexual complementarity attempted to extract males and females from competition with or hierarchy over each other by defining them as opposites, each perfect though radically different and for that reason suited to separate social spheres. Thus the notion of a single chain of being worked at odds with the revolutionary view of sexual difference which postulated a radical incommensurability between the sexes (*of European descent*).⁴⁴

(Emphasis added)

Indeed, Schiebinger writes, the anthropologists and anatomists who studied these matters seemed not always to realize

that what they said about sex had a bearing on race and vice versa. Leading theories underlying scientific racism (the doctrine of a great chain of being, for example) did not incorporate new views on sexual difference, while leading theories explaining sexual divergence (the doctrine of sexual complementarity being a prime example) applied only to Europeans.⁴⁵

In one sense, Schiebinger is entirely correct here; at least on its face, the sharp dualism of the male-female distinction *is* at odds with the gradualism of the great chain of racial being; and that the new doctrine of feminine complementarity applies only to Europeans might seem to worsen the problem. But once the binary of complementary sexes is understood as an *ideal* that only European men and women have realized, the incommensurability Schiebinger sees disappears. The sharp difference between human male and female, between masculine and feminine, turns out to characterize only well-born Europeans. As a consequence, then, a race's place on the great chain of being can be determined by the relation – physical, mental, moral, social – between the male and female of that race. Thus, the new femininity, which Schiebinger recognizes applies only to European women, can be regarded as one half of a *raced* conception of the gender-binary ideal, involving a sharp dualism that itself is a racial ideal – not all populations meet it, and some meet it better than others. In this way, gradualism reemerges in the scale that ranks races hierarchically according to how closely the male-female pairs of a race approach this sharply gender-binary ideal. In this way, racial ideology makes good use of the new idea – or rather *ideal* – of femininity, even as the gender-binary ideal takes on its full meaning only against those races that fail to meet it.

Seen from this perspective, Schiebinger's claim that "unique female traits" of non-European women "only served to confirm their racial standing" may not be quite right; these traits seem to have signified at once non-European women's race *and* their gender, understood together, just as the supposedly

unique female traits of European women signified – and still signify – theirs. At the very least, using “unique female traits” to signify race implies a comparison between the “savage” woman and the European one, a comparison central to the racial gender-binary ideal. Such a comparison was surely part of Europe’s disturbing sexual fascination with the body of Saartya Bartman. (Also called the “Hottentot Venus,” Bartman was an African woman who was enslaved, put on public display in Europe, and finally forced into prostitution before dying, in 1815, at the age of twenty-six.)⁴⁶

In the course of making a different point about the eighteenth-century European obsession with the male beard, Schiebinger herself presents a particularly interesting example of the gender-binary ideal. This example not only incorporates the two-sex model of the body but also repurposes the one-sex model; jointly, both contribute to a conception of racial hierarchy anchored by the racial gender-binary ideal.

As Schiebinger writes, some eighteenth-century naturalists (including Charles White, whose ode to White man and woman I quote earlier) thought that hair – its color, quantity, texture, and placement – should be studied along with skin color as a means of classifying humans, and the male beard in particular loomed large in the European male imagination. According to Carl Linnaeus, God gave men beards “for ornaments and to distinguish them from women.” Predictably, this emblem of European manhood came to serve as an important marker not only of sex but also of race.⁴⁷ According to Schiebinger, “Women, black men (to a certain extent), and especially men of the Americas simply lacked that masculine ‘badge of honor’ – the philosopher’s beard.”⁴⁸ In the seventeenth century, Francois Bernier claimed that male beards become scantier as one descends the racial ladder. In the middle of the eighteenth, Schiebinger writes, some natural historians understood the absence of beards in Native American males as evidence not only of their lower race, but also of a difference in species. Richard McCausland, an army surgeon, reported in 1786 that “the Indians of America” differed from other human males “in the want of one very characteristic mark of the sex, to wit, that of a beard.” And Montesquieu claimed that part of the Spanish justification for enslaving Native Americans was that they had only scanty beards (which, adding insult to injury, they trimmed “in an unseemly fashion”).⁴⁹

Schiebinger’s primary point here is that the beard could capture scientists’ imaginations so fully only because “anthropological classificatory interest focused almost exclusively on males” in this period. And, to be sure, this glorification of the beard certainly suggests the persistence of the one-sex human ideal.⁵⁰ As late as 1883, during the heyday of feminine complementarity, the influential American zoologist W.K. Brooks could claim that “in assuming at the age of puberty the distinctive secondary peculiarities of his sex, the male, so far as regards these secondary peculiarities, evidently passes into a higher degree of development than the female.” Since the female does

not develop the full complement of racial characteristics, she is “an arrested male.” Indeed, Brooks wrote, “possession of a beard must be regarded as a general characteristic of our race...when a female, from disease or mutilation or old age, assumes a resemblance to the male, the change is an advance.”⁵¹

(So much for the youthful – and hairless! – feminine ideal.)

But there’s more to this story. Although she regards eighteenth-century men’s focus on the beard as reflecting what I have been calling the one-sex human ideal, Schiebinger adds this comment:

Interest in beards did, however, hold consequences for placing women in nature as well. Medical observers, perplexed by the absence of beards in native American males, also reported that native American females did not menstruate. Beards were associated with catamenia in the minds of eighteenth-century natural historians through the outmoded, though still influential, theory of humors which taught that, in men, vital heat processed excess bodily fluids into sweat, semen, and beards (beard growth resulting from reabsorbed semen) and, in women, into catamenia (which explained the hair that sometimes appeared after menopause). Logically, a people whose males were beardless should have females lacking menstrual flux. The charge that native American women did not menstruate was indeed serious, considering that naturalists in this period had sought (in vain) to establish periodic menstruation as a uniquely human characteristic.⁵²

Considered in light of the racial gender-binary ideal, however, these beardless Native American men and their non-menstruating female counterparts take on new significance: the example reconciles a one-sex with a two-sex scheme, and uses the racial gender-binary ideal to do so. There are, of course, numerous examples of Europeans denying masculine characteristics to males of inferior groups. Even centuries before the advent of racial theories, for example, Jewish men were effeminized by being imagined to menstruate. While Jewish male menstruation was explained in the medieval period as a punishment for deicide, this account eventually merged with medical explanations pointing to Jewish men’s lack of manly heat, a lack much like the female’s.⁵³ But the Native American case, which links beardless men with non-menstruating women, engages fully with the racial gender-binary ideal. To claim that Native American women lack menstrual periods and that Native American men lack beards is, simply, to announce their combined failure to meet this ideal. Both Native American women and men, because of their race, lack a crucial marker of their sex, and this makes them more similar to each other than they should be.

What’s more, this view also bridges the older, one-sex ideal and the newer, two-sex one – or, more precisely, it expresses a hybrid of the two. The theory of humors has its origin in the one-sex model; for Aristotle, as we saw in

Chapter 1, vital heat is responsible for working up men's bodily fluids into soul-giving semen but is far less strong in woman. Schiebinger calls this view outmoded by the eighteenth century, which may be true; but it is being used here in a new way. In the beard example, the level of vital heat seems to be correlated not only with *sex* difference, as it had been in premodern periods, but with *racial* advancement and vigor. This example attributes to higher-race men *and* women more vitality than men and women of lower races possess. But at the same time, the new idea of European women's feminine complementarity suggests that men and women of "advanced" race employ this heat to different ends. The male becomes more masculine, as evidenced by his increasingly luxurious beard while the woman becomes more feminine, as evidenced by her increasingly heavy menstrual periods. (Agreeing with Charles White, Havelock Ellis would suggest around the turn of the twentieth century that the menstrual flow among women of the higher human races is more "pronounced" than among women of the lower ones; "American Indian women, for instance...usually only menstruate for two days."⁵⁴) So although Native American males and females (presumably) have enough vital heat to reproduce their kind, they have less of it to spare, and therefore it cannot manifest itself in the sex difference that female menstruation and the male beard signify – the very difference that supposedly marks advanced race.

An updated version of this view would be expressed in the late nineteenth century, when some biologists applied the First Law of Thermodynamics (the principle of the conservation of energy) to the human body in an argument against women's education. Here, the matter of race did not need to be explicit, since education was ordinarily available only to privileged White women – those who by right of race had both sufficient energy to fulfill their feminine destiny and an obligation to do so. But even the White body's energy was limited, and it was necessary for females to expend it appropriately. This ruled out any rigorous course of academic study. Edward Clarke, a Harvard Medical School professor who made a name for himself by opposing women's higher education, tells of a young female student who fell ill by squandering a "large share of vital force" on the wrong project:

She put her will into the education of the brain, and withdrew it from elsewhere.... [T]he strength of the loins, that even Solomon put in as part of his ideal woman, changed to weakness.... Doubtless the evil of her education will affect her whole life.⁵⁵

Bringing the discussion full circle back to the beard, we hear in Clark an echo of Kant, who a century earlier had complained about the unnaturalness of scientific learning in women: an intellectual woman, Kant wrote, "might just as well have a beard, for that expresses in a more recognizable form the profundity for which she strives."⁵⁶

Havelock Ellis: putting the ideal to work

The story of beauty and maternity continued to shape the racial gender-binary ideal into the twentieth century, and the post-Darwinian context is an ideal place to pick up this thread. The British sexologist Havelock Ellis, whose work on sexuality is arguably second in importance only to Freud's, will be my point of departure. Ellis warrants close attention because rather than simply assuming a racialized gender-binary ideal, he both develops the notion at some length and relies on it to resolve a number of paradoxes that arise in ordering the social world according to crosscutting classifications of race and gender. Ellis's particular challenge was to acknowledge the racial superiority of European women without quite challenging the gender superiority of European men – although as a champion of feminine difference, he might well have objected to putting the matter in quite this way.

Central to Ellis's attempt to resolve these issues is his *fin-de-siècle* contribution to a complicated just-so story of the female pelvis, a story dating back to the eighteenth-century quest for the pelvic marks of racial identity and hierarchy. Not surprisingly, this story was equivocal from the start, offering various and conflicting views about what constituted the racially advanced pelvis. Some early anthropologists and physiologists believed that the wide female pelvis so prized later by Ellis and his peers signified racial "primitivism," since such a pelvis seemed to promote the ease in childbirth supposedly enjoyed by beasts (a convenient justification for driving hard-laboring enslaved females of "lower race" even when they were pregnant.)⁵⁷ By the 1830s, however, Moritz Weber explained the alleged ease with which African women gave birth by the infant's smaller head rather than by the mother's wider pelvis.⁵⁸ Three-quarters of a century later still, this view was taken up by Ellis, who, combining Darwinism with craniometry, asserted that as races became more advanced, their increased head size required a wider maternal pelvis to accommodate the larger skull of the racially superior infant. Here, of course, is yet another expression of the racial gender-binary ideal – and Ellis will make good use of it.

By Ellis's time, degenerationist accounts of race and racial beauty had largely been replaced by ones inspired by Darwinian theory. On the latter view, humankind had been shaped not only by the general principle of natural selection but also by the principle of sexual selection, a process through which certain features, even when irrelevant for survival, are favored by sexual partners and thus passed on to descendants. In most species, according to Darwin, the female does the choosing; in humans, though, the tables are turned. Among human "savages," the male is stronger than the female and so holds her "in a far more abject state of bondage than does the male of any other animal"; thus, he gains the power of selection. Such power, exercised over and over, eventually creates various differences between human populations, including at least some of the differences among races. As the members

of a tribe spread out and split into distinct groups, they eventually come to differ slightly, causing the “more powerful and leading savages” to prefer women in whom tribal idiosyncrasies are most pronounced.⁵⁹ Thus, standards of beauty vary, since each tribe will favor its own peculiarities. At the same time, however, Darwin explicitly states that women are more beautiful than men – a reasonable claim, if beauty is defined as whatever enough men turn out to prefer. Male preference, moreover, shapes not only women but also offspring of both sexes, “so that the continued preference by the men of each race of the more attractive women, according to their standard of taste, would tend to modify in the same manner all the individuals of both sexes belonging to the race.”⁶⁰ But Darwin, of course, recognized more than a merely aesthetic distinction between the races; while Victorian evolutionary theory may have closed the metaphysical gap between Englishmen and apes, it left intact the evolutionary one between Englishmen and the “savages” under British rule, who would, according to Darwin, eventually be exterminated and replaced by the “civilized races of man.”⁶¹

As for the relation between the sexes, the male was clearly superior. Acquired before the dawn of history, the male’s “greater size, strength, courage, pugnacity, and even energy” have since been “augmented chiefly through the contests of rival males for the possession of the females,” leading, along with natural selection and “the inherited effects of habit,” to a “greater intellectual vigour and power of invention in man.”⁶² (Notice here Darwin’s Lamarckism.) In contrast, woman, who even among savages displays “greater tenderness and less selfishness” than man, also has more strongly marked “powers of intuition, rapid perception, and perhaps imitation,” characteristics possessed as well by the “lower races and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization.”⁶³ Thus at least some of what might pass as a civilized woman’s special feminine essence also signifies her failure to evolve. As for her more evolved traits, she owes them to her father.⁶⁴

Insofar as he views woman as a less evolved form of man, Darwin expresses in evolutionary terms the one-sex model of humanity: the (European) male is the exemplary human of which (European) females, like “lower race” men, are inferior versions – an example of the analogy that Stepan finds so important. But the menstruation-beard example discussed above suggests that while the one- and two-sex models may be in tension with each other, they may also function complementarily, increasing the repertoire of ways to conceptualize relationships between race and gender difference. Ellis demonstrates especially well not only how an evolutionary perspective can accommodate both a two-sex and a one-sex human ideal, but also the great capacity of the two-sex ideal to reconcile a hierarchy based on gender with one based on race.

Although an apostle of feminine complementarity, Ellis was also something of a sexual radical, rejecting the paradoxical gender ideology that saw

woman as “not very much troubled with sexual feelings of any kind” even as it urged vigilance in protecting her from these nonexistent feelings.⁶⁵ Of course, the sexuality so anxiously denied the angel of the house resurfaced in Victorian and post-Victorian accounts of female mental and physical pathology; it was also projected onto the harems of the East, the “savages” of Africa, European prostitutes, and, in general, all women who worked for wages.⁶⁶ But while Ellis certainly recognized social distinctions between women, he could not draw them on the conventional basis of sexual purity.⁶⁷ Indeed, Ellis regarded sexuality as an endowment of only the most advanced races. As he writes in *Man and Woman*,

We do not know very much of the sexual emotion (as distinguished from sexual customs) among the lower races, but while their sexual practices are often very free, there is considerable evidence to show that their sexual instincts are not very intense.... It would probably be found that the higher races (i.e., those with the larger pelvis) have nearly always the strongest sexual impulses.⁶⁸

This isn't surprising: Ellis regarded the pelvis as the seat of sexual feeling, and Europeans – especially European women – have the largest pelvises of all.

Such a view of sexuality challenged a longstanding association between savages and sexual licentiousness, an association, Ellis writes, that is somewhat confused. Some European travelers observed savages to have only weak sexual drives, some observed the opposite. Ellis resolves the matter by denying that savages exhibit a distinctively *human* sexuality in the first place; instead, like the beasts they supposedly resemble, savages have only a periodic sex drive, and the enormous sexual energy they display on occasion is soon spent. No wonder, then, that travelers' reports of savage sexual exploits varied so much.⁶⁹

Understanding savage sexuality as an on-again, off-again affair supports Ellis's further claim, echoing Herbert Spencer, that savages lack the “psychic” accompaniment to the sex drive: love, that essential sentimental glue that holds together the English hearth and for which, Ellis claims, many lesser cultures do not even have a word.⁷⁰ This ideal of domesticity allowed Ellis to distinguish not only between Europe – especially England – and other parts of the world, but also between higher and lower orders of womanhood. The proper Englishwoman might be a sexual being, but her sexuality was infused with a special maternal love directed toward both her children and her mate.⁷¹ This sort of love sets White womanhood off from “lower-race” women and men, and also, of course, from White men; her wifely and maternal nature is hers alone, the product and sign of racial advancement. The male, too, is capable of domestic love – but only if he is lucky enough to be inspired by a civilized woman's charms. Chief among these, of course,

is her beauty, itself long a symbol of civilized domesticity. Herbert Spencer, as we saw earlier, measured a society's level of advancement by how well women were treated, and he regarded feminine beauty as both the engine and the consequence of hard-won evolutionary progress. On Spencer's view, the ugliness of females and the brutality of males reinforce each other. Nevertheless, it's possible, through exercising taste in selecting mates, for men both to beautify their race and civilize themselves.

What, though, do men find beautiful? After a long catalog of the beauty ideals of many cultures, Ellis concludes that beauty is objective, since European travelers have "found attractive and even beautiful women, from the European perspective," even among "those races with the greatest notoriety for ugliness":

The fact that the modern European, whose culture makes him especially sensitive to aesthetic beauty, is nevertheless able to find beauty among even the women of savage races serves to illustrate the statement already made that, whatever modifying influences may have to be admitted, beauty is to a large extent an objective matter. The existence of this objective element in beauty is confirmed by the fact that it is sometimes found that the men of the lower races admire European women more than women of their own race. There is reason to believe that it is among the more intelligent men of lower race – that is to say those whose aesthetic feelings are more developed – that the admiration for white women is more likely to be found.⁷²

But this passage presents a puzzle: Ellis's aim of establishing the "objectivity" of female beauty might explain why he insists on the superior aesthetic sensitivity of the European, since his impeccable taste, on Ellis's view, is sure to lead him to the truly beautiful. It even explains why it might be important for "the more intelligent men of the lower races" to confirm the European verdict, since a judgment's universality might be taken as evidence of its objectivity. But why claim as well that feminine beauty exists even among savages? What does the universal embodiment of feminine beauty have to do with the objectivity and universality of the standard by which this beauty is judged, especially in light of Ellis's belief that beauty characterizes women of higher rather than lower races?

In the rare case that a "lower race" woman exhibits beauty, the European man will appreciate it, but the taste of the non-European male may be undeveloped partly because he has had little experience of real feminine beauty. Just as European men exercise a standard of taste that men of "lower race" approach only rarely, so do European women display a beauty surpassing that of most non-European women. Thus, the interracial male hierarchy of taste is complemented by a corresponding interracial female hierarchy of

beauty. Together, these hierarchies allow Ellis to distinguish, in gendered terms, between higher and lower races: the lower races strive for gendered ideals, expressed by feminine beauty and male taste, that the higher ones have already realized.

This makes some sense of Ellis's claim that feminine beauty is objective. Within a particular race, levels of male taste and of female beauty come to correspond through the mechanism of sexual selection: as men's taste improves, they seek more beautiful women as mates; correspondingly, the more beautiful women there are to appreciate, the better men's taste becomes. In the "lower races," such beauty is rare, and it may not be appreciated when it does appear. But with evolution, this changes. Emphasizing this material connection of female beauty to male taste within a particular population construes the relation between the sexes *intraracially*, thus asserting a (comforting?) kind of racial reproductive closure, especially at a time when anxieties about interracial sexual relations abounded.⁷³ But beyond refocusing male attention on women considered to be appropriate mates, such a racially specific interpretation of the general relation of male-as-beauty-judge to female-as-beauty-contestant allows each race to be ranked by how nearly its taste-beauty quotient, so to speak, approximates the European one – a ranking that embodies the racial gender-binary ideal.

But a universal standard of beauty is not the whole story for Ellis, either. Following Darwin, he claims that there is also a tendency for "the specific characters of the race or nation" to cause divergence in ideals of beauty, which is "often held to consist in the extreme development of these racial or national anthropological features"⁷⁴:

It frequently happens that this admiration for racial characteristics leads to the idealization of features which are far removed from aesthetic beauty. The firm and rounded breast is certainly a feature of beauty, but among many of the black peoples of Africa the breasts fall at a very early period, and here we sometimes find that the hanging breast is admired as beautiful.⁷⁵

So, within any race, standards of beauty that are objective and universal coexist with racially particular ones, and while the more advanced men of lower races may be drawn to the European type, they will be in the minority within their racial group. Here, then, is a specific formulation of a signature tension of liberal humanism, one between human universal and human particular, the universal connoting the highest human values, embodied, as always, in the European body and mind, and the particular connoting those lower, parochial values and tastes that shape the bodies and minds of everyone else. This opposition between universal and particular, between essence and accident – as usual, a problem only for the "lower races" – is resolved

by the civilized White European, in whose mind and body the universal ideal and the existing particular supposedly converge.

European women, then, are the most beautiful, and European men the most appreciative of this beauty. But a problem appears on the horizon when Ellis inquires further into what makes a woman beautiful. Surely, she will be fair; the fair woman, he claims, is universally and rightly agreed to be the most beautiful, since her “brilliantly conspicuous” golden hair complements the “soft outlines of woman.”⁷⁶ But therein lies the problem. Some racial theorists have regarded races themselves as differently gendered: the blond, Aryan races are supposedly the noble, masculine ones; the darker races are feminine (or effeminate). Indeed, Ellis, in thrall for a moment to such racial masculinism, complicates a discussion devoted almost entirely to feminine beauty by invoking, seemingly gratuitously, an aesthetic ideal that is decidedly *masculine*: the male body, he writes, is actually aesthetically superior to the female, apart from the unfortunate fact that the protruding male genital organ, especially when erect, ruins the male form – a failing avoided by Woman, whose “sexual region is almost imperceptible in any ordinary and normal position of the nude body.”⁷⁷ Except for this flaw, though, the virtues of beauty, masculinity, and racial superiority are combined in the European male. Thus, the one-sex ideal has been given a race.⁷⁸

But where does that leave the women of blond, superior – that is, of masculine – race? One thinks here of Alexander Walker, who bemoaned the masculine women of the highlands and the effeminate men of the plains. Ellis confronts the question squarely:

Other things being equal, the most blonde is most beautiful; but it so happens that among the races of Great Britain the other things are very frequently not equal....In most parts of Europe the coarse and unbeautiful plebeian type tends to be very dark; in England it tends to be very fair.... The English beautiful woman, though she may still be fair, is by no means very fair, and from the English standpoint she may even sometimes appear somewhat dark.⁷⁹

Apparently, one can have too much of a good thing – at least if one is a woman:

Fair people, possibly as a matter of race more than from absence of pigment, are more energetic than dark people. They possess a sanguine vigor and impetuosity which...especially in the competition of practical life, tend to give them some superiority over their darker brethren....Fair men are most likely to obtain wives[;]...created peers are fairer than either hereditary peers or even most groups of intellectual persons; they have possessed in higher measure the qualities that insure success.⁸⁰

Fair women, by virtue of their race, will possess these “blond” moral qualities, too. But if the fair woman has too much of whatever it is that makes the fair man superior, she threatens to become his equal:

Energy in a woman in courtship is less congenial to her sexual attitude than to a man’s, and is not attractive to men; thus it is not surprising, even apart from the probably greater beauty of dark women, that the preponderance of fairness among wives as compared to women generally...is very slight. It may possibly be accounted for altogether by homogamy – the tendency of like to marry like – in the fair husbands.⁸¹

This principle of homogamy, reflected by the “widely felt” sense that “one would not like to marry a person of foreign, even though closely allied, race,” inclines fair men to look for the racial characteristic of blondness; but insofar as blondness is accompanied by vigor and assertiveness – male characteristics – it will be unattractive in a woman.⁸² After all, Ellis insists, the male-female union requires that opposites attract, and so

it would be hopeless to seek for any homogamy between the manly man and the virile woman, between the feminine woman and the effeminate man. It is not impossible that this tendency to seek disparity in sexual characters may exert some disturbing influences on the tendency to seek parity in anthropological racial characters, *for the sexual difference to some extent makes itself felt in racial characters.*⁸³

(Emphasis added)

Here Ellis’s slight darkening of the attractive White woman brings to mind Blumenbach’s choice of a female skull to represent the beauty of the Caucasian race. While choosing a female rather than a male skull can be read as simply reflecting the new feminine ideal, Nell Painter notes that Circassian women from that region were not only imagined to be particularly beautiful, but were also prized as trophies in the “White slave” market – a chapter in the modern history of slavery that is largely forgotten now apart from its echoes in the genre of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Orientalist odalisque paintings.⁸⁴ Might Ellis be drawing on this tradition to racialize, if ever so slightly, his fair feminine ideal?

In any case, Ellis’s concern is that while the racially superior English woman must be blonde because of her race, if she is *too* blonde she will be unattractive as a woman. So as part of her very femininity, she must share with the inferior races a lack of energy, signified racially by slightly darker hair and skin. Thus, somewhat like the prognathous jaw, an inferiority that would be undesirable in any man will be desirable in a woman, or at least in *this* sort of woman. So even while Ellis consigns the European woman to a

slightly lower rung on the great racial chain of being, he insists at the same time that it is this position that makes her desirable and attractive. As for the too-blonde woman, she can only hope that she will not be forced to compete for a mate with someone a tad darker and more refined.

Part of Ellis's solution to the conundrum of the too-blonde woman, then, is to deny the desirable European (especially the English) woman the full complement of racially superior traits; she must be a bit darker than men of her group (and there's also her prognathous jaw). As Ellis himself says, "sexual difference makes itself felt to some extent in racial characters." But he has another solution too, one that manages to mark feminine difference without conflating it with racial inferiority. In an ingenious move, he contains the collapse of gender into race by invoking the gender-binary ideal. The too-blonde woman, remember, is found among the "coarse and plebian type" of the "races of Great Britain." These races, surely, are masculine, unlike the sea of darker, non-British races – and this is a positive thing. But what makes them "coarse and plebian"? Rather than simply claim that superior, blond races are masculine and leave it at that, Ellis implies here that while the men of truly superior races must be masculine, the women must *not* be. Instead, women must be feminine – as, indeed, they are among the "more refined" races of Britain. Echoing Alexander Walker's judgment about the inhabitants of the Scottish Highlands, Ellis concludes that it is not enough that the men of a particular race are masculine if the women are masculine as well.

This expression of the racial gender-binary ideal is qualified, since the racially superior woman's femininity depends, in part, on her possession of inferior racial traits. But, as we have seen, Ellis has another solution here, one that engages the racial gender-binary ideal fully. The European woman's well-developed pelvis, capable of accommodating the racially advanced infant's large head, signifies a racial superiority of a distinctly feminine sort, and a femininity of a racially superior sort. Here, Ellis demonstrates how the move from a one-sex to a two-sex model of humanity not only consolidates a conception of European woman's mental and physical difference from European man but also sets up the criterion of pronounced sex/gender difference as a measure of racial advancement. Emphasizing the development of pelvis and breasts also serves to focus attention on the intra-racial relation of mating pairs of men and women; the artistry of generation after generation of increasingly aesthetically sensitive European males, through sexual selection after sexual selection, actually creates the masterpiece of European female beauty. And while Ellis may, at first glance, seem to be moving further toward a universal, cross-racial sex dimorphism – since a pelvis adequate to bear children and well-developed breasts for nursing are, one might assume, universal female endowments – this impression is mistaken. Rather, Ellis holds that while the *ideal* of full breasts and pelvis may be recognized and appreciated by men nearly universally, it is best realized by European women, in whom, moreover, sexual selection for the broad pelvis coincides with

natural selection.⁸⁵ Broad hips, which involve a large pelvis, are “necessarily a characteristic of the highest human races, because the races with the largest heads must be endowed also with the largest pelvis to enable their large heads to enter the world.”⁸⁶ Thus, the broad European female pelvis, beautiful and desirable on its own, gains moral dignity through its association with the European (male?) infant’s large brain.

The foregoing reading of Ellis is based primarily on *The Psychology of Sex*. A slightly different one emerges from *Man and Woman*, written around the same time.⁸⁷ In the *Psychology of Sex*, Ellis, following Darwin, doesn’t shrink from likening superior European women to people of lower race; as he says, too much energy and ambition are “uncongenial” in a woman. In *Man and Woman*, however, this strategy is less available, since here he explicitly endorses a theory, later to be called neoteny, according to which adults of advanced races retain childhood traits into maturity, while adults of inferior races quickly “degenerate towards apishness.”⁸⁸ As Stephen J. Gould writes, this view replaced the older theory of recapitulation, derived from the biogenetic law of Ernst Haeckel, which regards each stage of embryonic development as “recapitulating” an adult stage of an evolutionary ancestor. Thus, for example, “the gill slits of an early human embryo represented an ancestral adult fish; at a later stage, the temporary tail revealed a reptilian or mammalian ancestor.”⁸⁹ As the saying goes, ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny – or, in Gould’s witty formulation, an individual “climbs its own family tree.” (As Gould also remarks, this framework, influential in so many contexts, would prove invaluable to “any scientist who wanted to rank human groups as higher and lower, The adults of inferior groups must be like children of superior groups, for the child represents a primitive adult ancestor.”⁹⁰)

By 1920, however, the theory of recapitulation had declined in popularity, and soon after the Dutch anatomist Louis Bolck proposed the theory of neoteny, which claimed just the opposite: the more advanced the organism, the more like an infant it is. One consequence of this new theory, unwelcome to many, was that the same childlike traits – for example, small head and stature, lack of beard, physical weakness – that had previously signified women’s inferiority to men now suggested the opposite. As Gould comments, Ellis was unusual among proponents of neoteny in being willing to draw the obvious conclusion that women were superior to men since they were, supposedly, more like children (although, as Gould also notes, Ellis “wiggles out of a similar confession for blacks”). Indeed, on Ellis’s view, not only has the female evolved, but her evolution has outpaced the male’s.⁹¹ Here is Ellis, in *Man and Woman*:

In order to appraise rightly the significance of the fact that women remain somewhat nearer to children than do men, we must have a clear idea of the position occupied by the child in the human and allied species. In Chapter II I alluded to the curious fact that among the anthropoids the infant ape

is very much nearer to Man than the adult ape. This means that the infant ape is higher in the line of evolution than the adult, and the female ape, by approximating to the infant type, is somewhat higher than the male. Man, in carrying on the line of evolution, started not from some adult male simian, but from the infant ape, and in a less degree from the female.⁹²

Moreover, Ellis regards his version of neoteny as completely complementary to the traditional notion of woman's domestic role, rooted in her biology:

The female retains her youthfulness for the sake of possible offspring; we all exist for the sake of our possible offspring, but this final end of the individual is more obviously woven into the structure of women. The interests of women may therefore be said to be more closely identified with Nature's interests. Nature has made women more like children in order that they may better understand and care for children....⁹³

Questions arise, certainly, about where Ellis believes human evolution is headed: Exactly what is meant by calling women of advanced race childlike, and just how childlike, one wonders, are they likely to become? Will women's fertile years increase? How far, and in what respects, will men follow their example? However these questions may be answered, Ellis's line of reasoning implicates the pelvis here as well: the

large-headed, delicate-faced, small-boned man of urban civilization is much nearer to the typical woman than is the savage. Not only by his large head, but by his large pelvis, the modern man is following a path first marked out by woman.⁹⁴

Here, the wide pelvis is not only a sign of European woman's femininity but also of (city-dwelling) European man's advanced race!

But this is not Ellis's last word, either, because in *Man and Woman* he also asserts that as humans evolve, woman's pelvis increases in size *more quickly* than man's does. Hence, the pelvis functions as a female secondary sexual characteristic after all – at least in the highest races:

The pelvis...constitutes the most undeniable, conspicuous, and unchangeable of all the bony human secondary sexual characters. Among numerous lower races, indeed, this is not well marked, and the women of several Central African peoples, for instance, when viewed from behind, can scarcely be distinguished from men; even Arab women, in whom the pelvis...is broadly extended, show nothing of the globular fullness of the well-developed European woman. The pelvis developed during the course of human evolution, while in some of the dark races it is ape-like in its

narrowness and small capacity, *in the highest European races it becomes a sexual distinction* which immediately strikes the eyes and can scarcely be effaced; while the women of these races endeavour still further to accentuate it by artificial means.⁹⁵

(Emphasis added)

So while the European male pelvis may broaden (especially among city dwellers), the European female pelvis broadens even more; thus, pelvis width varies more between European males and females than it does between males and females of other races. As for the more general principle that evolution tends to increase the differences between male and female, Ellis seems to take it as a given:

As such social changes [e.g., in education and the workplace] tend more and more to abolish artificial sexual differences, *thus acting inversely to the well-marked tendency observed in passing from the lower to the higher races*; we are brought face to face with the consideration of those differences which are not artificial and which no equalisation of social conditions can entirely remove, the natural characters and predispositions which will always inevitably influence the sexual allotment of human activities.⁹⁶

(Emphasis added)

An explicitly racial binary-gender ideal continued to serve racist ideology well into the twentieth century, and not just in the Anglophone world. In 1920, for example, the Viennese anthropologist Robert Stigler remarked on the vagueness of sexual characteristics in Jews, among whom “the women are often found to have a relatively narrow pelvis and relatively broad shoulders and the men to have broad hips and narrow shoulders.” Moving without hesitation from sex to gender, he notes further that in their advocacy of the “social and professional equality of man and woman,” Jews have tried to eliminate the “role secondary sexual characteristics instinctively play among normal people.”⁹⁷ The historian Gisela Bock notes that according to Nazi ideologues,

difference and polarity between the sexes (reason/emotion, activity/passivity, paid work/ housework) is fully developed only in the “superior,” the “nordic” races; among “inferior races” including those of low “hereditary value” the sexes are less differentiated – and thus heavy and cheap labor is good for both.⁹⁸

At mid-century, in the shadow of the Nazi atrocities, the discussion of the racial body became somewhat more circumspect, at least in polite circles. Although anthropologists continued to write about the pelvis, it was no longer

the explicit focus of an overtly racist classificatory scheme; finally, it seemed free to signify sex difference alone. By 1957, the American physical anthropologist Lucile Hoyme could marvel that anthropology had taken so long to recognize the pelvis as a universal indicator of sex difference and speculate that this was the consequence of an earlier era's misguided project of using the pelvis to differentiate among races. But the role of the pelvis in the story of race was not over. Having just hailed anthropologists' realization of the pelvis's relevance to sex rather than to race, Hoyme suggests, almost in passing, a possible direction for future study: collecting data measuring the *comparative disparities in pelvic measurements between men and women within particular races*. Thus, race is smuggled in through the back door, as the quest for the racial pelvis becomes masked by the seemingly innocent quest for the pelvic measure of intra-racial sexual dimorphism.⁹⁹

Of course, the gender-binary ideal need not be explicitly grounded in biology to be implicated in racist ideology. Pelvis width aside, Ellis's racialized ideal of sex/gender difference, with its contrast between feminine passivity and male competitive spirit, is of course rooted not in physical evolution but in the gender relations that were consolidated with the modern bourgeois family and quickly became a measure of the health and ascendancy of various groups. In eighteenth-century Europe, for example, the rising bourgeoisie criticized the effeminacy of aristocratic men and the lack of feminine virtue among aristocratic women.¹⁰⁰ In nineteenth-century India, many nationalists claimed for the middle class a domesticity superior even to that of the English, among whom women were judged to indulge a decidedly masculine appetite for travel and adventure (a verdict with which Ellis might well have agreed).¹⁰¹ Correspondingly, denying gender difference to enslaved Africans in the United States so dehumanized them in the White imagination that in 1965, more than a century after Emancipation, The Moynihan Report (the official title of which is "The Negro Family, The Case for National Action"), commissioned by the U.S. Department of Labor, could attribute Black Americans' continued social disadvantage to a single cause: the "tangled pathology" of the Black family, characterized by an absent husband and an "emasculating" female breadwinner – in other words, to the failure of the gender-binary ideal. Chapter 5 will have more to say about the Moynihan Report. Here, I will just note that while the racial gender-binary ideal may no longer involve pelvic or cranial measurement, it is hardly less powerful for that.

Freud: disrupting the racial gender-binary ideal

After his break with Freud, Carl Jung opined that Freud's and Adler's psychologies were specifically Jewish and therefore illegitimate for Aryans.¹⁰² In the past few decades, largely in response to Sander Gilman's readings of Freud – and, of course, from a very different perspective from Jung's – scholars have explored how Freud's Jewishness shaped psychoanalytic theory, especially its

view of gender. As Gilman remarks in his *Freud, Race and Gender* (1993), when it is addressed at all, any such influence on Freud's work is either tied to the supposedly "patriarchal" perspective of his Judaism, to the family structure of the shtetl, or to "rabbinic sexual doctrines" (about which Freud, despite his Eastern-European Jewish roots, probably knew precious little).¹⁰³ Gilman argues instead that psychoanalysis, especially its theory of gender difference, is deeply marked by Freud's reaction to the virulent antisemitism of his milieu. That reaction, I will suggest, engages with, and disrupts, the racial gender-binary ideal.

An ambitious Jewish physician and scientist, Freud contended with an Austro-Germany still resistant to the Jewish emancipation of 1848 and moving toward the horrors of the next century. European antisemitism, perhaps the German version of it in particular, was thoroughly couched in gendered terms. Jews were generally regarded as diseased, degenerate, sinful, and dangerous, and Jewish men in particular had been stereotyped for centuries as small, weak, and cowardly (not to mention materialistic, dishonest, hypersexual, histrionic, and even demonic). Unlike their heroic German counterparts, they were also thought to be more tied to their families than to the wider world of manly activity and so were regarded as effeminate and unproductive. Members of an old, degenerated race – whose blood, according to the British Nazi Houston Stewart Chamberlain, had mixed with the blood of Africans during their enslavement in Egypt – Jews, especially Jewish men, were supposedly inclined to a host of shifting physical and mental maladies, including syphilis, sexual perversion, hysteria, and neurasthenia.¹⁰⁴ The Jewish man's supposedly deformed feet made him "ill-fitted" for military service, and so he could not be a full citizen.¹⁰⁵ And he was thought to menstruate, the cure for which, according to some, was Christian children's blood – an elaboration of the classic antisemitic blood libel.¹⁰⁶ At best the quintessential patient, Gilman argues, the Jew could hardly be trusted as a physician. Freud was all too conscious of such obstacles; he commented more than once that he had hoped his Swiss acolyte Jung might serve as psychoanalysis's emissary to the Gentiles, countering its dismissal as the Jewish science.¹⁰⁷

Like psychoanalysis itself, Gilman's reading of Freud focuses on the penis: who has it, who wants it, and – most of all – who is afraid of losing it. While Freud traces castration anxiety to the traumas of prehistory as they are recapitulated in the individual male unconscious, Gilman focuses instead on the Jewish male's reaction to Christian Germany's obsession with Jewish male circumcision. For Jews, the ritual circumcision of male infants on their eighth day of life signifies the Jewish covenant with God; for Germans, it was the sign of the male Jew's difference – his primitivism, effeminacy, and inferiority.¹⁰⁸ As if the fixation on Jewish circumcision were not enough, there was also the widespread belief, supposedly confirmed by numerous scientific studies, that this millennia-old practice had led to instances of "congenital circumcision" – that is, to Jewish males being born without a foreskin (a defect, of course, thought to be unknown among non-Jews). Indeed, this

phenomenon was so widely accepted in late nineteenth-century Germany that it was taken as settling, once and for all, the question of whether acquired characteristics could be inherited by future generations.¹⁰⁹ Even Charles Darwin (whose own work, admittedly, was hardly free of Lamarckism) felt compelled to present both sides of the congenital-circumcision question.¹¹⁰ And when the German biologist August Weismann finally refuted Lamarckism in 1888, congenital circumcision figured as a central example in his refutation.¹¹¹ (A belief in congenital circumcision proved oddly persistent; according to Gilman, an association between Jewish males and congenital circumcision appears in a South African medical journal as late as 1971.)¹¹²

This German obsession with circumcision, of course, expressed a more general antisemitism, and Gilman understands Freud's theory of gender difference to be a response to it. According to Gilman, Freud simply projects the figure of the circumcised/castrated, effeminized Jewish male onto females in general. As a consequence, Freud was able to regard the female (of unmarked race) rather than the Jewish male as beset by a sense of inferiority and lack. Nor did this projection require any great feat of imagination on Freud's part; in *fin-de-siècle* Austrian slang, the clitoris was called *Jud*, or "Jew," and "playing with the Jew" referred to female masturbation.¹¹³ This condensed, economical slur managed simultaneously to effeminize Jewish males, masculinize Jewish females, and racialize any female who masturbated – or, for that matter, who had a clitoris.

Gilman argues that Freud's projection of Jewish men's special sense of genital inferiority onto women serves to relieve ritually circumcised Jewish men of the psychic burden of antisemitism. Of course, on Freud's view, the Jewish man will still be subject to that other burden, anxiety about castration. But all males experience this. And so a cross-racial class of males is consolidated, one that includes Jews. Indeed, Gilman argues, far from relegating the Jewish male to an inferior position, Freud has secured for him an enviable one:

Jewish men have the reality of circumcision already inscribed on their bodies from their earliest awareness. The baseline for the Jew is his circumcised penis; the Aryan, like the female, must undergo a double displacement of his anxiety.¹¹⁴

Freud himself, Gilman adds, comes quite close to acknowledging something like this in his famous note to the case of Little Hans:

The castration complex is the deepest root of anti-Semitism; for even in the nursery little boys hear that a Jew has something cut off his penis – a piece of his penis, they think – and this gives them a right to despise Jews. And there is no stronger unconscious root for the sense of superiority over women.¹¹⁵

On Gilman's view, the circumcised male is consequently

the baseline, the norm. It is the uncircumcised male who looks at the circumcised male and responds. He does not deny the possibility; rather he becomes anxious, fearing that he will become a Jew himself....The triad is clear; the fearful, uncircumcised Aryan; the longing, castrated female; and the Jewish male.¹¹⁶

In this way, Gilman claims, Freud's "overt discussion of circumcision" diagnosed the Aryan's anxiety about becoming a Jew, even while it "disguised the anxiety Jews felt about being indelibly marked as Jews."¹¹⁷

In response to Gilman, Daniel Boyarin has given a different reading of Freud. Instead of understanding Freud as resisting the antisemitic trope of the effeminate male Jew, Boyarin sees him as trying to assimilate into German Gentile culture by overcoming a masculine ideal internal to Judaism – an ideal of an "effeminate" Jewish masculinity. (Boyarin's intends this novel spelling to mark a distinction from effeminacy as construed as masculine failure.) First forged centuries ago in opposition to Roman martial manliness and then codified in Jewish tradition, Boyarin writes, the Jewish "effeminate" male ideal is gentle, wise, pious, scholarly, and, above all, self-consciously opposed to the brutal Gentile masculinity to which European Jewish communities had been subjected for centuries. On Boyarin's view, Freud's desire to assimilate to Germanic Gentile norms causes him to reject this traditional – and oppositional – Jewish ideal and instead universalize a conception of masculinity that would include Jewish men – himself foremost among them.¹¹⁸

Regardless of which of these readings one favors, their very possibility indicates that Freud has disrupted the racial gender-binary ideal – or at least the version of it that deprives Jewish men of masculinity. He does this by insisting that the character of gender *really be* binary – not so much in the sense that women and men must be complements or opposites, but rather that there be no options *apart from* male and female, masculine and feminine. In this way, he forecloses the very conceptual space necessary to imagine the racial body's failure; at least as far as the Jewish male body is concerned, the gender-binary norm no longer can function as a racial ideal. Thus, as Gilman points out, it is not surprising that Freud rejects the view of Magnus Hirschfeld, the famous Jewish sexologist and homosexual apologist, who talked of a "third sex," a term favored by a number of other nineteenth-century champions of homosexual rights. (In a letter to Jung, Freud calls Hirschfeld "a flabby, unappetizing fellow."¹¹⁹) In Gilman's words, by insisting on a binary system Freud "extirpates the position of the male Jew as a 'third sex,' as neither truly male nor truly female."¹²⁰ To eliminate this third-sex position is to eliminate the possibility of relegating the Jewish male to it.

In some respects, this reading of Freud recalls how Zine Magubane understands the disinclination among many South Africans to classify Caster Semenya as intersex, instead insisting that she is simply a woman (as discussed in Chapter 1). As Magubane argues, Semenya's community's response should be read as a refusal of the racial meaning long attached to ambiguously sexed bodies. Freud accomplishes something similar by severing both gender identity and sexual orientation (to use contemporary terms) from the body, instead regarding both as essentially psychic phenomena. In particular, he rejects the view that homosexuality is a manifestation of a degeneration often associated with the racial taint of Jewishness. Indeed, as Gilman points out, Freud also explicitly rejects the view, prevalent among his contemporaries, that male homosexuality results from the physiological "feminization" of the male body, either from castration (circumcision?) or debilitating illness.¹²¹ As Freud saw it, "the sex glands do not constitute sexuality, and the observations on castrated males merely confirm what had been shown long before by the removal of the ovaries – namely that it is impossible to obliterate the sexual characteristics by removing the sex-glands."¹²² These positions helped Freud formulate the idea of a masculinity that depended solely on the psyche rather than on the possession of the face and figure of a Teutonic God – or an intact foreskin.

The gender-binary ideal, of course, has two components, male and female, and although neither Freud nor Gilman seems especially interested in the Jewish woman, Gilman's male-centric reading of Freud on masculinity has implications as well for what it means to be a woman. First and most obviously, the projection onto all females of (Jewish) male anxiety and inferiority disrupts any commitment to the sort of untroubled feminine essence that Ellis, for example, takes as constituting the feminine half of the racial gender-binary ideal – an ideal against which negative stereotypes of racialized women have for centuries taken shape. One might also say that Freud has generalized the Jewish woman's lack, in particular, as Ann Pellegrini has argued, the difficulties of poor, female Eastern-European Jewish immigrants – women from Freud's own background – who struggled to conform to bourgeois German (and assimilated German-Jewish) feminine norms. So in the same way that generalizing the Jewish male's anxiety about circumcision consolidates a universal class of men, generalizing Jewish female lack consolidates a universal class of women.¹²³

This idea of female lack, of course, also recalls Laqueur's notion of the pre-modern, one-sex model of the human body. In fact, Laqueur concludes *Making Sex* with a brief reading of Freud's theory as an example of how the older, one-sex model of the body persisted even into the early twentieth century; Freud, after all, famously regarded the clitoris as a penis substitute. But as Laqueur well understands, Freud's view is not so simple as that. The girl may *start out* as an incomplete male, her orgasm dependent on her clitoris,

but as she matures she will meet civilization's requirements of her, if indeed she meets them at all, by renouncing this clitoral focus and transferring her erogenous zone to the vagina – somehow. Laqueur points out that Freud would have known that no biological basis for this transfer exists; the vagina had long been understood to lack the “abundance of specialized nerve endings” of the clitoris.¹²⁴ Instead, Laqueur writes, Freud's model for understanding this transfer was hysteria, the “attachment of libidinal energies to body parts. In other words, parts of the body in hysterics become occupied, taken possession of, filled with energies that manifest themselves organically.”¹²⁵ Thus, becoming “a sexually mature women is therefore living an oxymoron, becoming a lifelong ‘normal hysteric.’”¹²⁶ (And, it bears mention, since German medicine had routinely associated hysteria with Jewish *males*, casting hysteria as a woman's disease might be read as another projection of Jewish male stigma onto women.)¹²⁷ So while it might be true that Freud, in the end, recognized a notion of femininity as difference rather than simply as lack, it is not a difference guaranteed by – or even, really, grounded in – physiology. Instead, it is an achievement, hard won by each female who manages it.

Viewed in the context of Freud's general belief, nearly universal at the time, that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, his understanding of male and female psychic development would seem to mirror the nineteenth-century belief that increased civilization brings with it increased differences between men and women – although Freud has his own way of viewing these differences. Laqueur, of course, views Freud's incorporation of a one-sex model of sex/gender into his theory of female psychic development as reverting to, or at least drawing on, the premodern conception of the female as inferior male. But although Laqueur does not make this point, it is important to remember that this older one-sex model is also largely pre-racial; femininity's pedestal, such as it is, elevates Whiteness. Rather than celebrate this pedestal, however, Freud focuses on the difficulties of *all* women in meeting civilization's gender ideals. And while Freud might regard such ideals as, in some measure, necessary for civilization, he also recognizes their costs, which may involve a repression strong enough to cause illness. So even if Freud deserves his place among a rogue's gallery of Western misogynists, his fault cannot be that he fails to celebrate an idealized, unproblematic, and thoroughly racialized conception of feminine difference. Freud may think of gender in binary terms, but his understanding of this binary is different from, say, Havelock Ellis's. While Ellis's version of the gender binary leaves plenty of room to talk about race, Freud sought to close that very space by breaking the tight link between the racial body on the one hand and psychic masculinity and femininity on the other. In doing so, he manages to universalize both masculinity and femininity in a way that frustrates even the articulation of the sort of gender-binary ideal so dear to nineteenth-century thinkers, not to mention its use in the service of racism.

Thus, while Freud can be accused of falsely universalizing gender categories, the context and significance of his universalizing gesture should not be overlooked. One familiar sort of universalizing takes a group (usually one's own) as paradigmatic and generalizes – invariably falsely – from this position. A second sort, which Gilman attributes to Freud, blocks ascriptions of racialized difference by taking the racial body out of the equation. Freud, I think, universalized in both of these ways. Jung, who famously objected that Freud's perspective was “too Judaic,” may have thought so as well. According to Jung,

The Jews have this in common with women; being physically weaker, they have to aim at the chinks in the armour of their adversary, and thanks to the technique which has been forced on them through the centuries, the Jews themselves are best protected where others are vulnerable.

Perhaps Jung was referring here to the vulnerability of the Aryan unconscious, “the most precious secret of the Germanic peoples – their creative and intuitive depth of soul” – something, Jung claims, that “the average Jew” cannot fathom.¹²⁸ Gilman suggests that Freud's Jewish science diagnosed and redescribed the Aryan disease of antisemitism, a disease lodged deep in this Aryan “depth of soul.” Part of his remedy was to reformulate the gender-binary ideal, universalizing the difficulties both men and women have in meeting it.

In the end, Freud does not fully disavow the racial supremacism of this ideal; ontogeny, for him, still recapitulates phylogeny, and some humans remain more “primitive” than others.¹²⁹ And even if Freud may have thought of himself, on occasion, as one of civilization's discontents, he certainly also numbered himself among the civilized. Nevertheless, Freud destabilized the gender-binary ideal in a way that at least begins to call race into question. It's no wonder that Jung sought to protect the Aryan psyche from his keen eye.

Notes

- 1 George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 8–53. For other general discussions, see Michael Banton, *Racial Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America 1815–59* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1960), Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); Robert Wald Sussman, *The Myth of Race: The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).
- 2 George W. Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1968), 239.
- 3 Poliakov, *Aryan Myth*, 142–43.
- 4 Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 54.

- 5 Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 12–17; 35–36.
- 6 Poliakov, *Aryan Myth*, 132.
- 7 Poliakov, *Aryan Myth*, 93–94.
- 8 Samuel George Morton, *Crania Americana; or, A Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America: To Which Is Prefixed an Essay on the Varieties of the Human Species* (Philadelphia, PA: J. Dobson, 1839), 1–2.
- 9 C. Loring Brace, “Race” Is a Four-Letter Word: *The Genesis of the Concept* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 96–98; Stanton, *Leopard’s Spots*, 100–112.
- 10 Karl Vogt, *Lectures on Man: His Place in Creation and in the History of the Earth*, Lecture XVI (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, 1864), 443–69.
- 11 Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 303–5; 309.
- 12 George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985), 21.
- 13 Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, 177–78.
- 14 Mosse, *Towards the Final Solution*, 21.
- 15 Mosse, *Towards the Final Solution*, 25.
- 16 Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Outlines of Philosophy of History of Man*, trans. T. Churchill (New York: Bergman, N.D.), 144–45.
- 17 Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *On the Natural Varieties of Mankind*, trans. Thomas Bendyshe (New York: Bergman, [1795] 1969), 269.
- 18 Londa Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body: Gender and the Making of Modern Science* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1993), 131.
- 19 Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (New York: Double & Company, 1956), 457–58.
- 20 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of the Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1757] 1990), 107.
- 21 For example, Nell Painter discusses Emerson’s “almost homoerotic” obsession with the beauty of the White male, in Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: Norton, 2010), 166–70.
- 22 Alexander Walker, *Beauty; Illustrated Chiefly by an Analysis and Classification of Beauty in Woman* (New York: Henry G. Langley, 1844), 169.
- 23 Christoph Meiners, *History of the Female Sex: Comprising a View of the Habits, Manners and Influence of Women Among All Nations* (London: Henry Colburn, 1808), 8.
- 24 Quoted in Stanton, *Leopard’s Spots*, 17.
- 25 Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 197.
- 26 Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 167.
- 27 Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 204.
- 28 Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, trans. J.T. Goldthwait (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley University Press, 1960), 112.
- 29 Rudi C. Bleys, *The Geography of Perversion: Male to Male Sexual Behaviour Outside the West and the Ethnographic Imagination* (London: Cassell, 1996), 127.
- 30 Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, 3 vols. (New York: Appleton, 1925) I:725, quoted in Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 131.
- 31 Spencer, *Principles*, I:324.
- 32 Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 207.
- 33 Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 54–55.

- 34 Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd edition, ed. Richard Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 83; Susan Moller Okin, "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 7–24; "Introduction," in *What Kind of Liberation?: Women and the Occupation of Iraq*, 1st ed., ed. Nadjie Al-Ali, Nicola Pratt, and Cynthia Enloe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 1–20.
- 35 Nancy Leys Stepan, "Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science," *Isis* 77, no. 2 (June 1986): 261–77.
- 36 Stepan, "Race and Gender," 264.
- 37 Stepan, "Race and Gender," 270.
- 38 Darwin, *Descent*, 327.
- 39 Quoted in Russett, *Sexual Science*, 22.
- 40 Havelock Ellis, *Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characteristics* (London: A.& C. Black, 1926), 106–7.
- 41 Antoinette Brown Blackwell, *The Sexes throughout Nature* (New York: B. Putnam and Sons, 1875), Reprint (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1976), 16.
- 42 Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 159.
- 43 Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 160.
- 44 Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 146.
- 45 Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 144.
- 46 Deborah Willis, *Black Venus 2010: They Called Her "Hottentot"* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, 2010).
- 47 Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 120.
- 48 Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 120.
- 49 Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 124.
- 50 Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 125.
- 51 Quoted in Russett, *Sexual Science*, 75.
- 52 Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 124–25.
- 53 Irvn Resnick, "Medieval Roots of the Myth of Jewish Male Menses," *Harvard Theological Review* 93, no. 3 (July 2000): 241–63.
- 54 Ellis, *Man & Woman*, 334.
- 55 Russett, *Sexual Science*, 117.
- 56 Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 125.
- 57 Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 156.
- 58 Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 157–58.
- 59 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, [1871] 1981), 371.
- 60 Darwin, *Descent*, 372.
- 61 Darwin, *Descent*, 404.
- 62 Darwin, *Descent*, 382–83.
- 63 Darwin, *Descent*, 327.
- 64 Darwin, *Descent*, 328–29.
- 65 William Acton, quoted in Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*, 2 vol. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 392.
- 66 Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Judy Mabro, *Veiled Half-Truths: Western Travelers' Perceptions of Eastern Women* (New York: B. Tauris, 1991).
- 67 Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1905), 2:178–215, 505–75.
- 68 Ellis, *Man and Woman*, 86–87.
- 69 Ellis, *Psychology*, 1:275–76.

- 70 Ellis, *Psychology*, 2:133–34.
- 71 Ellis, *Psychology*, 2:572–73.
- 72 Ellis, *Psychology*, 1:152–53.
- 73 Sally Markowitz, “Pelvic Politics: Sexual Dimorphism and Racial Difference,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 399–401.
- 74 Ellis, *Psychology*, 1:210.
- 75 Ellis, *Psychology*, 1:176.
- 76 Ellis, *Psychology*, 1:177.
- 77 Ellis, *Psychology*, 1:162.
- 78 Arthur de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, Trans. Adrian Collins (New York: Putnam, 1915); Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 99–117; Stepan, “The Role of Analogy.”
- 79 Ellis, *Psychology*, 1:183.
- 80 Ellis, *Psychology*, 1:203.
- 81 Ellis, *Psychology*, 1:204.
- 82 Ellis, *Psychology*, 1:198.
- 83 Ellis, *Psychology*, 1:208.
- 84 Nell Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 43–58.
- 85 Ellis, *Psychology*, 1:156.
- 86 Ellis, *Psychology*, 1:165.
- 87 Although *Man and Woman* was first published in 1894 and *The Psychology of Sex*, Vol. 1 in 1897, both went through multiple editions and Ellis makes reference to *Man and Woman* in *The Psychology of Sex*. Thus, it’s not clear when, or whether, he changed his view.
- 88 Steven J. Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 120.
- 89 Gould, *Mismeasure*, 114.
- 90 Gould, *Mismeasure*, 115–18.
- 91 Gould, *Mismeasure*, 119–20.
- 92 Ellis, *Man and Woman*, 517.
- 93 Ellis, *Man and Woman*, 522.
- 94 Ellis, *Man and Woman*, 120.
- 95 Ellis, *Man and Woman*, 66–67.
- 96 Ellis, *Man and Woman*, 18.
- 97 Quoted in Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: 1993), 162-3.
- 98 Gisela Bock, “Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 8, no. 3 (1983): 417.
- 99 Lucile Hoyme, “The Earliest Use of Indices for Sexing Pelves,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 5, no. 4 (1997): 537–46.
- 100 Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Madelyn Gutwirth, *The Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolutionary Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).
- 101 Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and the Culture of Travel* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).
- 102 Sanu Shamdasani, *Jung and Making of Modern Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 92.
- 103 Sandor L. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 6–8.

- 104 Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, 30–31.
- 105 Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, 38–59.
- 106 Resnick, “Medieval Roots”; Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 124–25.
- 107 Gilman, *Freud*, 33–5.
- 108 Gilman, *Freud*, 49–92.
- 109 Gilman, *Freud*, 53–56.
- 110 Charles Darwin, 1868 *Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication* (1868), quoted in Gilman, *Freud*, 54: “With respect to Jews, I have been assured by three medical men of the Jewish faith that circumcision, which has been practiced for so many ages, has produced no inherited effect; Blumenbach, on the other hand asserts that in Germany Jews are often born in a condition rendering circumcision difficult, so that a name is there applied to them signifying ‘born circumcised.’”
- 111 Gilman, *Freud*, 55.
- 112 Gilman, *Freud*, 56; 223, nt.35.
- 113 Gilman, *Freud*, 38–39.
- 114 Gilman, *Freud*, 83–84.
- 115 Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey, et al. (London: Hogarth Press, 1955–1974), 24 vols., 10:36; quoted in Gilman, *Freud*, 77.
- 116 Gilman, *Freud*, 84.
- 117 Gilman, *Freud*, 85.
- 118 Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley University Press, 1997).
- 119 Sigmund Freud, (1911/1974) Letter to Jung, November 2, 1911, in William McGuire (ed.), *The Freud-Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, trans. R. Mannheim and R.F.C. Hull (London: Hogarth Press, 1988), 453–54.
- 120 Gilman, *Freud*, 47.
- 121 Gilman *Freud*, 163.
- 122 Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition*, 7:24, n. 2; quoted in Gilman, *Freud*, 145.
- 123 Ann Pellegrini gives a similar reading of Freud, and of Gilman on Freud, but her aim seems to be to center Jewish women. See “Whiteface Performances: ‘Race,’ Gender, and Jewish Bodies,” in *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Studies*, ed. Jonathon Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 108–24.
- 124 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 236.
- 125 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 241–42.
- 126 Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 243.
- 127 Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 63.
- 128 Quoted in Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1991), 48–49.
- 129 Richard Schechner, “Ritual and Performance,” in *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology: Humanity, Culture, and Social Life*, ed. Tim Ingold (London: Routledge, 1994), 635–36.

Bibliography

- Al-Ali, Nadje, Nicola Pratt, and Cynthia Enloe, ed. 2009. *What Kind of Liberation? Women and the Occupation of Iraq*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Banton, Michael. 1987. *Racial Theories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Bederman, Gail. 1995. *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880–1917*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Blackwell, Antoinette Brown. 1875. *The Sexes throughout Nature*. New York: Putnam and Sons.
- Bleys, Rudi C. 1996. *The Geography of Perversion: Male to Male Sexual Behaviour Outside the West and the Ethnographic Imagination*. London: Cassell.
- Blumenbach, Johann Friedrich. n.d. *Outlines of Philosophy of History of Man*. Translated by T.B. Churchill. New York: Bergman.
- Blumenbach, Johann Friedrich. [1795] 1969. *On the Natural Varieties of Mankind*. New York: Bergman.
- Book, Gisela. 1983. "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 8(3): 400–21.
- Boyarin, Daniel. 1997. *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley University Press.
- Brace, C. Loring. 2005. *"Race" Is a Four-Letter Word: The Genesis of the Concept*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Burke, Edmund. [1757] 1990. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of the Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burton, Antoinette. 1994. *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Clark, Kenneth. 1956. *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*. New York: Doubleday & Company.
- Darwin, Charles. 1868. *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*. London: Murray.
- Darwin, Charles. [1871] 1981. *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Ellis, Havelock. 1905. *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. New York: Random House.
- Ellis, Havelock. 1926. *Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characteristics*. London: A & C Black.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1955–1974. *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Translated by James Strachey et al. London: Hogarth.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1965. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1988. "Letter to Jung." In *The Freud-Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung*, edited by William Maguire. London: Hogarth.
- Gay, Peter. 1984. *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Geller, Jay. 2007. *On Freud's Jewish Body: Mitigating Circumcisions*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Gilman, Sander. 1991. *The Jew's Body*. New York: Routledge.
- Gilman, Sander L. 1985. *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Gilman, Sander L. 1993. *Freud, Race, and Gender*. Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press.
- Gobineau, Arthur de. 1915. *The Inequality of Human Races*. New York: Putnam.
- Gould, Steven J. 1981. *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: W. W. Norton.

- Grewal, Inderpal. 1996. *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and the Culture of Travel*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Grosrichard, Alain. 1998. *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East*. (T. L. Heron, Ed.) London: Verso.
- Gutwirth, Madelyn. 1992. *The Twilight of the Goddesses: Women Representation in the French Revolutionary Era*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried von. n.d. *Outlines of Philosophy of History of Man*, trans. T. Churchill. New York: Bergman.
- Hoyme, Lucile. 1997. "The Earliest Use of Indices for Sexing Pelves." *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 5 (4): 537–46.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1960. *Observations on the Felling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Landes, Joan. 1988. *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Laqueur, Thomas. 1990. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mabro, Judy. 1991. *Veiled Half-Truths: Western Travelers' Perceptions of Eastern Women*. New York: B. Tauris.
- Markowitz, Sally. 2001. "Pelvic Politics: Sexual Dimorphism and Racial Difference." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26 (2): 389–414.
- Marx, Karl. 1978. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Richard Tucker. New York: W.W. Norton, 66–125.
- McGuire, William. ed. 1988. *The Freud-Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Meiners, Cristoph. 1808. *History of the Female Sex: Comprising a View of the Habits, Manners and Influence of Women Among All Nations*. London. Henry Colburn.
- Morton, Samuel George. 1839. *Crania Americana: or, A Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America*. Philadelphia, PA: Dobson.
- Mosse, George L. 1985. *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*. New York: Howard Fertig.
- Newman, Louise Michele. 1999. *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States*. New York: Oxford.
- Okin, Susan Moller. 1999. "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" In *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, S.M. Okin et al. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 7–26.
- Painter, Nell I. 1990. *The History of White People*. New York: Norton.
- Pelligrini, A. 1997. "Whiteface Performances: 'Race,' Gender, and Jewish Bodies." In *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Studies*, edited by Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 108–24.
- Poliakov, Léon. 1977. *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe*. New York: Basic Books.
- Poovey, Mary. 1984. *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Rainwater, Lee, and Yancey, William Lowndes. 1967. *The Moynahan Report and the Politics of Controversy: Transaction Social Science Report*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Resnick, Irven. 2000, July. "Medieval Roots of the Myth of Jewish Male Menses." *Harvard Theological Review* 93 (3): 241–63.
- Russett, Cynthia Eagle. 1989. *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schechner, Richard. 1994. "Ritual and Performance." In *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology: Humanity, Culture, and Social Life*, edited by Tim Ingold. London: Routledge, 613–47.
- Schiebinger, Londa. 1986. "Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustration of Female Skeletons in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy." *Representations* 14: 42–82.
- Schiebinger, Londa. 1993. *Nature's Body: Gender and the Making of Modern Science*. Boston, MA: Beacon.
- Shamdasani, Sanu. 2003. *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Spencer, Herbert. 1890. *Principles of Psychology* (Vol. 1). London: Williams and Norgate.
- Spencer, Herbert. 1925. *Principles of Sociology*. New York: Appleton.
- Stanton, William. 1960. *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America 1815–59*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Stepan, Nancy Leys. 1986, June. "Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science." *Isis* 77 (2): 261–77.
- Stocking, George W., Jr. 1968. *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Stocking, George W., Jr. 1987. *Victorian Anthropology*. New York: Free Press.
- Sussman, Robert Wald. 2016. *The Myth of Race: The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- The Moynihan Report: The Negro Family, the Case for National Action*. 1965. Retrieved October 15, 2023, from The Black Past: <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/moynihan-report-1965/>
- Vogt, Karl. 1864. *Lectures on Man: His Place in Creation and in the History of the Earth*. London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts.
- Walker, Alexander. 1844. *Beauty; Illustrated Chiefly by an Analysis and Classification of Beauty in Woman*. New York: Henry G. Langley.
- Willis, Deborah. 2010. *Black Venus 2010: They Called Her "Hottentot."* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim. 1991. *Freud's Moses: Terminable and Interminable*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Young, Robert J.C. 1995. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*. New York: Routledge.

3

MAKING (MALE) HOMOSEXUALITY WHITE

Introduction

In the early 1990s, roughly a century after the first use of the word “homosexuality” in English, Keith Meinhold revealed that he was gay on *ABC World News Tonight* and became the face for gay rights in the U.S. military. An all-American, White, athletic-looking man in uniform, his picture would grace the cover of the February 1, 1993, issue of *Newsweek* magazine. Meinhold was chosen over Perry Watkins, an openly gay Black army sergeant who had successfully challenged the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” U.S. military policy of the era, and who often performed in drag at various venues (including military ones); apparently, he was deemed a less appropriate movement figurehead than Meinhold. Later, in 2008, the slogan “Gay is the new Black!” began to figure in gay-rights arguments for marriage equality, appearing on the cover of *The Advocate* magazine. The problems with this slogan, of course, are legion. Beyond leaving no room to address the many ways racism and homophobia might intersect, it manages to imply both that anti-Black racism is a thing of the past and that there are not now, nor have there ever been, gay Black people. I borrow these examples from the critical race theorist Devon Carbado, who discusses them in an analysis of intersectionality.¹ Here, though, I use them to present something of a paradox: in one sense, there is nothing very new or surprising in them. The “paradigmatic woman” has too often been assumed to be White in mainstream feminism, and the same has been true for the “paradigmatic gay person” – and is likely to remain so as long as White people have the power to define this paradigm.

From the perspective of this book, however, there is something puzzling about the White face of gayness (and of LGBTQ identity generally). Previous

chapters have analyzed the relationship between the ideal of binary gender difference and the construction of hierarchical categories of race. In the supposedly most advanced races – the White, European ones – men and women are taken to be complementary opposites, and one manifestation of this complementarity is their romantic and sexual attraction to each other and only to each other. However, other, “lower races” are another matter. Wouldn’t one expect, then, a correspondingly strong association between non-Europeans and what have traditionally been considered to be disordered, vicious, unnatural, or otherwise abnormal sexual practices, including those involving members of the same sex? If the sex lives of males and females of “lower races” fall short, this is no surprise; they are only imperfectly men and women to begin with. Indeed, how can such males and females hope to be fully heterosexual in the first place?

This chapter will focus on the work of the British literary figures John Addington Symonds (1840–1893) and Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), both of whom helped forge a category of respectable (male) homosexuality that distanced itself from racial otherness – and, as I will argue, each used a version of the racial gender-binary ideal to do so, Symonds explicitly and Carpenter more subtly but still unmistakably. Such a strategy might be surprising, since the racial gender-binary ideal would hardly seem to lend itself to such a use. But the power of this ideal to Whiten, so to speak, is considerable, and both Symonds and Carpenter understood how to harness it.

The last chapter suggests that some categories might be said to be born White, some to achieve Whiteness, and some to have Whiteness thrust upon them. Where does homosexuality fall in this scheme? In what follows, I will assume that the category of homosexuality, like those of gender binarism and race, should be understood as situated in history. Thus, I take a view that is, loosely speaking, constructionist, at least in the sense that Alan Sinfield has in mind: “Constructionism means that it is hard to be gay until you have some sort of slot, however ambiguously defined, in the current framework of ideas.”² So, on Sinfield’s view, while some contemporary gay men might find much to identify with as they look back at the culture of Plato’s *Symposium* or Shakespeare’s sonnets, this does not show that gayness is an identity with a transcultural and transhistorical essence.

Daniel Halperin has put this view particularly well. He allows, of course, that same-sex sexual contact occurs in all historical periods and cultures, and he acknowledges the attraction of counting any instance of such contact as homosexuality, regardless of time or place. But he asks:

Does the “paederast,” the classical Greek adult, married male who periodically enjoys sexually penetrating a male adolescent share the same sexuality with the “berdache,” the Native American (Indian) adult male who from childhood has taken on many aspects of a woman and is regularly penetrated by the adult male to whom he has been married in a public and

socially sanctioned ceremony? Does the latter share the same sexuality with the New Guinea tribesman and warrior who from the ages of eight to fifteen has been orally inseminated on a daily basis by older youths and who, after years of orally inseminating his juniors, will be married to an adult woman and have children of his own? Does any one of these three persons share the same sexuality with the modern homosexual? It would be more prudent to acknowledge that although there are persons who seek sexual contact with other persons of the same sex in many different societies, only recently and only in some sectors of our own society have such persons – or some portion of them – been homosexuals.³

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has pushed Halperin's antiessentialism further, cautioning against understanding the history (or prehistory) of homosexuality as a succession of discrete forms that culminates in another discrete form, something called "homosexuality 'as we know it today.'" After all, Sedgwick argues, even those who are committed to giving an historicist account of the category of homosexuality may nevertheless disagree about what, exactly, the content of this category is. A case in point: Foucault, a strong influence on Halperin, understands cross-gender identification (what was once called "inversion") as central to "homosexuality today," while Halperin instead sees as central the notion of sexual orientation, "the highest expression of which is a straight-acting and appearing gay male."⁴ Sedgwick takes this as evidence that the idea of homosexuality is internally heterogeneous, comprising multiple strands, some of which are holdovers from the past. These strands, moreover, are likely to be in tension with one another, if not in outright contradiction. Through her readings of a number of texts, Sedgwick shows how the "unrationalized coexistence of different models" of homosexuality structures "issues of modern homo/heterosexual definition."⁵ While Sedgwick's analysis – like Halperin's and Foucault's, for that matter – fails to engage in any sustained way with the idea of race, her account is suggestive for such an engagement; at least some of the multiple "unrationalized" models that coalesced in the late nineteenth-century notion of homosexuality are racially charged.⁶ John Addington Symonds and Edward Carpenter, writing after the passage of the Labouchere Amendment (which punished acts of "gross indecency" between men with harsh prison sentences although no longer with death), had good reason to exploit this internal complexity in the emerging notion of homosexuality in their attempt to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable versions of it.⁷ And since an unacceptable version was associated with lower race, the tensions and contradictions between these conflicting, "unrationalized" models of homosexuality allowed room for another version – a respectable one – to emerge. As Symonds put it in a slightly different context, "it's necessary to distinguish between paederast and paederast."⁸ This task was no doubt made easier by the newness of the category itself; indeed, Symonds is sometimes credited with having been the first

to use the term “homosexuality” in English.⁹ In this sense, at least, one might say that a particular sort of (male) homosexuality – the Oxbridge sort – was born White, its Whiteness dependent on a contrast with older conceptions of non-normative sexual activity that never quite lost the taint of racial otherness. What’s more, the Whiteness of this new category of homosexuality gained support from a most unexpected source: the racial gender-binary ideal itself.

Sex among the heathens

As Foucault has famously argued, the modern conception of homosexuality emerges from an older, longstanding general notion of sexual sin.¹⁰ Christianity, of course, regarded all humanity as sinful, but if Christians could so easily fall into the abyss, how much more vulnerable were heathens, pagans, heretics, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Africans, and the rest? Indeed, the term “buggery” comes from the French word “bougrerie,” used from the twelfth century on and originally a name for a religious heresy. It gradually came to refer to bestiality and anal intercourse with women, and only in the fourteenth century to sexual relations between males.¹¹ The term “sodomy,” which derives, of course, from the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah, might be thought of as a kind of religious heresy as well. By the time of the Spanish Inquisition, Jews, including even those who had converted to Christianity, had become known as the “children of Lot,” associated with sodomy and disproportionately charged with committing it; as Rudi Bleys writes, sexual immorality was simply seen as inherent to Jewish identity. Islam fared no better; sodomy, along with sexual acts between females, was considered to be endemic to Islam, and Muslims who were forced to convert to Catholicism were assumed to be guilty of the “Muslim vice” (later to be known as the “Turkish vice” as the Ottoman empire expanded).¹² As the traveler Vincent Stochove wrote in *Voyage du Levant*, in 1643:

The inhabitants of this country [Egypt] are generally devoted to lasciviousness and, more awfully, Sodomy reigns in such a degree that men despise women and women...also despise men and sleep with one another, committing bastard acts of love more frequently than natural, honourable and legitimate ones.¹³

Indeed, Alan Grosrichard has claimed that in the European imagination, even the seemingly hyper-virile figure of the “Oriental despot,” surrounded by his harem, is only a surface ideological effect,

hiding a hell of debauchery and perversion wherein burns an indomitable desire...where the difference between the sexes evaporates....where the master, far from being the all-powerful male that he seems, is only a name masking a contemptible effeminate creature reduced to nothing at

the bosom of his mother who alone holds in her hands all the threads of the Empire.¹⁴

Nor was such disorder thought to be confined to the East. While “the Orient” and Islam may have played a special role in the European sexual imaginary, Bleys argues that from the fifteenth century on, narratives of discovery and conquest used same-sex sexual practices to signify the cultural difference “of the peoples of both *India Orientalis* and *India Occidentalis*” and of Africans as well.¹⁵ As racial theory developed, such unacceptable sexual practices came to be regarded not only as signs of sinfulness but also as indications of inferior race. Did the races have a common origin, as the monogenists believed? Or were their origins different, as the polygenists claimed? Either way, non-Europeans lacked the restraining force of Christianity. Especially popular was the vaguely degenerationist idea that climate or environment played a part in producing sexual vice, much as, supposedly, they had produced racial differences themselves. The eighteenth-century philosopher Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, for example, claimed not only that polygamy may arise in warm climates to satisfy a male sexual appetite enflamed by the heat, but that “a plurality of wives leads to that passion which nature disallows.”¹⁶ In the next century, the orientalist and sexual adventurer Richard Francis Burton (who, not long before his death, corresponded with Symonds) would identify a “Sotadic zone,” comprising large swaths of Africa and Asia, where climate effects the “the blending of masculine and feminine temperaments and physiques,” thus weakening the normal relationship between man and woman.¹⁷

The idea that climate might shape a population’s sexual practices proved tenacious, but the increasingly popular evolutionary approach suggested another hypothesis: humanity had been at its beginning polymorphously perverse and sexually hedonistic but had finally evolved to that pinnacle of civilization, European Christendom. The early nineteenth-century French physician Claude Francois Lallemand draws the contrast:

On the one hand, polygamy, harems, and seraglios; from which spring [venereal] excesses, barbarous mutilation, revolting sodomy, a population that is small, inactive, indolent, ignorant.... On the other hand, monogamy, Christian austerity, a more equal sharing of domestic happiness, increasing freedom, equality, well-being, rapid reproduction, a dense population, that is active, hardworking.¹⁸

On Sander Gilman’s reading, Richard von Krafft-Ebing expresses this view as well: “‘Civilization’ had moved from the most primitively organized system of sexual activity through the stage of Judaism to its height – modern Christianity.”¹⁹

By the late nineteenth century, the new science of sexology began to view homosexuality as disorder or disease, if not sin's close cousin, criminality. The connections forged between homosexuality and race are complex, but both are closely associated with the notion of degeneration. Used in the eighteenth century to describe the devolution of multiple races from a single ideal type, it was repurposed and medicalized in 1857 by Augustin Morel, for whom, as George Mosse writes, degeneration "emerged as the antithesis of manliness," a process that destroyed men and women through opium and alcohol as well as through "the social environment, a nervous temperament, diseased moral faculties, or inherited bodily and mental weaknesses."²⁰ Degeneration certainly seems implied in Havelock Ellis's understanding of homosexuality: "The tendency to sexual inversion in eccentric and neurotic families," he observes, "seems merely to be nature's merciful method of winding up a concern which, from her point of view, has ceased to be profitable."²¹ He makes no mention of race here, but as Nell Painter has remarked in another context, when undesirable traits thought to be characteristic of "lower races" appear in Anglo Saxons, degeneration was always a useful explanation.²² Arguing in the other direction, Mosse writes that "the stereotyped depiction of sexual 'degenerates' was transferred almost intact to the 'inferior races.'" Seen as immoral and undisciplined, Blacks and Jews "were endowed with an excessive sexuality, with a so-called female sensuousness that turned love into lust," and both groups inspired the same fears in bourgeois Europeans.²³ So perhaps one could say that the idea of degeneration served as a switchpoint, allowing Otherness to flow freely in both directions.

Mosse has also argued that despite a widespread late nineteenth-century German belief that Jewish males were effeminate, they were not so much thought of as *being* homosexual as with *spreading* homosexuality "in order to attain cultural dominance in Germany." (They were also charged with weakening the Aryan race by seducing Gentile women and inventing birth control.)²⁴ Sander Gilman, however, argues for a closer, more explicit association between Jews and homosexuality, citing Havelock Ellis's surprise at finding the percentage of Jews among the homosexual subjects he interviewed to be no more than proportionate to their percentage of the general population. As a consequence, Ellis conceded that there might be, after all, no association between homosexuality and race, but Gilman notes that Ellis was practically alone in this opinion. The allegedly feminine character of the Jewish male, Gilman argues, ensured that "the Jew was seen as overwhelmingly at risk for being (or becoming) a homosexual."²⁵ Indeed, Krafft-Ebing, like many others, believed an important cause of degeneration to be the sort of nervous overactivity associated with the frantic pace of the city; and, Gilman points out, Krafft-Ebing regarded Jews as neurotic – "the quintessential city dwellers."²⁶ Racially mixed ancestry was also widely regarded as a cause

of degeneration. So the ideas of race, degeneration, and homosexuality are intertwined in multiple and complex ways.

John Addington Symonds: making Europe safe for (and from) homosexuality

As Foucault notes in passing, Freud broke the link between homosexual orientation and degeneration.²⁷ While Freud, as discussed in Chapter 2, may have had an interest in freeing Jewishness from associations with both homosexuality and degeneracy, Symonds sought to distance homosexuality, at least of the better sort, from its association with all things disreputable – vice and disease, certainly, but also racial Otherness. This aim is apparent in the two books in which Symonds most directly addresses same-sex love. Ten copies of *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, written in 1873, were privately and anonymously published ten years later, with a warning to readers to “please be discreet about it”; fifty copies of *A Problem in Modern Ethics* were published, also privately, in 1891, well after Symonds had left London, having lost his bid to be elected to the Oxford Chair in Poetry – quite possibly because of rumors about his sexuality.²⁸ Both were written before the love that dared not speak its name really even had a name to speak. Symonds announces that he will use the term “inverted sexuality” (which is somewhat confusing, since he doesn’t fully endorse the kind of cross-gender identification most sexologists meant by the term). He also uses “homosexuality,” “Uranian love,” “unisexual love,” and “antiphysical love.” But perhaps more important than this variety of terms are the multiple models of homosexuality he puts into play. His account has been criticized for inconsistency but one wonders if this charge assumes that homosexuality – as it would soon be known – itself has a single essence that Symonds tried but failed to capture.²⁹ His project is better understood as an attempt to distinguish between different sorts of same-sex love – and to elevate one sort at the expense of the others.

In claiming respectability for homosexuality, Symonds sought to break its association with three specters that haunted it (and, indeed, him): disease, effeminacy, and debauchery. The objective, scientific analysis of the sexologists promised, at least, to move the discussion away from sin, and Symonds collaborated, if uneasily, with Havelock Ellis on a work about sexual inversion. (The collaboration was cut short by Symonds’s death.)³⁰ But degeneration did not seem to him to be the whole story; as he wrote in his *Memoirs*, the “neuropathic grandmother is too common an occurrence in modern families to account for what is after all a rather rare aberration of sexual proclivities.”³¹ More promising in this regard was the work of the German jurist and homosexual apologist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1896), who has memorably been called the first gay man ever to out himself.³² Ulrichs insisted that there was nothing inherently diseased, disordered, or disreputable about men

(or women, although they concerned him far less) who were passionately, erotically attracted to others of their sex. This attitude is expressed well by the term Ulrichs uses to designate men who love other men: “Uranians” or “Urnings,” derived from the name of the Greek goddess of heavenly love, *Urania*, a character in *Symposium*, Plato’s famous encomium to male same-sex desire. As the term itself implies, Uranians have nothing to apologize for. Ulrichs also popularized the idea, later to become something of a trope if not a cliché, that an inverted man might be best understood as having a female soul trapped in a male body (and the same, *mutatis mutandis*, for an inverted woman – although, again, women were largely an afterthought).

Unlike Carpenter, who would later embrace it more fully, Symonds had only limited use for this trope as a way to understand homosexuality; as he writes, the idea of “a female soul shut up in a male body savours of bygone scholastic speculation.”³³ But Symonds is happy to take up the term “Uranian,” with all of its positive connotations. He also agrees with Ulrichs’s insistence that at least in its paradigmatic instances, same-sex attraction is both inborn and unchangeable. And he denies that homosexuality can always or even ordinarily be explained by race, degeneration, or atavism, instead following Ulrichs in understanding Uranians as present in all societies and periods, “one of nature’s sports, a creature healthy and well organized, evolved in her superb indifference to aberrations from the normal type.”³⁴ Indeed, the Urning is otherwise just like any other man as far as his body goes – and as far as his psyche goes, too, except in a single respect: he is attracted to males, usually from an extremely young age. And, like Ulrichs, Symonds endorses approaching the phenomenon of sexual inversion

from the point of view of embryology rather than psychical pathology. In other words, is not the true Urning to be regarded as a person born with sexual instincts improperly correlated to his sexual organs? This he can be without any inherited or latent morbidity; and the nervous anomalies discovered in him when he falls at last beneath the observation of physicians, may be not the evidence of an originally tainted constitution, but the consequence of unnatural conditions to which he has been exposed from the age of puberty.³⁵

As far as the view that inversion can always, or even usually, be explained by “neuropathy, tainted heredity, and masturbation,” the aesthetic and intellectual glory of ancient Greece itself is its refutation.³⁶ (Ancient Greece, as will become apparent, consistently served this function for Symonds.)

But even as he adopts Ulrichs’s view that inversion is “in a very large number of instances congenital,” Symonds criticizes Ulrichs for failing to recognize other possibilities, ignoring both the “frequency of acquired habits” and “the force of fashion and depravity”;³⁷ taste and preference, Symonds adds,

may also be factors “in the dissemination of anomalous passions.”³⁸ Perfectly normal, healthy people might either be born with homosexual instincts or acquire them by custom.³⁹ And, he adds, at least in some cases inversion might be a consequence of degeneration or tainted heredity. Clearly, Symonds was not wedded to giving a single etiology.

While Symonds didn’t regard all who acquired sexual inversion as necessarily vicious or debauched, some certainly were, and he saw this as a significant problem for liberalizing attitudes and laws.⁴⁰ Breaking the association between homosexuality and vice, but only in part, allows him to cast the same-sex debauchery of some as a foil for the perfectly natural, often inborn, and even ennobling same-sex desire of others:

It is the common belief that all subjects of sexual inversion have originally loved women, but that, through monstrous debauchery and superfluity of naughtiness, tiring of normal pleasure, they have willfully turned their appetites into other channels. This is true about a certain number. But... it does not meet by far the larger proportion of cases, in whom such instincts are inborn, and a considerable percentage in whom they are also inconvertible.

That homosexuality need *not* involve debauchery, Symonds writes, is evidenced by the many respectable inverts one might meet every day, in

drawing-rooms, law-courts, banks, universities, mess-rooms; on the bench, the throne, the chair of the professor; under the blouse of the workman, the cassock of the priest, the epaulettes of the officer, the smock-frock of the ploughman, the wig of the barrister, the mantle of the peer, the costume of the actor, the tights of the athlete, the gown of the academician.

As for the particular specter of sodomy (Symonds calls it “*aversa Venus*”) – that signifier of sin, debauchery, and degeneration – inverts “do not invariably or even usually” prefer it, and when they do their health suffers no more (from, for example, the ailments of “spinal disease, epilepsy, consumption, dropsy”) than the health of anyone, inverted or not, who engages to “excess in any venereal pleasure.” Again, witness the great vigor and wholesomeness of the ancient Greeks.⁴¹

The distinction Symonds insists on between the debauched and the respectable homosexual to some extent corresponds to the shift Foucault identifies between an earlier emphasis on sinful act and a later one on inborn psychology (although this inborn psychology is often pathologized in a way that Symonds resists). But this distinction also calls to mind the earlier association, discussed above, between sexual vice, especially sodomy, and non-Europeans. The distance between the true Uranian – healthy and wholesome

in body and mind but simply attracted, from an early age, to males rather than females – and the jaded, insatiable profligate, unable to control his appetites, suggests a sexual geography that distinguishes between respectable drawing rooms, law courts, and the like on the one hand, and what Richard Burton called the Sotadic zone, populated by sexually debauched racial Others, on the other. As we'll see below, Symonds's uncritical acceptance of ancient Greek proto-orientalist distinctions between the noble Greek practice of paiderasty and the effeminate "Oriental luxury" of the Phoenicians, the Persians, and the Scythians suggests that he may have had such a geography in mind. His scattered references to the effeminate same-sex practices of contemporary Turkey and Persia add to this impression.

But such a reading must be squared with two further claims Symonds makes: the first is that the phenomenon of same-sex orientation occurs throughout *all* populations, and the second is that sexual profligacy is a universal temptation, an expression of basic human instinct – a view not so very different from the traditional religious one. He introduces *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, for example, by claiming that there is no need to offer an explanation for the "primal instincts of human nature."⁴² As for the "baser form of paiderastia," he continues,

vice of this kind does not vary to any great extent, whether we observe it in Athens or in Rome, in Florence of the sixteenth or in Paris in the nineteenth century; nor in Hellas was it more noticeable than elsewhere except for its comparative publicity.

What Symonds believes needs explanation is rather the "nobler type of masculine love developed by the Greeks," which, unlike paiderastic vice, is

almost unique in the history of the human race. It is that which more than anything else distinguishes the Greeks from the barbarians of their own time, from the Romans, and from modern men in all that appertains to the emotions.⁴³

In this respect, at least, the sexual geography that concerned Symonds was the distance separating ancient Greece from everywhere else.

Above all, ancient Greece served as Symonds's bulwark against the effeminacy so often associated with male same-sex love. Alan Sinfield has argued that while the idea of effeminacy has a long history, it does not become clearly and decisively linked to homosexuality for the English public until the sodomy trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895, just two years after Symonds's death. On Sinfield's view, this linkage would simply be taken for granted by the middle of the twentieth century (and, on Halperin's view, broken soon after). But, Sinfield writes, "effeminacy preceded the category of the homosexual,

overlapped with and influenced the period of its development, and has continued in potent interaction with it.”⁴⁴ Sinfield traces the idea of effeminacy to Aristotle’s analysis of continence and incontinence:

Now the man who is defective in respect of resistance to the things which most men both resist and resist successfully is soft and effeminate; for effeminacy too is a kind of softness; such a man trails his cloak to avoid the pain of lifting it.⁴⁵

But as Plato’s *Symposium* suggests, a man’s erotic attraction to other males (especially younger ones) was another matter entirely – seen as a mark of a noble, elevated character and certainly not of effeminacy. Nor was such attraction associated with effeminacy in England until quite late; instead, what was most dangerously effeminizing for a man was the habit of spending too much time in the boudoirs of women – even if that time were spent in bed. Sinfield reminds us that

in [Milton’s] *Samsons Agonistes* [1671] Samson’s explanation of his subjection to Delilah is: “Foul effeminacy held me yoked/her bondslave”. Shakespeare’s Romeo [circa 1595] says he is effeminate – not in respect of his love for Mercutio but when he is distressed at his failure to prevent the death of Mercutio. Juliet’s beauty “hath made me effeminate”, he says. It is love for a woman that produces the problem for masculinity; had Romeo been swayed more strongly for his love for Mercutio, that would have been manly.⁴⁶

Indeed, before the eighteenth century, the hierarchical structure of British society, in this respect something like that of ancient Athens, allowed the well-born male sexual access to his social inferiors, regardless of their sex. Even as late as the second half of the seventeenth century,

the aggressively manly rake, though reproved by the churches and in violation of the law, would feel able to indulge himself with a woman or a young man; he lost no status so long as he was the inserter rather than the insertee.⁴⁷

Hence, the classic image of “the seventeenth-century libertine having a catamite on one arm and a whore on the other.”⁴⁸

However, to be effeminate did not mean to be feminine in the modern sense of the word. Linda Dowling writes that in 1757, just over a century before Symonds published *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, the Anglican priest and essayist John Brown warned in his *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Time* that “a vain, luxurious, and selfish EFFEMINANCY” threatened

England's downfall. But, Dowling cautions, Brown's critique of effeminacy should be understood not as

looking forward to modern gender categories but gazing backward to a vanished archaic past in which the survival of a community was sustained in an almost metaphysical as well as a wholly practical sense by the valor of its citizen soldiers.

In short, this critique looks back to the warrior ideal of classical republican theory.⁴⁹ There, effeminacy "has to do not with femaleness in any modern sense but with an absence or privation of value"; in particular, with an absence of manliness that rendered a male useless as a soldier.⁵⁰

As such traditional ideals of martial manhood confronted the realities of industrial capitalism, many worried about a new danger, "the spread of social and intellectual 'stagnation' and 'uniformity'." The remedy, according to Victorian liberals like J.S. Mill, George Grote, and Matthew Arnold, would not be found "in simple 'manliness' but must be looked for in something like 'energy' and 'individuality' and 'diversity.'"⁵¹ And these ideals were rooted in Hellenism, fast becoming popular in elite circles. Oxford University, the training ground for generations of English ruling-class males, was the epicenter of this Greek revival, which supplemented, indeed challenged, conventional Christian pieties with the Hellenic values of beauty and truth. Benjamin Jowett, the influential Master of Balliol College, Symonds's tutor, and a renowned translator of Plato, believed that the study of Plato could revitalize Victorian manhood, fitting a new generation to take up the White man's burden.⁵² But Plato's dialogues, of course, not only offered a metaphysics of transcendence and an ethic of personal development; they also presented an ideal of male homoeroticism, of Greek love, or *paiderasty* – i.e., the love between an older and a younger man. In this all-male setting, as undergraduates and their unmarried male tutors pored over texts in which the eroticized relations between young men and their teachers were sometimes as central as the pursuit of truth and wisdom, hermeneutic discussions challenged the limits of Victorian respectability. E.M. Forster's gay coming-of-age novel, *Maurice* (written in 1913–1914 but published only posthumously in 1970), presents the scene vividly. "Omit: a reference to the unspeakable vice of the Greeks," intones the fictional Cambridge Dean, who might well have been modeled on Jowett himself.⁵³ Indeed, it would be difficult to find a better example of an incitement to discourse silenced publicly, if unsuccessfully, at the last moment. "You've read the *Symposium*?" was the leading, coded question.⁵⁴ If not all love between men in Plato's dialogues was purely Platonic, neither was all love at Oxford.

The *Symposium* is central to both Symonds' and Carpenters' writing on sexuality. The dialogue introduces two Aphrodites – *Urania*, or Heavenly

Aphrodite (whose name, of course, had inspired Ulrichs), and *Pandemos*, or Common Aphrodite, each presiding over her own sort of love. Common Aphrodite's love "is the love felt by the vulgar, who are attached to women no less than boys, to the body more than to the soul... since all they care about is completing the sexual act." Those whose love is Heavenly, by contrast, are "attracted to the male; they find pleasure in what is by nature stronger and more intelligent."⁵⁵ While the love of Common Aphrodite issues in mere children of flesh and blood, Heavenly love produces spiritual offspring: wisdom, virtue, poetry, and theories about the "proper ordering of cities and households" which is "called moderation and justice."⁵⁶ The dialogue famously charts how a young man starts by appreciating the earthly beauty of a single boy, then learns to appreciate the beauty of many boys, and in the end appreciates and comes to know Beauty in itself.⁵⁷ And as if presenting male homoerotic attraction as the gateway to transcendence weren't heady enough fare, the dialogue also analyzes the proper relations between an older male lover and his young beloved.

Clearly the implications of such texts needed to be contained, and Jowett tried his level best to do so. In the Introduction to his 1892 translation of the *Symposium*, he wrote:

The opinion of Christendom has not altogether condemned passionate friendships between persons of the same sex, but has certainly not encouraged them, because though innocent in themselves in a few temperaments they are liable to degenerate into fearful evil.⁵⁸

As for paiderasty itself, the

possibility of an honourable Connexion of this kind seems to have died out with Greek civilization. Among the Romans, and also among barbarians, such as the Celts and Persians, there is no trace of such attachments existing in any noble or virtuous form.⁵⁹

Symonds's challenge, then, was to defend Greek love against the charge of effeminacy, casting it instead as a model of a healthy, virtuous, and virile love between men. As he writes in *A Problem in Modern Ethics*, while it might be "objected that inverted sexuality is demoralizing to the manhood of a nation, that it degrades the dignity of man, and that it is incapable of moral elevation," these arguments are "all of them at once and together contradicted by the history of ancient Greece." There the most "warlike sections of the race... organized the love of male for male because of the social and military advantages they found in it": namely, "heroic enthusiasm, patriotic devotion, and high living, inspired by homosexual passion." (The same is true of other "fighting peoples of the world," in which there is a high frequency of "what

popular prejudice regards as an effeminate vice.”)⁶⁰ Indeed, in its origins and its essence, Symonds finds Greek love to be martial. Among the warlike Dorians, “fire and valour, rather than tenderness or tears, were the external outcome of this passion; nor had *Malachia*, effeminacy, a place in its vocabulary.”⁶¹ Crete, though, was another matter; there “Phoenician vices” left their mark on the Dorians. Thus, Greek love became a mixed form, partly martial and partly “luxurious,” its “military and enthusiastic elements” originating with the Dorians and acquiring refinements of sensuality and “sanctified impurity” from the Phoenicians.⁶² Indeed, since “Oriental nations were addicted to this as well as other species of sensuality,” Symonds hypothesizes that “paiderastia in its crudest form was transmitted to the Greeks from the East.” But whatever “the Greeks received from adjacent nations,” Symonds writes, “they distinguished with the qualities of their own personality.” In sum, “paiderastia in Hellas assumed Hellenic characteristics and cannot be confounded with any merely Asiatic form of luxury.”⁶³ On the contrary, it was bound up with the love of political independence, with gymnastic sport, and with the intellectual and aesthetic interests that distinguished Greeks from barbarians.

But what accounts for Greece’s superiority to its neighbors? Symonds explicitly rejects Richard Burton’s explanation; climate, Symonds writes, may help determine

the complexion of sexual morality; yet, as regards paiderastia we have abundant proof North and South have been equally addicted and equally averse to this habit... The only difference...is that everything which the Greek genius touched acquired a portion of its distinction, so that what in semi-barbarous society may be ignored as vice, in Greece demands attention as a phase of the spiritual life of a world-historic nation.⁶⁴

Indeed, Symonds argued, Greece was simply unique, an exception to the usual evolutionary progression of social forms. Certainly, the martial character of the Doric phase of Greek love – a character that Plato’s Athens had partially inherited – was not merely a stage that other “savage tribes” had passed through as they became more civilized. Citing Herbert Spencer on the evolution of sexual practices, Symonds insists that the

unisexual vices of barbarians follow, not the type of Greek paiderastia, but that of the Scythian disease of effeminacy, described by Herodotus and Hippocrates as something essentially foreign and non-Hellenic. In all these cases, whether we regard the Scythian impotent effeminate, the North American Bardashes, the Tsecats of Madagascar, the Cordaches of the Canadian Indians, and similar classes among California Indians, natives of Venezuela, and so forth – the characteristic point is that effeminate

males renounce their sex, assume female clothes, and live either in promiscuous concubinage with the men of the tribe or else in marriage with chosen persons. This abandonment of the masculine attribute and habits, this assumption of feminine duties and costume, would have been abhorrent to the Doric custom. Precisely similar effeminacies were recognized as pathological by Herodotus, to whom Greek *paiderastia* was familiar. The distinctive feature of Dorian comradeship was that it remained on both sides masculine, tolerating no sort of softness.⁶⁵

In contrast with what might be called the Greek exception, these “effeminacies,” along with the sodomy documented “among the primitive peoples of Mexico, Peru and Yucatan, and almost all half-savage nations...only prove, in connection with abundant modern experience of what are called unnatural vices,” the “universality of unisexual indulgence in all parts of world and all conditions of society.” Nevertheless, such vices among the primitives should not be denounced too quickly, since one can

detect in them the germ or raw material of a custom which the Dorians moralized or developed after a specific fashion; but nowhere do we find an analogue to their peculiar institutions. It was just that effort to moralize and adapt to social use a practice which has elsewhere been excluded in the course of civil growth, or has been allowed to linger half-acknowledged as a remnant of more primitive conditions, or has reappeared in the corruption of society; it was just this effort to elevate *paiderastia* according to the aesthetic standard of Greek ethics which constituted its distinctive quality in Hellas.

The “true Hellenic manifestation of the *paiderastic* passion,” then, must be separated “from the effeminacies, brutalities and gross sensualities which can be noticed alike in imperfectly civilised and in luxuriously corrupt communities.”⁶⁶ This “true Hellenic manifestation of the *paiderastic* passion,” however, was not to last. Symonds bemoaned the drift of Greek love, even by Plato’s time, into a sensuality and effeminacy that would become even more pronounced in later antiquity. Even so, however, Greece stands as proof for him that a same-sex orientation need not necessarily involve effeminacy, a tendency that social norms can either encourage or check.

It is not surprising that Symonds, so taken with the masculinism of ancient Athens, should have had little enthusiasm for explaining a male’s desire for another male, as Ulrichs and others did, in terms of the modern notion of a complementary femininity – that is to say, as a feminine soul trapped in a masculine body. Symonds insists instead that Uranism, at least in its most elevated form, was masculine through and through. Thus, at least on its face, Symonds’s masculinist ideal of male same-sex love would hardly seem to be

compatible with the racial gender-binary ideal. But in Victorian England, this ideal was both powerful and protean, and Symonds could not do without it. The first way this ideal announces itself is in Symonds's rather reluctant and limited use, after all, of the logic of inversion – the idea that a homosexual man is someone with a male body but the psyche of a woman. Of course, this logic had to be reconciled with his thorough-going masculinism. But as male and female became understood as complements, male same-sex desire no longer could be understood in terms of the traditional patriarchal prerogative to dominate over social inferiors, whether women or subordinate men. In the new order of two opposite and incommensurable genders, male same-sex activity, once a sinful expression of social privilege, became instead an expression of an unnatural gender identity. If a man were normal, he simply could feel no sexual interest in other men. And it was no longer possible, “as it had been in the seventeenth century, for a boy to pass from the passive to the active role at manhood. All males needed to be active at every stage of life in order to establish masculine status.”⁶⁷

Whereas the older notion of effeminacy was understood in terms of either social inferiority or else softness, weakness, and the failure to live up to masculine standards, the trope of the female soul trapped in a male body instead (or perhaps also) suggests something more akin to *femininity*. According to Rictor Norton, this was a new development; Norton claims that until the 1860s, there was no evidence that men who had sex with other men thought of themselves this way.⁶⁸ But the healthy, respectable sort of Uranian Symonds celebrates is like a woman *only* in one particular respect; otherwise, he is like other men. Indeed, when the love object is a younger (or working class, or racialized) man, the Uranian's masculine agency is barely called into question at all. Nevertheless, by the time Symonds wrote, to be erotically attracted to the masculine was, by definition, to express an element of the feminine.

Symonds takes care to show how far removed this very particular element of the feminine is from the constellation of physical and mental traits exhibited by the more “extreme types” of homosexual. Here he draws on Krafft-Ebing's classification of inverters: there is the sort who avoids masculine pursuits like smoking, drinking, exercising, and whistling (!), and while they might remain “in their physical configuration males,” they had “no inclination for blooming adolescents,” preferring instead “a robust adult” to submit themselves to, some developing a “peculiar liking for the passive act of sodomy or the anomalous act of fellatio.” Such inverters have already left behind the masculine temperament, but in another group, more effeminized still, sexual inversion reaches its final development. Here, the “soul which is doomed to love a man” strives to convert the male body “to feminine uses so entirely” that even if the male organs of procreation cannot be changed to female ones, “the bony structure of the body, the form of the face, the fleshly

and muscular integuments” are so far modified as to suggest a class of “androgynous beings...at the end of the extraordinary process.”⁶⁹

Symonds does not announce outright that such Uranians are degenerated, diseased, or atavistic, but that is the implication. His extremely heterogeneous conception of homosexuality certainly allows for such a reading, and his use of Krafft-Ebing, who linked homosexuality to degeneration, suggests it. And although he may find them pitiable rather than vicious, Symonds does not attempt to argue that these effeminate types are “normal” or respectable; their condition seems more than simply “a sport of nature in her attempt to differentiate the sexes.”⁷⁰ What’s more, these are the types that Symonds has claimed are common among barbaric cultures, where such effeminacy is normalized and even institutionalized.

But the notion of femininity has another, larger role to play in Symonds’s account. Indeed, in spite of his masculinity, he explicitly and quite unexpectedly invokes not just femininity but the racial gender-binary ideal itself to argue for nothing less than the legalization of male homosexuality. *A Problem in Modern Ethics* ends with a four-page chapter titled “Suggestions on the Subject of Sexual Inversion in Relation to Law and Education,” containing fourteen suggestions, each no longer than a paragraph. Here is the eighth:

The danger that unnatural vices, if tolerated by the law, would increase until whole nations acquired them, does not seem to be formidable. The position of women in our civilization renders sexual relations among us occidentals different from those of any country – ancient Greece and Rome, modern Turkey and Persia – where antiphysical habits have hitherto become endemic.⁷¹

In calling these vices “endemic” in certain places, Symonds, who draws on Spencer, should be understood to mean not only that such vices are widespread there, but also that having been acquired and practiced by previous generations, they are part of an inheritance that is both cultural and physical. As Spencer wrote, “hereditary transmission applies to psychical peculiarities as well as to physical peculiarities.” Future generations inherit “the modified bodily structure produced by new habits of life” along with the “modified nervous tendencies produced by such new habits.” And, Spencer adds, “if the new habits of life become permanent, the tendencies become permanent.... It needs only to contrast national characters to see that mental peculiarities caused by habit become hereditary.”⁷²

So just as male homosexuality of the effeminate sort had become part of the very fiber of contemporary Turkey and Persia (as it had in Greece and Rome in late antiquity), feminine women, along with the manly men who revere them, had become part of the fiber of Europe – or at least of Northern Europe. Here is where Symonds most clearly enlists the racial gender-binary

ideal: in Europe, women have become worthy keepers of home and hearth, and men treat them with the proper respect. Of course, Symonds is drawing here on the very ideal that one might have expected to condemn same-sex desire as unnatural, degenerate, or sinful. So it is all the more striking that he ends *Modern Ethics* by suggesting that European femininity and men's worship of it are what make Europe safe for – and from – homosexuality.

The structure of his argument is not entirely transparent, but its most important premise is both clear and familiar: to be truly civilized, the women of a society must embody the feminine ideal and the men must value it. Here is where Greece, for all its glory, falls short. It is imperative that sexual appetite, whether its object is male or female, be elevated, and although Greece, at its best, managed this for male sexual desire for other males, the lowly status of free Greek women remained a problem, perhaps even encouraging “the more effeminate elements of paiderasty.” While men led an active civic life, Symonds writes, wives and daughters remained ignorant, secluded in the household with servants and children. Marriages, usually arranged, were undertaken from “a desire for children and a sense of duty to country,” while free Athenian women “were comparatively uneducated and uninteresting.”⁷³ As for the hetairai, they “had proverbially bad manners.” In sum, “circumstances simply rendered it impossible for women to excite romantic and enthusiastic passion,” and a man “would never have dreamed of treating free women as intellectual companions.”⁷⁴

Here Symonds may have been influenced by his old tutor Jowett, who wrote this in the introduction to his translation of Plato's *Phaedrus*:

To understand [Plato], we must make abstraction of morality and of the Greek manner of regarding the relation of the sexes. In this, as in his other discussions about love, what Plato says of the loves of men must be transferred to the loves of women before we can attach any serious meaning to his words. Had he lived in our times he would have made the transposition himself. But seeing in his own age the impossibility of woman being the intellectual helpmate or friend of man (except in the rare instances of a Diotima or an Aspasia), seeing that, even as to personal beauty, her place was taken by young mankind instead of womankind, he tries to work out the problem of love without regard to the distinctions of nature.⁷⁵

Greece's lack of chivalry toward women, then, is seized upon by both Jowett and Symonds, but to different ends. Jowett uses it to explain why Plato talked about boy-love when, if only he had known better, he would have instead extolled the virtues of Victorian marriage – and why contemporary readers should read him as if he were doing the latter. Symonds, by contrast, uses Europe's embrace of the chivalric attitude toward woman to explain why male

homosexuality, if only Europe would allow it, could be managed more easily than it had been in Greece.

I should note, however, that Symonds' insistence that women and femininity be given their due coexists not only (if uneasily) with his general masculinism, but also with the implication, in line with Plato's symposiasts, that there *is* something special about paiderasty after all, indeed that it has an objective basis – if one has the aesthetic sensibility to see this:

[T]he Greeks admitted, as true artists are obliged to do, that the male body displays harmonies of proportion and melodies of outline more comprehensive, more indicative of strength expressed in terms of grace, than that of women. I guard myself against saying – more seductive to the senses, more soft, more delicate, more undulating. The superiority of male beauty does not consist in these attractions, but in the symmetrical development of all the qualities of the human frame, the complete organization of the body as the supreme instrument of vital energy. In the bloom of adolescence the elements of feminine grace, suggested rather than expressed are combined with virility to produce a perfection which is lacking to the mature and adult excellence of either sex.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, Symonds regards the low status of women as a central flaw in Greek society:

[N]o one can help feeling that the idealization of masculine love, which formed so prominent a feature of Greek life in the historic period, was intimately connected with the failure of the race to give their proper sphere in society to women. The Greeks themselves were not directly conscious of this fact.... Far in advance of the barbarian tribes around them, they could not well discern the defects of their own civilization; nor was it to be expected that they should have anticipated that exaltation of the love of women into a semi-religious cult which was the later product of chivalrous Christianity. We from the standpoint of a more fully Organized society detect their errors and pronounce that paiderastia was a necessary consequence of their unequal social culture.⁷⁷

This error, compounded by the deepening vice of late antiquity, would be righted later in the Middle Ages, when, thanks “in no small measure to the Teutonic converts to Christianity,” the truth was

for the first time fully apprehended, that woman is the mediating and ennobling element in human life....The mythology of Mary gave religious sanction to the chivalrous enthusiasm; and a cult of woman sprang into being to which although it was romantic and visionary, we owe the

spiritual basis of our domestic and civil life. The *modus vivendi* of the modern world was found.⁷⁸

With this pronouncement, Symonds ends *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, a book largely devoted to justifying Greek love – which, it turns out, can be justified only so far.

One might wonder how, exactly, the idealization of woman, home, and hearth – an ideal that melds elements of Teutonic chivalry with the Christian cult of Mary – would check same-sex debauchery in Victorian England were homosexual relations to become legal there. The explanation must somehow involve the belief that women civilize by producing a general taming of men; medieval chivalry “bequeathed incalculable good to modern society by refining and clarifying the crudest of male appetites.”⁷⁹ Of course, the men who feel such influence most strongly, one assumes, are those whose sexual preferences are for women; but thanks to the inheritance of acquired traits, presumably there will be more such men in a society that reveres women and fewer of the sort who become slaves to their sexual appetites, whatever their objects. Problems arise only in the absence of chivalric ideals, and, Symonds believes, the Oriental nations, ancient and modern, seem to be chivalry-poor.

I have not managed to tie up the loose ends of Symonds’s argument here. But perhaps the important point is that he may not have felt the need to do so either. The racial gender-binary ideal was so well established and so thoroughly associated with the superiority of Christian Europe that simply gesturing toward it might have seemed sufficient – even though, on the face of it, the same-sex relations he sought to justify are at odds with the very same binary ideal he employs for the purpose. And, of course, a contemporary reader is likely to object that the problem with Greece is not that it lacked a cult of womanhood, much less that this lack was damaging to *men*, but that the status of women there left something to be desired. But it is striking that Symonds invokes the two-sex ideal after a discursus on male same-sex passion that might have come straight out of Plato. There is no role for woman as the object of chivalry in Symonds’s analysis of male same-sex desire, which, in its loftiest form, is for him a celebration of masculinity. And yet, Symonds cannot do without the ideal of womanhood. He reaches for it almost as a talisman for Christian Europe against the supposed effeminate excesses of non-European races, and, as if to reassure his readers, he ends his defense of male homosexuality by invoking it.

Hans Blüher: a footnote to Symonds

Before turning to Edward Carpenter’s engagement with the racial gender-binary ideal, I add as a footnote to the discussion of Symonds a brief consideration of Hans Blüher (1888–1955) – German nationalist, antisemite,

and homosexual apologist. I draw here on the work of Jay Geller, who has discussed Blüher in relation to Freud; my interest, by contrast, is in comparing Blüher to Symonds. Superficially at least, the comparison is a natural one; both were champions of a martial, masculinist, same-sex erotic ideal, and both racialized this ideal. But not only did Blüher dispense with the racial gender-binary ideal as a foundation of racial supremacy; he reversed its racial significance altogether.

Blüher was best known as the chronicler of the *Wandervögel*, a German nationalist youth movement critical of industrialization and devoted to the celebration of nature and the revival of traditional Teutonic culture. On Blüher's view, the only "productive social form" was the male band, or *Männerbund*; in this, he distinguished himself from Freud, an early influence.⁸⁰ As Geller writes, "where Freud located the reproduction both of the species and of the individual identity in the family, Blüher separated these two processes: male identity forms in masculine society largely through identification with the nonpaternal *Männerheld* {hero of men, or manly man}."⁸¹

Like Symonds, Blüher championed a conception of male homoeroticism that was manly rather than effeminate and, consequently, without racial taint. Thus, also like Symonds he was happy to distinguish between two sorts of male same-sex relations: the heroic, manly, Germanic sort, and the effeminate sort (for which Blüher reserved the term "homosexuality"). He associated the latter with sexologists like Magnus Hirschfeld, third-sex theories generally, and, above all, Jews. As Blüher wrote, "one should not forget to which race the overwhelming majority of [third-sex sexologists] belong."⁸²

Here Blüher is not so very different from Symonds, although Blüher idealized the Germans rather than the Greeks, and his racial Other – not surprisingly, given his time and place – is not the Turk, the Persian, or the Scythian but the Jew. But Blüher's misogyny and antisemitism would not allow him to enlist the racial gender-binary ideal in his campaign for a racially pure homosexuality. As noted earlier, George Grosse has remarked that given the degree to which Jewish men were effeminized and vilified in Aryan ideology, it is surprising that they were not associated more strongly with homosexuality in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany. Part of the explanation Grosse gives for this is another strong association, this one between Jewish men and family life. For Blüher – echoing, perhaps, the older English caution against spending too much time in women's boudoirs – this is exactly what effeminizes the Jewish male. He may or may not turn out to be a homosexual, but if he does, he will not be a manly but an effeminate one – the decadent-Jewish type.⁸³ Here, Geller writes, Blüher drew on both the Jewish sexologist Benedict Friedlaender, according to whom the male socio-political sphere, unlike the female family sphere, was "founded upon male-male sociality," and on Gustav Jaeger, who believed that men are attracted to other men through their male scent, or "soul aroma" – something

Friedlaender called “chemotaxis.”⁸⁴ All men are subject to this attraction, homosexual men differing from heterosexual ones only in finding the smell of women repulsive. Friedlander, like Jaeger, also “considered the natural repulsion of Europeans toward those internally and externally colonized peoples, the Jews and the Africans, as the exemplary instance of chemotaxis.” Beyond such olfactory unpleasantness, Friedlander maintained as well that Jews were responsible for feminizing society; the overvaluation of women and the prohibition against male homosexuality were “racially Jewish institutions,” hostile to the manly, heroic Teutonic invert.⁸⁵ While the family was a product of the heterosexual drive, the state depended on the homosexual one: in *The Role of the Erotic*, Blüher writes that “beyond the socializing principle of the family that feeds off the Eros of male and female, a second principle is at work in mankind, ‘masculine society,’ that owes its existence to male-male Eros and finds its expression in male-bonding.” As Geller writes, such a view requires that the family function

as a constitutive element of the state, but not more. And wherever nature has produced species capable of developing a viable state, this has been made possible only by smashing the role of the family and the male-female sexual urges as sole determinants.

Since Jews have not managed to do this, the argument went, they have no state. Thus, for the likes of Blüher, the inverse of the inverted (Germanic) type is neither the effeminate nor the heterosexual male, but rather the Jew, who, in Blüher’s words, is “submerged in the family and familial relations.... Loyalty, unity, and bonding are no concern of the Jew.” Jews have lost their state, “cursed never to be a people [Volk], always to remain a mere race” – a race, moreover, maintained “through an overemphasis of the family.”⁸⁶

A thorough comparison of Symonds and Blüher would, of course, involve a discussion of the different political and cultural contexts of Germany and England as well as the different sensibilities of Symonds and Blüher themselves.. But I compare them to show that while Symonds reassured himself that in Europe, especially Northern Europe, chivalry toward women and respect for the family would halt the slide of homosexuality into effeminacy, Blüher sees the family and the overvaluation of women as a Jewish corruption, effeminacy’s source rather than its cure. He became increasingly anti-semitic, denouncing in his *Secessio Judaica* “the Jew Sigmund Freud” and arguing for “[t]he severing of the Jews and their corruptive and carnal modes of thinking from Germans, Germany, and German culture.”⁸⁷ In the 1920s, after Germany’s defeat in World War I, Nazi ideologues incorporated a de-eroticized version of the Männerbund that recognized the imperative of reproduction along with that of masculinist state formation. But, following Blüher, Heinrich Himmler’s vision of the SS retained the idea of Jewry as masculine

society's other.⁸⁸ (Blüher himself supported the Nazis until the 1934 Night of the Long Knives, a massacre which included among its victims Ernst Röhm, the homosexual leader of the SA and long-time confidant of Hitler.)

Edward Carpenter: introjecting the racial gender-binary ideal

Edward Carpenter (1844–1928), roughly Symonds's contemporary, was a socialist writer and former prelate who lived fairly openly with his male partner for years. Although he admired Symonds and drew on his work, he took a different approach to justifying male same-sex love. Like Symonds, he denies the connection popularly made between homosexuality and sexual vice or debauchery, but he frames this denial differently. Symonds breaks this connection, in part, by invoking established associations between debauchery and "lower race" and then presenting the contrasting figure of the chivalrous, noble European Uranian. Carpenter, however, manages to wrest homosexuality from its associations with vice – and with inferior race – without a word about "Oriental luxury" or the "Turkish vice" (and although he cannot resist the gratuitous antisemitic remark, it is about money rather than sex).⁸⁹ Nonetheless, race plays a part in his analysis; one must just look a bit harder.

Symonds and Carpenter both reject views that reduce homosexuality to morbidity or sin, and both recognize same-sex desire as a mode of sensibility, typically inborn, with some sort of physical basis. Drawing on Ellis and Ulrichs, Carpenter claims that

in congenital cases of sex-inversion there is a mixture of male and female elements in the same person; so that for instance in the same embryo the emotional and nervous regions may develop along feminine lines while the outer body and functions may determine themselves as distinctly masculine, or *vice versa*.⁹⁰

Also like Symonds, he emphasizes the difference between such congenital homosexuality, which is a matter of inborn sensibility, and the sort of homosexuality acquired through sexual excess or circumstance:

Too much emphasis cannot be laid on the distinction between these born lovers of their own kind, and that class of persons, with whom they are so often confused, who out of mere carnal curiosity or extravagance of desire, or from the dearth of opportunities for a more normal satisfaction (as in schools, barracks, etc.) adopt some homosexual practices. It is the latter class who become chiefly prominent in the public eye, and who excite, naturally enough, public reprobation. In their case the attraction is felt, by themselves and all concerned, to be merely sensual and morbid. In

the case of the others, however, the feeling is, as said, so deeply rooted and twined with the mental and emotional life that the person concerned has difficulty in imagining himself affected otherwise than he is; and to him at least his love appears healthy and natural, and indeed a necessary part of his individuality.⁹¹

Along the same lines, Carpenter is perhaps even more eager than Symonds to deny that homosexual love's exclusive focus is sexual activity. It is not fair, he writes, to suppose that homosexual

attachments are necessarily sexual, or connected with sexual acts. On the contrary (as abundant evidence shows), they are often purely emotional in their character; and to confuse Uranians (as is so often done) with libertines having no law but curiosity in self indulgence is to do them a great wrong.⁹²

As for the physical expression of such attraction, Carpenter insists that repressing it will probably "cause it to burst forth with greater violence." Besides, "since the homogenic love...can from the nature of the case never find expression on the physical side so freely and completely as is the case with the ordinary love, it must tend rather more than the latter to run along *emotional* channels, and to find its vent in sympathies of social life and companionship" – as one sees in ancient Greece.⁹³

However, while both Symonds and Carpenter disassociate Uranians from sexual profligacy and downplay Uranian sexuality in general, they do so for different reasons. Symonds, as discussed above, regards sexuality as a primal instinct that can be "moralized" in the appropriate social context, and for the Uranian this involves taking an aesthetic or chivalrous attitude rather than a merely appetitive one toward the male beloved. For the beloved, the danger is effeminacy by giving up his masculine agency; for the lover, the danger is allowing appetite to get the better of him – also a form of effeminacy. Carpenter's picture of Uranian virtue, however, incorporates the modern notion of femininity. He does talk about the masculine type of Uranian, not only incorporating Symonds's work on the Greeks but supplementing it with a lengthy discussion of the homoerotic masculinism of medieval Japanese Samurai culture.⁹⁴ And drawing on Jaeger, as Blüher does, he also recognizes a sort of "supervirile" Uranian man, whose "soul aroma" attracts both effeminate and "ordinary" men, who, in turn, attract him.⁹⁵ Because of this, Carpenter, like Symonds, is sometimes said to give a masculinist account of homosexuality.⁹⁶

However, although he expresses some reservations about Ulrichs's trope of a woman's soul trapped in a man's body, the bulk of Carpenter's discussion describes the Uranian very much as Ulrichs does – and in a way Symonds

would resist.⁹⁷ For Symonds, to be attracted to a male may be a sign of being female, but one feminine element does not a feminine psyche make. By contrast, Carpenter, like Ulrichs, is happy to allow that other aspects of feminine personality as well are likely to go along with an attraction to men, even for Uranians of the best sort – or perhaps especially for them. Such men, moreover, do not thereby lose the positive characteristics of masculinity: “The thoroughly masculine powers of mind and body” are combined in them with

the tenderer and more emotional soul-nature of the woman – and sometimes to a remarkable degree.... Emotionally they are extremely complex, tender, sensitive, pitiful and loving...;like women they read characters at a glance, and know, without knowing how, what is passing in the minds of others; for nursing and waiting on the needs of others they often have a peculiar gift.⁹⁸

Indeed,

it is possible that in this class of men we have the love sentiment in one of its most perfect forms – a form in which from the necessities of the situation the sensuous element, though present, is exquisitely subordinated to the spiritual.⁹⁹

Symonds might well have summarily pronounced such a character effeminate, spiritual element or no. As we see above, when Symonds talks about Uranians who “tend toward the female type” he does so with significant distaste. But more to the point, although Symonds recognizes a positive conception of Woman as one of his pair of gendered chivalric ideals, perhaps to be respected even by evolved Uranian men (like himself?), there is no room for such a conception in his understanding of the *individual* Uranian’s psyche. Symonds seems to imply that if a Uranian is not manly, he will simply be effeminate in one way or another. Carpenter, by contrast, emphasizes not effeminacy but *femininity*, characterized by intuition, selflessness, and love. Indeed, Symonds’s emphasis on Greek love, a relationship grounded in a masculinist hierarchy in which an older, demonstrably masculine man is drawn to what is almost-but-not-quite feminine – and only ephemerally so – in a youth, crowds out the sort of analysis that Carpenter offers. Where Carpenter’s account of the Uranian draws on a notion of complementarity based on two genders, Symonds repurposes the older Greek idea of hierarchy, softened by the fact that the beloved boy will one day become a man.

Thus, Symonds and Carpenter incorporate the modern, positive conception of femininity in different ways. Symonds, as discussed earlier, valorizes the notion of femininity-as-difference almost as an afterthought in his celebration of Northern European chivalry toward women, but there is no room

for positive feminine traits (except for his attraction to men) in the psychic makeup of the homosexual man. As for inverters who present themselves as women and assume women's roles, they are associated with debauchery, degeneracy, and racial primitivism. Carpenter, by contrast, draws on the positive notion of femininity as complementary difference, complete with its ideal of emotional sensitivity, and introjects it into the Uranian's psyche. Indeed, if Uranian men have a fault, Carpenter writes, it will be sentimentality rather than sensuality – and sentimentality is a quintessential *feminine* frailty.¹⁰⁰

Carpenter's perspective also allows him to consider sex to be "the physical allegory of love" rather than an instinctual, vulgar appetite in need of elevation. He focuses on the transcendent possibilities of sexuality itself, romanticizing "primitive" societies' now-lost understanding of the close relationship between sexuality and religion. Indeed, he distinguishes not so much between sex and love as between sex as an expression of love and sex as a mere means to pleasure. As for love itself, just as "the ordinary love has a special function in the propagation of the race, so the other has its special function in social and heroic work, and in the generation – not of bodily children – but of those children of the mind, the philosophical conceptions and ideals which transform our lives and those of society" – an echo, of course, of Plato's *Symposium*.¹⁰¹

By taking the idealized notion of femininity-as-difference and, in effect, making it an inner component of the Uranian temperament, Carpenter eliminates the need to argue in any explicit or extended way against the kind of effeminacy – that is to say, the simple failure of masculinity – that so troubled Symonds. Instead, the Uranian – at least the *best* sort of Uranian – gains the positive traits of European womanhood while retaining his estimable masculine reasoning and physical strength; he seems to lose only male faults. In effect, conceiving of the Uranian as Ulrichs does, as a feminine soul ("feminine," again, connoting difference rather than inferiority) trapped in a masculine body, inoculates the Uranian against charges of both effeminacy and sexual profligacy.

But Carpenter has managed something else here as well: he has severed male homosexuality from its association with racial otherness without so much as having to mention race, or even those stand-ins for race, sexual profligacy, effeminacy, and gender disorder. In this respect, he contrasts starkly with Symonds. While it might overstate the case to claim that Symonds's main concern was to distinguish Oxbridge Uranians from those racial others who give "oriental luxury" its meaning, he did clearly want to rescue homosexuality from its reputation for sexual profligacy. So for Symonds, an acceptable Uranian sexuality must be in some way muted – or transmuted, elevated, aestheticized; it must be distinguished from what goes on in barbarous nations, in the decadent precincts of ancient Greece and Rome, or in contemporary Turkey and Persia. Thus, in conceptions like Symonds's (and,

indeed, Blüher's too), the notion of the homosexual is split, his vices projected onto racial others and his virtues claimed for Greeks and/or (Northern) Europeans. But by making use of Ulrichs's trope of the feminine soul in a male body, Carpenter can simply define the Uranian in a way that Europeanizes him fully. Incorporating the European ideal of femininity into his conception of the Uranian man – whose feminine soul inhabits an altogether masculine body, as Carpenter assures us – allows Carpenter to consolidate a notion of the male homosexual that is White by definition, and to do so without fanfare.¹⁰² There is no real need to distinguish between an Oxbridge same-sex passion and lesser, racialized sorts. Instead, Carpenter makes use of a notion of femininity as difference rather than as inferiority, a notion that would not have been fully available in earlier centuries – and one that is European through and through. So whereas Symonds invokes the racial gender binary ideal, including its feminine component, as a kind of *dea ex machina* at the end of a thoroughly masculinist analysis, Carpenter views this ideal as embodied in the individual European Uranian man himself, who combines within him the best of both sexes.

Even so, Carpenter cannot do without a version of the evolutionary narrative of human progress so popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – and, as we have seen, so often used to explain the racial gender-binary ideal itself. As discussed earlier, Symonds believes that the celebration of an elevated notion of femininity, whether in medieval chivalry or in the later Victorian ideal of home and hearth, is a crucial aspect of human social development and civilization. Somewhat along the same lines, Carpenter sees the feminine quality of love as central to the development of humankind. But Carpenter considers love's avatar to be neither the mother nor the wife, but rather the male Uranian, with his expansive feminine capacity for love. And it is the development of *this* love, rather than the Victorian ideal of separate spheres for male and female, that Carpenter associates with evolution. Indeed, Carpenter bemoans the fact that men and women have grown too different, that their relationship is out of kilter.¹⁰³ He acknowledges that contemporary women's problems owe much to the growth of private property, but he also regards the basic social roles of men and women as grounded in nature, dating back to humanity's beginnings: "We have seen that among early peoples the quite normal man is warrior and hunter, and the quite normal woman house-wife and worker-round-the-house" – a kind of Fred and Wilma Flintstone *avant la lettre*.¹⁰⁴ So while it may be true that the working-class wife and mother has turned into a drudge, the solution is not to upend the separate spheres altogether. Rather, the problem for Carpenter is that male and female roles have *degenerated*, and he devotes much of *Love's Coming of Age* to outlining how these roles must be reconstructed so that the female can better serve her natural function as wife and mother. Because the basic structure of the relationship between man and woman, including a

gendered division of labor, is given by nature, Carpenter does not – indeed, cannot – accord this relationship an important evolutionary role.

But that suits his purposes well, since this role can then go to the Uranian and evolve against the relatively unchanging background of the male-female relation. Thus, in *Intermediate Types Among Primitive Folk*, Carpenter writes that the impetus for social evolution did not come from the “normal” male hunters and female stone-age “housewives,” but instead from the “appearance on the scene” of men and women who chafed at the gender roles assigned to them and so were forced to find for themselves “new occupations and new activities.” They first became shamans and then branched out, developing primitive versions of art and science. In short, “normal sex types” established the “foundational occupations of human life – such as fighting, hunting, child-rearing, and agriculture,” while the intermediate types invented culture.¹⁰⁵ Again, one hears echoes of the *Symposium* – but also, as Rudi Bleys has remarked, a rejoinder to the sexologists and physicians who regarded homosexuality as degeneration or atavism.¹⁰⁶

This intermediate type, moreover, makes an appearance not only at evolution’s beginning but also at its completion. In his more general writing about the evolution of humanity (much of which is collected in *Love’s Coming of Age*) as well as in his writing about homosexuality, Carpenter suggests that the human spiritual journey culminates in an enlarged capacity – enlarged, that is, beyond one’s family and mate – for love, “doubtless the last and most difficult lesson humanity has to learn.”¹⁰⁷ And, unsurprisingly, he finds that Uranian

men are superior to the normal men in this respect – in respect of their love-feeling – which is gentler, more sympathetic, more considerate, more a matter of the heart and less one of mere physical satisfaction than that of ordinary men.¹⁰⁸

But the (male) Uranian’s capacity for love is not only superior to a “normal” man’s; in some respects it may be superior to a woman’s. For in spite of woman’s many virtues, her

want of the power of generalization has made it difficult for woman (at any rate up to to-day) to emerge from a small circle of interests, and to look at things from the point of view of public advantage and good.... Her deficiency in logic has made it almost impossible to act upon her through the brain.¹⁰⁹

So it’s not surprising that Carpenter suggests that if

the day is coming...when Love is at last to take its rightful place as the binding and directing force of society (instead of the Cash-nexus) and

society is to be transmuted in consequence to a higher form, then undoubtedly the superior types of Uranians – prepared for this service by long experience and devotion, as well as by much suffering – will have an important part to play in the transformation. For that the Urnings in their own lives put Love before everything else...is a fact that is patent to everyone who knows them.¹¹⁰

Race is nowhere mentioned here. As we've seen, Carpenter credits early Uranians (of both sexes) with the development of human culture, but although he wrote a book with the title *Intermediate Types Among Primitive Folk* he nowhere discusses the capacity for love of the "primitive" Uranian male. Rather, the male Uranian who is especially adept at love seems to be a creature of Carpenter's *fin-de-siècle* Anglo-European world. So in this respect, at least, his view may not be so very different from Symonds's after all. Symonds requires the evolution of the cult of Woman, of a chivalric ideal, while Carpenter requires the evolution of love itself, a notion bound up with European woman but transformed and elevated by the Uranian spirit. In both cases, evolution ends in Europe.

Carpenter's incorporation of femininity-as-difference enables race to be encoded in his notion of homosexuality without its ever being explicitly invoked, but this notion is no less racialized for that. The Uranians Carpenter is interested in are White Europeans, but there is no need for him to announce this, since the notion of femininity does the job for him. However, there is one place where Carpenter does invoke race more explicitly, not in his writing about sexuality or gender relations but in *A Visit to a Gnani*, an account of his pilgrimage to India and his relationship with a meditation master there. Duly respectful of Indian culture, Carpenter gives a sympathetic portrait of his teacher and a cogent account of the spirit and practice of yoga and meditation. Indeed, in the requisite contrast between "Eastern" and "Western" perspectives, the East fares quite well:

The West seeks the individual consciousness – the enriched mind, ready perceptions and memories, individual hopes and fears, ambitions, loves, conquests – the self, the local self, in all its phases and forms – and sorely doubts whether such a thing as universal consciousness exists. The East seeks the universal consciousness, and in those cases where its quest succeeds individual self and life thin away to a mere film, and are only the shadows cast by the glory revealed beyond.¹¹¹

Carpenter also finds much to admire in the "Oriental" teaching that goes "*beyond* the moral," beyond "our bald commercial philanthropy, our sleek aesthetic altruism," beyond all the "little self-satisfactions which arise from the sense of

duty performed, all the cheese-parings of equity between oneself and others.” Above all, the Western attitude “involves the conception of one’s self as distinct from others, as distinct from the world, and presupposes a certain antagonism between one’s own interests and those of one’s fellows.”¹¹² By contrast, in India, “the chief fact is *not* that you are distinct from others, but that you are a part of and integral with them.” This idea, which has “lain, germinal all these centuries in the hidden womb of the East,” must be alive at the heart of the

Democracy of the future....This non-differentiation is the final deliverance. When it enters in the whole burden of absurd cares, anxieties, duties, motives, desires, fears, plans, purposes, preferences, etc., rolls off and lies like mere lumber on the ground.¹¹³

So it comes as something of a surprise when, even in the face of such profound Eastern wisdom, Carpenter confesses that he finds himself agreeing after all with those Westerners who think that this “specially Eastern teaching” is defective in one respect: “its little insistence on the idea of Love.” While gentleness, forbearance, and “passive charity” may characterize Indian thought and life, “that positive spirit of love and human helpfulness, which in some sections of Western society might almost be called a devouring passion,” is absent.¹¹⁴ Carpenter assures us that he is not speaking “of the specially individual and sexual amatory love, in which there is no reason to suppose the Hindus deficient” but of how

in the West we are in the habit of looking on devotion to other humans (widening out into the social passion) as the most natural way of losing one’s self-limitations and passing into a larger sphere of life and consciousness; while in the East this method is little thought of, or largely neglected, in favor of the concentration of one’s self in the divine, and mergence in the universal in that way.¹¹⁵

“In the East the Will constitutes the great path,” but “in the West the path has been more specially through Love—and probably will be.”¹¹⁶ Indian scriptures and Eastern thought cannot easily accommodate the “immense human sympathy” of a Whitman. And while Carpenter acknowledges that “different races and peoples incline according to their idiosyncrasies to different ways,” he ends the chapter by musing that

when the Western races once realize what lies beneath this great instinct of humanity, which seems in some way to be their special inspiration, they will outstrip even the Hindus in their entrance to an occupation of the new fields of consciousness.¹¹⁷

Here is an echo of Carpenter's account of how the Uranian, with his special feminine emotional gifts, will show humanity the way to a comradeship based on love. These remarks from *A Visit to a Gnani* suggest that in spite of Carpenter's insistence that Uranians can be found in all times and places, he is interested primarily in *Western* Uranians – rather than, say, Indian ones. Not surprisingly, the very same feminine capacity that distinguishes the Uranian male, that puts him in the vanguard of humanity's spiritual progress, turns out to be a capacity associated with the West. The racial gender-binary ideal has been realized within the European Uranian man.

Gayle Rubin's charmed (White?) circle

In 1984, about a half-century after Carpenter's death, Gayle Rubin published "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," widely regarded as a founding document of gay and lesbian studies.¹¹⁸ Rubin's aim was to call attention to sexuality as an axis of oppression on a par with – and in some strong sense autonomous from – those of gender, race, and class and thus requiring its own analysis. Rubin explains how such oppression works through the heuristic device of a "charmed Circle"; "good" practices (and practitioners) fall within the circle, questionable or vicious ones without.

According to this system, sexuality that is 'good', 'normal', and 'natural' should ideally be heterosexual, marital, monogamous, reproductive, and non-commercial. It should be coupled, relational, within the same generation, and occur at home. It should not involve pornography, fetish objects, sex toys of any sort, or roles other than male and female. Any sex that violates these rules is 'bad', 'abnormal', or 'unnatural'. Bad sex may be homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, non-procreative, or commercial. It may be masturbatory or take place at orgies, may be casual, may cross generational lines, and may take place in 'public', or at least in the bushes or the baths. It may involve the use of pornography, fetish objects, sex toys, or unusual roles.¹¹⁹

Of course, what counts as good, or at least acceptable, sex may be open to debate:

As a result of the sex conflicts of the last decade [i.e., mid-seventies to mid-eighties], some behaviour near the border is inching across it. Unmarried couples living together, masturbation, and some forms of homosexuality are moving in the direction of respectability.... Most homosexuality is still on the bad side of the line. But if it is coupled and monogamous, the society is beginning to recognize that it includes the full range of

human interaction. Promiscuous homosexuality, sadomasochism, fetishism, transsexuality, and cross-generational encounters are still viewed as unmodulated horrors incapable of involving affection, love, free choice, kindness, or transcendence.¹²⁰

In light of the long history of anti-miscegenation laws in the United States, it's striking that interracial sex does not appear in this list. Indeed, when Rubin mentions race, she does so to draw an analogy between racial hierarchy and the hierarchy of sexual practices and sensibilities she aims to bring into view; in both cases, a dominant group oppresses a subordinate one. But this analogy only serves to underline the autonomy she insists upon for sexuality, a separate axis of oppression that

cuts across other modes of social inequality, sorting out individuals and groups according to its own intrinsic dynamics. It is not reducible to, or understandable in terms of, class, race, ethnicity, or gender. Wealth, white skin, male gender, and ethnic privileges can mitigate the effects of sexual stratification. A rich, white male pervert will generally be less affected than a poor, black, female pervert. But even the most privileged are not immune to sexual oppression.¹²¹

Rubin had good reason to insist on viewing sexuality as an autonomous category. Written during the feminist "sex wars" of the 1980s, "Thinking Sex" addressed the danger that "[w]ell-intentioned feminists and other progressives would support abusive, oppressive, and undeserved witch hunts," as Rubin explains in a later interview.¹²² But even so, one wonders: isn't the couple at the very center of the charmed Circle not only heterosexual, monogamous, procreative, bourgeois (etc.) but also *White* – the very instantiation of the racial gender-binary ideal? Even apart from the matter of racially mixed couples, one thinks here of Roderick Ferguson's remark that straight African Americans have been figured as heterosexual but never as *heteronormative*.¹²³ By contrast, being *White* increases the chances that an otherwise questionable practice might enter the charmed Circle's interior. Indeed, as Symonds and Carpenter both understood – Symonds quite clearly and Carpenter clearly enough – *Whiteness* may be essential to the charmed Circle's charm.

Notes

- 1 Devon Carbado, "Colorblind Intersectionality," *Signs* 38, no. 14 (2013): 833–36.
- 2 Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Moment* (New York: Columbia, 1994), 17.
- 3 David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 46.

- 4 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 45–47.
- 5 Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, 47.
- 6 See Greg Thomas, *The Sexual Demon of Colonial Power: Pan-African Embodiment and Erotic Schemes of Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 2–10.
- 7 Rictor Norton, ed., *Homosexuality in Nineteenth Century England: A Source Book*, <https://rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/1886gros.htm>, accessed October 15, 2023.
- 8 John Addington Symonds, *A Problem in Modern Ethics* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1971), 23.
- 9 Joan DeJean, “Sex and Philology: Sappho and the Rise of German Nationalism,” *Representations* 27, no. 27 (July 1989): 155. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928488> Accessed October 15, 2023.
- 10 Michel Foucault, *The History of Homosexuality: An Introduction*, Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1990), 19–20; 38.
- 11 Rudi C. Bleys, *The Geography of Perversion: Male to Male Sexual Behavior Outside the West and the Ethnographic Imagination* (London: Cassell, 1996), 19–20.
- 12 Bleys, *Geography*, 20.
- 13 Bleys, *Geography*, 22.
- 14 Alain Grosrichard, *The Sultan’s Court: European Fantasies of the East*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1998), 17.
- 15 Bleys, *Geography*, 35.
- 16 Quoted in Grosrichard, *Sultan’s Court*, 42.
- 17 Richard Francis Burton, *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* (London: The Burton Club, 1886), 10:208.
- 18 Bleys, *Geography*, 12.
- 19 Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 137; *Richard von Kraft-Ebbing, Psychopathia Sexualis*, With Especial Reference to the Antipathetic Sexual Instinct, trans. Franklin S. Klaf (New York: Stein and Day [1886] 1997) 7–12.
- 20 George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Richard Von Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985), 34.
- 21 Havelock Ellis, “A Note on the Treatment of Sexual Inversion,” *The Alienist and Neurologist*, 17 (1896): 261.
- 22 Nell Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 250, 256.
- 23 Mosse, *Nationalism*, 36.
- 24 Mosse, *Nationalism*, 140.
- 25 Gilman, *Freud*, 162–63.
- 26 Gilman, *Freud*, 130–31.
- 27 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 150.
- 28 John Addington Symonds, *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, [1883] 1971).
- 29 For example, by Bleys, *Geography*, 240–41.
- 30 Phyllis Grosskurth, *John Addington Symonds: A Biography* (London: Longmans, 1964), 284–94.
- 31 John Addington Symonds, *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, ed. Phyllis Grosskurth (New York: Random House, 1984), 64.
- 32 Liam Steck, “Overlooked No More: Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, Pioneering Gay Activist,” *New York Times*, July 20, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/01/obituaries/karl-heinrich-ulrichs-overlooked.html>, accessed October 20, 2023.
- 33 Symonds, *Memoirs*, 64.

- 34 Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 99.
- 35 Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 74.
- 36 Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 37.
- 37 Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 98.
- 38 Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 28.
- 39 Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 51–52.
- 40 Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 28.
- 41 Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 11–12.
- 42 Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 5.
- 43 Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 7.
- 44 Sinfield, *Wilde Century*, 8.
- 45 Sinfield, *Wilde Century*, 26.
- 46 Sinfield, *Wilde Century*, 27.
- 47 Sinfield, *Wilde Century*, 33.
- 48 Tim Hitchcock, *English Sexualities, 1700–1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 65.
- 49 Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 6.
- 50 Dowling, *Hellenism*, 8.
- 51 Dowling, *Hellenism*, 59.
- 52 Dowling, *Hellenism*, 32.
- 53 E.M. Forester, *Maurice* (London: Edward Arnold, 1971), 50. The novel was written in 1913–1914 but published only posthumously.
- 54 Forester, *Maurice*, 50.
- 55 Plato, *Symposium*, trans. C.D.C. Reeves, in Reeves, *Plato on Love* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2006), 37.
- 56 Plato, *Symposium*, 69.
- 57 Plato, *Symposium*, 71.
- 58 Benjamin Jowett, "Introduction to *Symposium*," in Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Boston, MA: Digireads.com Publishing, 2017), 24.
- 59 Jowett, "Introduction to *Symposium*," 31.
- 60 Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 109.
- 61 Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 8.
- 62 Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 17–18.
- 63 Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 4–5.
- 64 Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 60–61.
- 65 Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 18.
- 66 Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 19.
- 67 Randolph Trumbach, "The Birth of the Queen: Sodomy and the Emergence of Gender Equality in Modern Culture, 1660–1750," in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. (New York: Penguin, 1989), 139.
- 68 Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1972), 104.
- 69 Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 58–59.
- 70 Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 9.
- 71 Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 131.
- 72 Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 1 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1890), 1:422.
- 73 Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 33.
- 74 Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 51, 64.
- 75 Benjamin Jowett, "Introduction to *Phaedrus*," <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1636/1636-h/1636-h.htm>, accessed October 22, 2023.
- 76 Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 68–9.

- 77 Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 63–64.
 78 Symonds, *Greek Ethics*, 73.
 79 Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 124.
 80 Jay Geller, *On Freud's Jewish Body: Mitigating Circumcisions* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007) 169.
 81 Geller, *Jewish Body*, 170.
 82 Quoted in Geller, *Jewish Body*, 278, note 43.
 83 Geller, *Jewish Body*, 174.
 84 Geller, *Jewish Body*, 173.
 85 Geller, *Jewish Body*, 173.
 86 Geller, *Jewish Body*, 176.
 87 Geller, *Jewish Body*, 181, 165.
 88 Geller, *Jewish Body*, 179.
 89 Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age* (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1911), 39. About the "Middle-class Man," Carpenter writes, "It is really lamentable to think how his great organizing capacity – which might create a holy Human empire of the world – is simply at present the tool of the Jew and the Speculator."
 90 Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1912), 62.
 91 Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 52.
 92 Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 25.
 93 Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 63.
 94 Edward Carpenter, *Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk: A Study in Social Evolution* (New York: Arno Press, [1919] 1975), 87–101; 137–60.
 95 Carpenter, *Primitive Folk*, 162–63.
 96 Sinfield, *Wilde Century*, 114.
 97 Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 20.
 98 Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 31–32.
 99 Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 33.
 100 Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 13.
 101 Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 65.
 102 Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 31.
 103 Carpenter, *Love's Coming*, 86, 91.
 104 Carpenter, *Intermediate Types*, 171.
 105 Carpenter, *Intermediate Types*, 172–73.
 106 Bleys, *Geography*, 247.
 107 Carpenter, *Love's Coming*, 119.
 108 Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 120.
 109 Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 56–57.
 110 Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, 114–15.
 111 Edward Carpenter, *A Visit to a Gnani: From Adams Peak to Elephanta* (Chicago, IL: Alice B. Stockham & Co., 1900), 42.
 112 Carpenter, *Visit*, 41–42.
 113 Carpenter, *Visit*, 77–78.
 114 Carpenter, *Visit*, 79–81.
 115 Carpenter, *Visit*, 81–82.
 116 Carpenter, *Visit*, 83.
 117 Carpenter, *Visit*, 84–86.
 118 Gayle Rubin, "Notes for a Radical Theory of Sexuality," in *Pleasure and Danger*, ed. Carole Vance (London: Pandora, 1992), 267–319.
 119 Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex," 280–81.
 120 Rubin, "Thinking Sex," 282–83.

- 121 Rubin, "Thinking Sex," 293.
- 122 Gayle Rubin with Judith Butler, "Sexual Traffic, *Interview*," in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. E. Weed and N. Schoer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 96–97.
- 123 Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Towards a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 122.

Bibliography

- Bleys, Rudi C. 1996. *The Geography of Perversion: Male to Male Sexual Behaviour Outside the West and the Ethnographic Imagination*. London: Cassell.
- Burton Richard Francis. 1889. Vol. 10, *The Book of a Thousand Nights and a Nights*, London: The Burton Club.
- Carbado, Devon. 2013. "Colorblind Intersectionality." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38 (4): 811–45.
- Carpenter, Edward. 1900. *A Visit to a Gnani: From Adams Peak to Elephanta*. Chicago, IL: Alice B. Stockham & Co.
- Carpenter, Edward. 1911. *Love's Coming of Age*. New York: Mitchell Kennerly.
- Carpenter, Edward. 1912. *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women*. New York: Mitchell Kennerly.
- Carpenter, Edward. [1919] 1975. *Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk: A Study in Social Evolution*. New York: Arno Press.
- DeJean, Joan. 1989. "Sex and Philology." *Representations* 27 (27): 148–71.
- Dowling, Linda. 1997. *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Ellis, Havelock. 1896. "A Note on the Treatment of Sexual Inversion." *The Alienist and the Neurologist* 17: 257–64.
- Ferguson, Ronald. 2003. *Aberrations in Black: Towards a Queer of Color Critique*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Forester, E.M. 1971. *Maurice*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Foucault, Michel. 1990. *The History Of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vol. 1. New York: Vintage.
- Geller, Jay. 2007. *On Freud's Jewish Body: Mitigating Circumcisions*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Gilman, Sander L. 1993. *Freud, Race, and Gender*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Grosskurth, Phyllis. 1964. *John Addington Symonds: A Biography*. London: Longmans.
- Grosrichard, Alain. 1998. *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East*. Translated by Liz Heron. London: Verso.
- Halperin, David M. 1990. *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love*. New York: Routledge.
- Hitchcock, Tim. 1997. *English Sexualities, 1700–1800*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Hull, Gloria T., Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, ed. 1982. *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*. New York: Feminist Press.
- Jowett, Benjamin. n.d. "Introduction to Phaedrus." Accessed October 22, 2023. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1636/1636-h/1636-h.htm>.

- Jowett, Benjamin. 2017. "Introduction to *Symposium*." In Plato, *Symposium*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Boston, MA: Digireads.com Publishing.
- Krafft-Ebing, Richard von. [1886] 1997. *Psychopathia Sexualis, with Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct*. Translated by Franklin S. Klaf. New York: Stein and Day.
- Mosse, George L. 1983. *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*. New York: Howard Fertig.
- Norton, Rictor. 1972. *Mother Clap's Molly House*. London: Gay Men's Press.
- Norton, Rictor, ed. 2023. "Homosexuality in Nineteenth Century England: A Sourcebook." April 25. Accessed October 15, 2023. <https://rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/1886gros.htm>.
- Painter, Nell Irvin. 1990. *The History of White People*. New York: Norton.
- Plato. 2006. "Symposium." In *Plato on Love*, edited by C.D.C. Reeves. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 26–87.
- Rubin, Gail, and Judith Butler. 1997. "Sexual Traffic, Interview." In *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, edited by Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 66–108.
- Rubin, Gayle. 1992. "Notes for a Radical Theory of Sexuality." In *Pleasure and Danger*, edited by Carole Vance. London: Pandora, 267–319.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 1990. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sinfield, Alan. 1994. *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Moment*. New York: Columbia.
- Spencer, Herbert. 1890. *Principles of Psychology*. Vol. 1. London: Williams and Norgate.
- Steck, Liam. 2020. "Overlooked No More: Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, Pioneering Gay Activist." July 20. Accessed November 10, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/01/obituaries/karl-heinrich-ulrichs-overlooked.html>.
- Symonds, John Addington. [1883] 1971. *A Problem in Greek Ethics*. New York: Benjamin Blom.
- Symonds, John Addington. [1891] 1971. *A Problem in Modern Ethics*. New York: Haskell House Publishers.
- Symonds, John Addington. 1984. *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*. Edited by Phyllis Groskurth. New York: Random House.
- Thomas, Greg. 2007. *The Sexual Demon of Colonial Power: Pan-African Embodiment and Erotic Schemes of Empire*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Trumbach, Randolph. 1989. "The Birth of the Queen: Sodomy and the Emergence of Gender Equality in Modern Culture, 1669–1750." 129–40. In *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, edited by M. Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey, Jr. New York: Penguin, 129–40.

4

ORIENTALISM AND THE GENDER-BINARY IDEAL IN *THE SECOND SEX*

Introduction

The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir's iconic mid-twentieth-century feminist tome, might at first seem like an unlikely place to find the gender-binary ideal expressed, complete with its racial overtones. This is especially true when one considers three important hallmarks of this ideal.¹ The first is a celebration of an ideal of bourgeois gender relations defined by a special feminine essence in body, mind, and soul; the second is the use of this ideal to define and classify races and to denigrate those – i.e., all but White Europeans – who fail to meet it; and the third, especially pronounced after Darwin, is the conviction that bourgeois European masculinity and femininity are the crowning achievements of human evolution.

The reading of Beauvoir I propose might seem unpromising on all of these counts. As far as an idealized feminine essence is concerned, Beauvoir goes to lengths perhaps unsurpassed among feminists to reject the idea; not for her encomia to feminine purity, self-abnegation, maternity, or “women's ways of knowing.”² On Beauvoir's view, if woman occupies a separate sphere that is because man has confined her there.³ For Beauvoir, moreover, “the feminine” is not on par with “the masculine”; only what is masculine counts as fully and paradigmatically human, and to pretend otherwise is nothing more than an exercise in mystification. As for race, despite some criticisms of Beauvoir (which I discuss further in this chapter), *The Second Sex*, written in the shadow of the Shoah in Europe and in the midst of Jim Crow in the United States, takes care to emphasize that the ideas of the Jewish personality and the Black soul are mystifications, instruments of oppression, and, indeed, on a par with the idea of the eternal feminine. In all of these cases,

Beauvoir believes, full human beings are reduced to bodies, objects, others, mere things.⁴ Finally, the existential framework underlying *The Second Sex*, a framework that posits a radically free human subject, would seem to be at odds with the sort of teleological or evolutionary view favored by proponents of the racial gender-binary ideal.

But Beauvoir is a complex, original, and eclectic thinker, and *The Second Sex* draws liberally from many intellectual currents, some in tension with others. Indeed, part of Beauvoir's genius is her ability to weave these threads together so well into what might appear, at least at first, to be a seamless whole. Although Beauvoir is often read today either as a timeless classic or as in dialogue with contemporary thinkers, *The Second Sex* was published in the mid-twentieth century, only a decade after Havelock Ellis's death in 1939. So it should come as no surprise that the racial gender-binary ideal makes an appearance in her text.

Beauvoir's oriental other

I will begin by pointing out several passages in *The Second Sex* that might at first seem to be isolated and thus hardly worth noticing – they have, apparently, seemed so to many Beauvoir scholars – but that become significant if one reads with the racial gender-binary ideal in mind. In the first of these passages, which appears at the end of the book's second chapter on history, Beauvoir writes that one of the problems man “will seek to solve is how to make his wife at once a servant and a companion; his attitude will evolve through the centuries, and this will also entail an evolution in woman's destiny.” On the face of it, this seems an innocuous enough remark, although one certainly hears in it echoes of Spencer and Symonds. But just after, Beauvoir adds this pointed, jarring footnote: “We will examine this evolution in the Western world. The history of the woman in the East, in India, in China, was one of long and immutable slavery.”⁵ One might choose to ignore this passage as well, dismissing Beauvoir's casual ethnocentrism as inessential to her general argument. But then, later in the text, one encounters this explanation of what makes gender relations in the modern West so special: “The more the male becomes individualized and claims his individuality, the more he will recognize an individual and a freedom in his companion. The Oriental man who is unconcerned with his own destiny is satisfied with a female [femelle] who is his pleasure object; but Western man's dream, once elevated to consciousness of the singularity of his being, is to be recognized by a foreign and docile freedom.”⁶

In this brief, really rather astounding passage, Beauvoir manages not only to rehearse the major philosophical concerns of her work – self/other, subject/object, individuality, freedom, reciprocity – but also to situate them squarely and explicitly within the wider discourse of what Edward Said has

famously called orientalism. As Said puts it: “An Oriental lives in the Orient, he lives a life of Oriental ease, in a state of Oriental despotism and sensuality, imbued with a feeling of Oriental fatalism”⁷; the orient itself is “separate, eccentric, backward, silently indifferent, femininely penetrable, supinely malleable, isolated from the mainstream of European progress in the sciences, arts, and commerce.”⁸ Europe’s technological and industrial achievements, its political freedoms, and its monogamous institution of marriage (the latter certainly an object of Beauvoir’s criticism, but probably preferable, on her view, to polygamy) all follow, it seems, from man’s – that is, from *Western* man’s – emerging self-consciousness. So it appears that Beauvoir, like those discussed in previous chapters, tells a narrative of human progress that unfolds in the West against the backdrop of a static world, suspended in time and inhabited by an oriental other who never quite rises to the occasion of human freedom and history.

In light of how deeply entrenched this trope had become in the two centuries or so before Beauvoir wrote, its appearance in *The Second Sex* is not a surprise. What is more surprising is that although some feminist readings of Beauvoir comment cursorily on her invocations of the harem, the passages I cite above have been largely ignored.⁹ Perhaps by paying Beauvoir the compliment of criticizing her as they might have a contemporary, her first wave of feminist critics simply overlooked these remarks. Moreover, I suspect there may be a subtle tension between reading Beauvoir the way I do here and reading her, as some feminist philosophers might favor, in a way intended to secure for her work, and for the category of sexual difference generally, a central place in philosophy. Or it may be that after so many earlier hostile readings – and misreadings – of Beauvoir, feminists have preferred to find in her work new inspiration rather than new problems.

Nevertheless, taking these orientalist moments of *The Second Sex* seriously will not only add to our understanding of this iconic text but also allow us to situate it within two important, related stories. The first is a continuation of the one previous chapters tell, of the entanglement of the category of binary gender difference with the doctrine of racial supremacy. The second is the history of a specifically feminist version of this story. In the latter part of the twentieth century, feminist ethnocentrism most often took the form of regarding the category of gender as easily separable from that of race, thus allowing feminists to talk simply about gender, or “woman’s condition.” The problem, of course, is that such talk often turns out to be centered on the situation of White, middle-class, Western women – not to mention heterosexual, cisgendered, Christian, able-bodied ones. When Beauvoir has been criticized for ethnocentrism, she has most often been criticized for this sort of false universalizing. I will suggest, however, that the text’s orientalism reveals an ethnocentrism of a different older, sort, the outlines of which will be familiar from earlier chapters.

One promising place to start is with Beauvoir's engagement with history. Sartre's existentialist conception of the human subject as transcendent – an autonomous, free, self-creating being – is, of course, at the heart of Beauvoir's analysis, and there is something deeply ahistorical about this conception. But she is pulled in another direction as well. As Sonia Kruks has pointed out, although Beauvoir may have claimed to speak in one philosophical voice with Sartre – a voice, indeed, that pronounced the slave in chains to be as free as the master – the truth may be more complicated.¹⁰ Kruks notes that in *The Prime of Life*, written in 1960, Beauvoir gives this account of an early disagreement with Sartre:

I maintained that, from the point of view of freedom, as Sartre defined it – not as a stoical resignation but as an active transcendence of the given – not every situation is equal: what transcendence is possible for a woman locked up in a harem? Even such a cloistered existence could be lived in several different ways, Sartre said. I clung to my opinion for a long time and then made only a token submission. Basically I was right. But to have been able to defend my position, I would have had to abandon the terrain of individualist, thus idealist morality, where we stood.¹¹

Indeed, in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, written just before *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir has already sketched an alternative to this sort of Sartrean view. In extreme cases, according to Beauvoir, social oppression may keep subjects from even understanding that they are oppressed, let alone from acting to change their situations.¹² As Kruks has argued, *The Second Sex* took this analysis a step further by offering an account of human situatedness within social institutions that mediate and, indeed, may severely limit one's freedom. Thus, a tension emerges between the metaphysical voluntarism of the early Sartre and Beauvoir's more materialist and historical understanding of agency, freedom, and subjectivity as importantly shaped by social structures.¹³ Beauvoir's great achievement was to resolve this tension largely in favor of the latter view, developed so forcefully in *The Second Sex* and consistent with a more historical understanding of human subjectivity and social relations, especially the relation between men and women.

But the picture becomes more complicated than this suggests, because one can tease out from Beauvoir's work not one but two alternatives to Sartre's ahistorical voluntarism. The first is the sort of conception of social situatedness described above, which owes much to Marx's historical materialism and takes into consideration the concrete, specific realities of social power relations as they unfold, contingently, in particular times and places. The other alternative, by contrast, invokes a somewhat different conception of history, of history with, so to speak, a capital H – a conception familiar from Spencer, Ellis, Carpenter, and Symonds. Like them, Beauvoir both turns to a grand

historical narrative to understand gender relations and links these relations to the progress of humankind. This sort of speculation, closely related to various grand evolutionary or teleological perspectives about human history, has been out of fashion for quite some time. However, as the anthropologist Michelle Rosaldo wrote almost a half century ago, some version of it has long held an attraction for many feminists. After all, if one regards women's oppression as monolithic and universal but not biologically determined, it is tempting to look to prehistory to see how we came to this pass.¹⁴ Beauvoir takes this sort of long view. One might even argue that existentialism's essentially ahistorical and voluntaristic character – its claim that all humans are inherently free – gave Beauvoir all the more reason to seek an explanation of how, when, and why women became the inessential Other, to themselves as well as to men. For her, history – or, rather, History – holds a crucial part of the answer.

The Second Sex's orientalism – a perspective that, as Said notes, is particularly useful for bolstering grand historical narratives and “diffuse world-hypotheses” – tells a particular version of this story, one invoking a doctrine of racial difference that intersects in the late nineteenth century with the sort of evolutionary just-so stories of European superiority discussed in previous chapters.¹⁵ Not surprisingly, orientalism also routinely, and often explicitly, contrasts Western gender-binary health with oriental gender disorder. Women of “the East” are hypersexualized, figured as victims, or both. And, as discussed in Chapter 3, there was a longstanding association of the Muslim male with a rampant, aggressive sexuality, unrestrained by the Christian sacrament of marriage. Indeed, such sexual excess was often itself associated with effeminate weakness, as Alain Grosrichard and others have argued.¹⁶ A version of the racialized gender-binary ideal, then, threads through orientalist discourse and underwrites a gender-differentiated Western ideal that the orient allegedly fails to meet.

Said does not discuss G.W.F. Hegel, by all accounts a major influence on Beauvoir, but Hegel's grandiose story of the progression of Spirit through human history certainly invokes the narrative of racial development on which orientalism depends. The preface to human history, Hegel writes, can be read in “the main part of Africa,” where “the most terrible manifestations of human nature” make despotism necessary.¹⁷ Indeed, African man, who is “as yet unconscious of himself” is in such a state of animality that “history is in fact out of the question. Life there consists of a succession of contingent happenings and surprises.... There is no subjectivity, but merely a series of subjects who destroy one another.”¹⁸ In short, “what we understand as Africa proper is that unhistorical and undeveloped land which is still enmeshed in the natural spirit, and which had to be mentioned here before we cross the threshold of world history itself.”¹⁹ Asia is somewhat more advanced, but despite its “spiritual treasures,” in India “all social relations

are wild and arbitrary ... with no ultimate end in the shape of progress and development.”²⁰ Indeed, since “world history travels from east to west,” Asia is the absolute beginning of history, and Europe is its culmination; from Asia, “history passes over to central Asia [that is, to ancient Greece and Rome],” and eventually to Christendom.²¹

Although the echo of these passages in *The Second Sex* is striking, feminist discussions of Beauvoir’s use of Hegel tend to overlook it. But Beauvoir would not necessarily have needed to draw on Hegel here; an inheritance from the nineteenth century, such a perspective had become ubiquitous by the first part of the twentieth. Indeed, on Said’s view even the work of Karl Marx – itself, of course, heavily influenced by Hegel and also an independent influence on Beauvoir – is tainted with orientalism. According to Said, in spite of Marx’s initial “fellow feeling” with the plight of the colonized Indians, he eventually succumbed to the standard orientalist justification of European colonialism as necessary to correct the Asiatic tendency to stagnation and despotism.²²

Said’s characterization of Marx as an orientalist is controversial, and some of Marx’s defenders find that it significantly misrepresents his views.²³ Others have emphasized his rejection of Hegel’s abstract, teleological conception of history as a series of escalating stages, one epoch necessarily developing out of the previous one.²⁴ And, as Aijaz Ahmad has argued, to the extent that Marx draws on categorical generalizations about Asia based on stereotype and myth instead of undertaking the sort of concrete, materialist analysis that informs his work more generally, he violates his own historical materialism – a materialism that both demystifies perspectives like orientalism and presents an alternative way of understanding the social world.²⁵ At the very least, Marx’s materialist commitments require that categories like the Asiatic mode of production be justified by concrete, material particulars, not by racialist tropes about the oriental temperament or spirit.²⁶

For Hegel, though, race is more fundamental. To develop the necessary spirit of independence and freedom, Hegel tells us, a nation needs a certain sort of climate and geography as well as access to the sea. (Even the founder of historical idealism, it seems, cannot do without environmentalist explanations.)²⁷ But in the end, such explanations are not sufficient for Hegel. Even when a sea is available, Hegel writes, the nations of Asia suffer from insularity, the Indian religion going so far as to forbid going to sea in the first place. Only Europeans seem able to take advantage of the sea, that “outlet which enables life to step beyond itself” and invests “European political life with the principle of individual freedom.”²⁸ One hears an absurd twentieth-century echo of this view in the pronouncement of the American eugenicist and polygenist Madison Grant, the author of the infamous *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916) – a book that Hitler considered to be his “bible.”²⁹ As Robert Sussman writes, Grant cited a study showing that “success as a naval

officer was related to a single inherited recessive trait, ‘thalassophilia’ (love of the sea), that was especially common among Nordics.”³⁰

Marx’s orientalism, then – such as it is – seems to be of a milder, less racialized variety than Hegel’s (or Grant’s). This is not to suggest that Beauvoir explicitly chose between Marx’s and Hegel’s orientalisms; indeed, she seems to be all but unaware of her own. Consider that while Hegel at least felt the need to give *some* sort of explanation for European superiority, Beauvoir simply notes that in the East the situation of woman has not evolved because Eastern man has not evolved. But why hasn’t he? It is striking that Beauvoir, the trenchant critic of the notions of the Jewish personality and the Black soul, has nothing more to say about the matter. The generalized oriental male seems unable or unwilling to rouse himself from his lethargic sensuality. Indeed, her treatment of race begins to appear somewhat bifurcated, sounding one register when she talks about the oppression of Blacks, Jews, or Algerians and a second, seemingly incompatible one when she trots out the oriental sensualist. That Beauvoir shows no awareness of this tension perhaps suggests that by the time she wrote *The Second Sex*, such orientalism had penetrated to a stratum of ideological assumption deep enough to escape scrutiny.

At first sight, this tension in Beauvoir’s treatment of race might call to mind the incongruity noted above between Marx’s historical materialism and whatever orientalism he might have inherited from Hegel. But there are differences. Not only are Marx’s orientalist moments inconsistent with his resolute and thorough-going materialism; arguably, they are also too isolated and adventitious to pose much of a challenge to this materialism. The orientalism of *The Second Sex*, by contrast, runs more deeply through the text. Nor does materialism provide the same sort of bulwark against Beauvoir’s orientalism as it does against Marx’s. Certainly, Marx’s influence is felt throughout *The Second Sex* – in its emphasis on historical circumstance, its analysis of mystification, and its generally critical attitude toward capitalism – but materialism is but one theoretical strand of a complex and heterogeneous work. What’s more, Beauvoir explicitly and repeatedly implies that materialism is not the whole story, that while socialism may be a necessary condition for gender equality, it is hardly a sufficient one. Not only is an entire early chapter devoted to arguing against what Beauvoir takes to be an historical-materialist understanding of woman’s condition, but Beauvoir writes this in the book’s concluding chapter:

One must certainly not think that modifying her economic situation is enough to transform woman: this factor has been and remains the primordial factor for her development, but until it brings about the moral, social, and cultural consequences it heralds and requires, the new woman cannot appear.³¹

Beauvoir, like many later feminists, continued to puzzle over the role marxism should play in feminist analysis and politics and, although I cannot analyze it here, her view is complex, equivocal, and largely unresolved. In 1963, she expresses regret about not having given a more materialist analysis in *The Second Sex*:

As for the content, I should take a more materialist position today in the first volume. I should base the notion of woman as other and the Manichean argument it entails not on an idealistic and a priori struggle of consciences, but on the facts of supply and demand; that is how I treated the same problem in *The Long March* when I was writing about the subjugation of women in ancient China.³²

Later, in the 1970s, she questions more than once her earlier faith that socialism would bring about women's equality.³³ Whatever her ultimate position, a thoroughly materialist perspective of the sort that is based, as Beauvoir puts it, on "the facts of supply and demand" might be expected to supplant not only talk of "an idealistic and a priori struggle of consciences" but also the framework of Hegel's orientalist historical idealism.³⁴ But, alas, even *The Long March* is peppered with a variety of orientalist tropes: those of the oriental despot, the absence of Chinese history, the effeminate Chinese male, and the Chinese lack of energy and personality.³⁵ Orientalism is indeed a hardy plant.

Beauvoir's version of gendered evolution

Earlier chapters have contrasted a one-gender understanding of social evolution, where the male is the measure of all human progress, with an understanding that incorporates the binary-gender ideal. As we have seen, these perspectives may intertwine in complex ways, which is not surprising; as Beauvoir herself took great pains to show, if one presses hard enough on the traditional ideal of femininity it is likely to give way to the idea that woman is inferior to man – an idea for which talk of feminine difference is often just a screen. In Beauvoir's own conception of human progress, the entanglement of these two models is especially complex. Western feminists have, of course, often implicitly or explicitly gauged social progress by humanity's success in reaching gender-egalitarian social arrangements. But how should such success be measured? Feminists have reason to find neither the one- nor the two-gender model of humanity wholly satisfactory. The one-gender model has the obvious drawback of equating what is human with what is coded as male; this suggests that a gender-egalitarian world will be one where women are as much like men as possible – rational, autonomous, competitive, violent. But the two-gender model is little better insofar as it incorporates the very notion

of femininity – of the “eternal feminine” (as Beauvoir calls it) or the angel of the house – that spurred modern feminism in the first place.³⁶ Complicating matters, this feminine ideal also encodes a racial privilege White feminists may be loath to give up. In light of this, one strategy is to hold fast to the ideal of femininity and simply insist that it be respected, that the feminine sphere be given equal weight with the masculine. As Chapter 2 indicates, feminists from privileged social groups have celebrated traditional bourgeois ideals of femininity but insisted that such femininity – a femininity that has evolved, supposedly, in tandem with a corresponding White masculinity – entitles White women not only to equality with their husbands but also to the privilege of assisting them in wielding power over social subordinates.³⁷ Beauvoir, at least, is not guilty of this.

However, to the dismay of generations of feminist readers (and I think here of my students over the years), Beauvoir seems to embrace instead the one-gender model, often quite explicitly. For example, she writes that “it is in man and not in woman that it has hitherto been possible for Man to be incarnated”; that men rather than women have been the progressive force in history;³⁸ and that while even “the most conservative man” realizes that he must adapt to evolution, woman “takes no part in history” and thus often impedes its progress.³⁹ No wonder that some of Beauvoir’s apologists – for example, Debra Bergoffen and Sara Heinämaa – have downplayed these passages and instead have argued (with various degrees of plausibility) that sexual difference is central to Beauvoir’s analysis of woman’s situation and her hope for an egalitarian future.⁴⁰ I cannot examine these arguments here, but it is true at least that Beauvoir’s invocation of the one-gender model can be understood as well in terms of a *relationship* between man and woman that has been transformed through (Western) history. For although Beauvoir claims that men have long been the agents of evolution, even the exemplars of humanity, she also believes that the future may hold something very different, that women have it within their power to become full, autonomous subjects and to be recognized as such by men. Indeed, only then will both sexes be relieved of their different burdens of bad faith and self-deception. In this sense, then, the ideal heterosexual couple, not simply the male, serves for Beauvoir as the measure of human progress after all. I will discuss this view further in the next section, but here I want to emphasize that Beauvoir’s version of this ideal involves neither the development through history of some sort of feminine difference nor even the negotiation of sexual difference *per se*, however such difference might be understood. Rather, the crux of this relationship is woman’s – *Western* women’s – final overcoming of her age-old status of Other, and man’s coming to terms with those elements of himself that he has projected onto her: his embodied nature, his passivity, his mortality – in short, the inescapable immanence common to all humans.

Coming to freedom (in the West)

Beauvoir's version of the binary-gender model of human progress departs from the traditional one in another way as well. Unlike most adherents of this model, she is, of course, no advocate of the traditional Western bourgeois heterosexual ideal – the masterful, paternalistic male and his gentle, forbearing better-half. But even though *The Second Sex* may disparage such gender relations, they nevertheless have for Beauvoir an important role to play both in measuring and furthering human advancement. I will say more about this just below, but in this respect, at least, Beauvoir is similar to the American feminist thinker Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who died only several years before *The Second Sex* was published.

Influenced by evolutionary theory, especially by Lester Ward's gynocentric version of it, Gilman did not completely reject the idea of femininity or the view that a pronounced degree of difference between the sexes was a sign of a race's superiority. At the same time, like many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western feminists, she chafed at the restrictions imposed on respectable White women. Indeed, she wanted it both ways. Gilman's solution was to admit that greater gender difference was, indeed, a sign of superior racial evolution, but to insist that if humanity hoped to evolve further, such dimorphism must finally be transcended. But on her view the crucial evolutionary stage characterized by the manly man and feminine woman could not be skipped. So although she championed (White) women's rights, she declined to support the emancipation of the less-than-feminine Black woman – at least until Black men evolved sufficiently to assume fully their proper manly role.⁴¹

To be sure, Beauvoir's feminist existentialism may at first seem to be a far cry indeed from Gilman's racist evolutionism, let alone from the scientific measurements of the skull and pelvis favored by Ellis and his crowd. As Beauvoir famously claims, woman is made rather than born; so too, on Beauvoir's view, are the "Jewish personality" and the "black soul," both mainstays of early twentieth-century racism.⁴² But, like Gilman, Beauvoir can be read as both incorporating and transcending a conventional evolutionary view by regarding Western bourgeois heterosexual relations not as human history's final triumph but as its penultimate stage – and, hence, a crucial one. In fact, Beauvoir's focus on these relations in the latter part of *The Second Sex* is so exclusive that she has been accused of conflating the plight of bourgeois Western women of her time with that of womankind generally (an accusation I will return to below).

But we can also understand Beauvoir to be calling attention to a particular, and singular, moment of human History, the darkness just before the dawn of gender equality. This reading of Beauvoir is in tension with the more usual one that emphasizes her understanding of woman's condition as at once static

and universal, a reading for which there is certainly a good deal of support. For example, Beauvoir writes that from the Greeks to our own day, “woman’s condition has remained the same throughout superficial changes”; and no wonder: “The category of the Other,” Beauvoir memorably writes, “is as primordial as consciousness itself.”⁴³ Man’s modest biological advantages in early human society allowed him to dominate woman, and this domination, further fueled by his projection onto woman of his fear of his own mortality and immanence, soon hardened into a basic structure of human society.⁴⁴ “At the moment when man asserts himself as subject and freedom, the idea of the Other becomes mediatory,” and woman has suffered the consequences ever since.⁴⁵ Indeed, one feminist anthropologist has gone so far as to regard Beauvoir as a structuralist who holds that “the symbolic structures defining masculine and feminine conform to an essentially static, dialectical pattern of binary oppositions in all societies.”⁴⁶ On this reading, whatever differences there may be between women’s situations, the basic structure – and indeed the fact – of their subjugation remains the same.

However, such a reading does not square well with the text’s considerable optimism. Intractable though the problem of women’s subordination may be, Beauvoir claims more than once that humanity is an “idea,” one at a transitional moment; woman is not a “fixed reality” but a “becoming.”⁴⁷ Moreover, a reading that sees women’s condition as essentially static raises this familiar question: if Beauvoir intends her analysis to apply universally to *all* women, why does she concentrate so disproportionately on the situation of women like herself, producing what Judith Okely has called an “anthropological village study” of mid-twentieth-century Parisian bourgeois women – “but without the anthropological theory and focus”?⁴⁸ Is the idea that since woman’s condition is universal, one need not venture too far from home for data? If so, it is no wonder Beauvoir is accused of feminist ethnocentrism.

But the reading I give, one in line with the text’s submerged orientalism, suggests an alternative explanation: the tension between viewing woman’s condition, on the one hand, as a universal and, on the other, as varying according to class, race, historical period, and culture may be partially resolved by understanding the long project of human History as culminating in a human psyche capable of, and committed to, reciprocity and authenticity. *The Second Sex* views the struggle between the sexes as the proving ground for this progress, which can thus be measured by woman’s situation in a certain place and time. Progress may be slow and uneven, and until the final breakthrough woman will remain the other. But as the male becomes freer and more responsible, woman’s status finally becomes visible and insupportable – to women, of course, but also to men.

On this reading, then, Beauvoir presents bourgeois European woman’s condition as a particular instance of the universal relationship between man

and woman, but an instance as special as it is poignant. For the evolution of woman's condition requires not only woman's "participation in productive labor and freedom from reproductive slavery"⁴⁹ but also – and crucially – her developing consciousness of the central contradiction that structures her psyche and social life. The development of this consciousness reaches a critical point in bourgeois woman. "Insofar as woman is considered the absolute Other," Beauvoir writes, "that is – whatever magic powers she has – as the inessential, it is precisely impossible to regard her as another subject."⁵⁰ But a major part of the pathos and tragedy of her condition is that she also understands herself in this way. That is, she sees herself as the Other – as nature, as object, as inessential even while she is also necessarily an independent subject and must, however dimly, understand herself as such.⁵¹ As Beauvoir writes, "Woman's drama lies in this conflict between the fundamental claim of every subject, which always posits itself as essential, and the demands of a situation that constitutes her as inessential."⁵²

Woman's growing awareness of this drama, moreover, is central to its unfolding. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir has already concluded that to be free, one needs a level of awareness of both oneself and one's situation, but under extremely oppressive conditions such awareness may be impossible. In this work, Beauvoir has not yet quite decided how this criterion for freedom should apply to woman's condition, nor even to what extent the situations of all women should be understood to be uniform. On the one hand, after explaining the infantile state of those who are enslaved, she likens modern bourgeois Western women to them:

Even today in western countries, among women who have not had in their work an apprenticeship of freedom, there are still many who take shelter in the shadow of men; they adopt without discussion the opinions and values recognized by their husband or their lovers.⁵³

But then immediately after, she distinguishes these same modern Western women not only from those who are enslaved but also from women "enclosed in a harem":

The child's situation is imposed upon him, whereas the woman (I mean the Western woman of today) chooses it or at least consents to it. Ignorance and error are facts as inescapable as prison walls. The negro slave of the eighteenth century, the Mohammedan woman enclosed in a harem have no instrument, be it in thought or by astonishment or anger, which permits them to attack the civilization which oppresses them.... But once there appears a possibility of liberation, it is a resignation of freedom not to exploit the possibility, a resignation which implies dishonesty [la mauvaise foi] and which is a positive fault.⁵⁴

So the child, the enslaved person, the “Mohammedan woman enclosed in a harem” all can be called free in only the most attenuated of senses, while the Western woman of today, whose changed situation is accompanied by a new awareness and new possibilities, consents to her unfreedom in a way the others do not. Although *The Second Sex*, written soon after, may equivocate somewhat on the matter, it suggests that the “Western women of today” and “the Mohammedan woman enclosed in a harem” have something important in common after all: both have female bodies, and so both are viewed as the other by the men of their group. But Beauvoir also insists on a crucial difference between them. Even as she understands herself to embody the ideal of feminine difference, the bourgeois Western woman has a correspondingly more developed idea of what it means to be a free, autonomous subject. *The Second Sex*, moreover, suggests that this idea and the material conditions that make it possible have developed through the evolution of the male – that is, of the *Western* male, who increasingly requires his companion to be not merely an object of pleasure, but another free being, a version of himself (if not quite his equal).⁵⁵

To return for a moment to the earlier discussion of race in Beauvoir, we should note again the sharp contrast between Western man and the male oriental other, who – immanent, despotic, content to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh – haunts the margin of Beauvoir’s text and is so difficult to reconcile with Beauvoir’s explicit antiracist sympathies. But while Beauvoir seems unaware of this tension, she nevertheless provides the tools to draw a distinction between two sorts of racial others, each corresponding to one of her approaches to race. On the one hand, there are the Algerian, the Jew, the African American, all of whom, like woman (although perhaps not so much like the privileged, bourgeois woman), can justifiably blame their conditions on the tyranny of others; on the other hand, there is the sensual, indolent oriental male who, although enslaved by no one, still does not will himself free.⁵⁶ Perhaps like Hegel’s Indian, who failed to set sail although he lived near a sea, the oriental man of the European imagination simply cannot manage to make history – or perhaps he chooses not to do so. Either way, unlike the Jew or the African American, this imaginary oriental doesn’t have the excuse of being oppressed. Here Beauvoir seems to have projected immanence onto the timeless oriental male much as she claims men have projected immanence onto women. Indeed, this oriental other, insofar as he does not choose freedom, has more in common with the contemporary bourgeois Western woman (at least as *The Ethics of Ambiguity* characterizes her), who consents to a life of dependence and ease, than he does with the oppressed populations – the African American, the Algerian, the Jew – Beauvoir invokes when she talks about race and racism.

However, there is also an important difference between the oriental man and the bourgeois European woman: only the bourgeois woman’s situation

marks a crucial moment in humankind's evolution. This situation, moreover, however painful it may be for her, follows from Western man's laudable discovery of his own subjectivity and so presages woman's discovery of *her* own. Just as he has from the earliest historical period, when woman recognized the value of his energy, risk taking, and inventiveness (before oriental lethargy set in, or perhaps in a different part of the globe), man makes visible how far humans have come and what might lie ahead. Yet, even as she glimpses humankind's great potential, bourgeois woman nevertheless finds herself still defined by her role, identified with her body, and confined to immanence and generality.⁵⁷ The traditional bourgeois relationship between man and woman combines a masculine imperative to transcendence with a feminine imperative to ornamental passivity; but only transcendence fully signifies what is essentially human. Thus, the bourgeois woman – the angel of the house – can't help but feel the contradiction of her situation particularly sharply. This contradiction, although universal among women, will not afflict non-Western women or Western women of the working classes in quite the same way as it does contemporary bourgeois women (even though – as I assume Beauvoir would acknowledge – the misery and oppression of less privileged women are, in other respects, surely greater).

On this reading of *The Second Sex*, then, the road to an ideal relationship between man and woman – a relationship by which Beauvoir, like so many others, measures human advancement – leads straight to, and then through, the contradictions of the bourgeois hearth. To read bourgeois women's situation this way accords both with Beauvoir's grand view of history generally and also with her understanding of the world-historical significance of women's condition at other crucial moments: in the "advance" from stone to bronze age, for example, when "the devaluation of woman" represented "a necessary stage in the history of humanity,"⁵⁸ or "at the moment when man asserts himself as subject and freedom" and "the idea of the Other becomes mediatory."⁵⁹ At the other end of human history, just beyond the bourgeois horizon, lies the reciprocal relation of equality embodied by the evolved "human" (i.e., heterosexual) couple, which, Beauvoir tells us on the final page of *The Second Sex*, will there "find its true form." She ends the book with a quotation from the early Marx:

"The direct, natural, necessary relation of human creatures is *the relation of man to woman*," said Marx. From the character of this relationship follows how much man as a species being, as man, has come to be himself and to comprehend himself; the relation of man to woman is the most natural relation of human being to human being.⁶⁰

Of course, for Marx the central subject of history is the modern proletariat, whose contradictory material situation would move history to its triumphant conclusion. In *The Second Sex*, by contrast, Beauvoir's focus is on

the contradiction of the bourgeois woman – shaped to be man’s other and tempted by bad faith but poised finally to demand her full humanity.

Just another privileged White feminist?

In examining how a particular late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ideology of race and gender informs *The Second Sex*, I have placed Beauvoir at some remove from the late twentieth-century feminism she was to influence so greatly and of which her work is so often taken to be an early example. Indeed, when Beauvoir’s treatment of race in *The Second Sex* first came under feminist scrutiny, she was usually accused of committing the same mistake as the privileged White feminists who would come after her: by focusing on her own situation and conflating it with that of all women – so the charge goes – she obscures and reinforces her own privilege even as she ignores the multiple oppressions of other women. An early version of this criticism was forcefully leveled against Beauvoir in 1989 by Elizabeth Spelman. Beauvoir’s ethnocentrism, Spelman writes, is particularly notable since *The Second Sex* has the theoretical apparatus to avoid it. In particular, Beauvoir’s emphasis on embodiment and her rejection of the myth of a timeless feminine essence invite her theory to address the great variability of gender within and across cultures.⁶¹ Yet, Spelman objects, although Beauvoir recognizes significant differences among women, she

dismisses those differences as irrelevant to understanding the condition of “woman,” insofar as she takes the story of “woman” to be that provided by the examination of the lives of women not subject to racism, classism, anti-Semitism, imperialism, and so forth.⁶²

Indeed, Spelman charges, by routinely contrasting the situation of woman to that of Blacks, Jews, the working class – groups that all obviously include women – Beauvoir, like many later feminists, ends up focusing on women like herself without acknowledging it. And as Spelman notes, “For someone to have privilege is precisely not to have to beg for attention to one’s case. For feminist theory to express white middle-class privilege is for it to ensure that white middle-class women will automatically receive attention.” It ensures this, moreover, by “making the default position of feminist inquiry an examination of white middle-class women,” thus eliding differences between women.⁶³ “How lovely: the many turn out to be one, and the one that they are is me,” Spelman dryly concludes.⁶⁴

This sort of objection has become familiar in recent decades, but Beauvoir has also had her defenders. Toril Moi, for example, has claimed that to argue,

as Spelman does ... that Beauvoir’s comparison of women with blacks and Jews is sexist because it implies that Beauvoir excludes the existence

of black and Jewish women from her categories is to make the mistake of taking a statement about oppression (that is to say, about power relations) for a statement about identity.⁶⁵

But here Moi seems to beg the very question at issue: *Is the oppression that women experience the same across these categories of identity? What's more, being Black or Jewish is not simply a matter of identity any more than being a woman is; identities may bring oppressions in their wake, just as oppressions may forge identities. And as intersectional theorists make clear, oppressions on the basis of gender and race often cannot be pried apart in any case. This book, of course, makes a related claim: the very categories of race and gender are inextricably linked even at the most basic level.*

However, if Moi's answer to Spelman misses the mark, Spelman's analysis of Beauvoir has a different problem: it overlooks her orientalism and instead attributes to her a failing that is really more characteristic of later feminist work. Central to Spelman's criticism of Beauvoir is the term "privilege," which, used by turns accusingly, confessionally, or defensively, crops up often in contemporary feminist discussions. And central, in turn, to what might be called the discourse of privilege – or, perhaps, the discourse of White, middle-class anxiety about privilege – is the well-founded fear that the more privilege one has, the more likely one is to be unconscious of it and so to reinforce it unwittingly. This problem is especially poignant for White feminists, who have a vision of women's equality not only with men – Beauvoir's primary concern – but also with each other: that is to say, a vision of sisterhood. Of course, this vision has too often mistakenly assumed an essence or condition that all women share but one that, at best, characterizes only women of privileged groups. Both the appeal of this sort of essentialism and the urgency of questioning it arise, I suspect, from the ideals, illusions, and struggles that shaped late twentieth-century feminist politics – a movement, one should not forget, that coalesced well after *The Second Sex* was written.

But if Beauvoir, more than some of the White second-wave feminists who followed her, was alert to the profound differences between women across time, culture, and social position, why, one might wonder with Spelman, does Beauvoir nevertheless devote so much of *The Second Sex* to discussing bourgeois women in mid-century Paris? Does this emphasis, after all, simply reflect the familiar myopia of the privileged? Beauvoir's orientalism suggests another explanation: unlike the sort of late twentieth-century liberalism that flatters itself as being free of racism, orientalism and similar discourses needed neither to repress an assumption of Western superiority nor to ignore how entangled categories of gender are with those of race and culture. Indeed, even if later feminist readers have chosen not to notice, Beauvoir herself did not shrink from explicitly invoking the oriental male. On this reading, when Beauvoir emphasizes the variety of situations in which

women find themselves, she does so primarily to demystify the masculine myth of the eternal feminine, not to challenge the essentialist presuppositions of a feminist movement that, for all purposes, had yet to be born. From the perspective of an orientalism like the one I have sketched, bourgeois Western woman is surely privileged, but this privilege is one bestowed by History and superior race as much as by bourgeois class structure. Nor does Beauvoir's orientalism square well with the assumption, attributed to Beauvoir by Spelman, that sexism is easier to analyze when it is abstracted from the "further oppressions" of race, class, or antisemitism. No, Beauvoir implies, the bourgeois woman is worth focusing on because the history of humankind flows through her, not through women "in the East, in India, in China" – nor, for that matter, through her less privileged contemporary Western sisters.⁶⁶

This discussion is not intended to reduce *The Second Sex*, in all of its complexity, to its orientalist strand, which, admittedly, is in considerable tension with other aspects of the text. Nor do I claim that its orientalism necessarily compromises what seems compelling about this work: an approach to gender that neither ignores the body nor is reduced to it; a theory of agency and complicity; an understanding of how mind/body dualism underpins the dynamics of oppression; and an analysis of myth and mystification. Should we then, as we read *The Second Sex*, resolutely replace the text's notion of History – capital H – with that of history, and see what remains? While this is a reasonable suggestion, a caveat is in order. Even if we do not understand them in the context of a full-blown orientalist evolutionism – in the context, that is, of History – Beauvoir's scattered references to the oriental sensualist suggest that the ideal of the European male, and indeed of the evolved heterosexual couple, derive their content and significance in Beauvoir's work, as they do elsewhere, by contrast with other men and other sorts of couples, in other times and places. Thus, we are faced with the general question, as familiar as it is difficult, of how to recoup what seems valuable in theories that are also imbricated with sexism or racism (or, as is often the case, both). How fully, for example, can we disentangle Immanuel Kant's celebrated moral ideal of a "kingdom of ends," where all humans are deserving of equal respect as rational beings, from his casual description of the indolent, hedonistic "South Sea Islanders," whom he presents as rationality's other?⁶⁷ I won't venture an answer to the general question, but the example of Kant is apt. Like Kant, Beauvoir subscribed to a certain sort of mind-body dualism; indeed, feminists have sometimes faulted her for accepting not only this dualism but also the androcentric ideals usually associated with it.⁶⁸ The feminist anthropologist Sherry Ortner has suggested that the contrast that Beauvoir draws between human agency and passivity – between, in Beauvoir's parlance, transcendence and immanence – is one many cultures recognize, and that this dualism is often projected onto gender categories.⁶⁹ But even granting Ortner's point, for Beauvoir this dualism reaches its final form only among civilized Europeans.

Thus, Beauvoir's orientalist ethnocentrism turns out to be linked to problems in the text that also concern gender.

In any case, Beauvoir's orientalism is worth attention. Feminists, perhaps especially feminist philosophers, often favor ahistorical approaches that ignore the genealogy of feminism itself. This tendency, especially when combined with a protective reverence for Beauvoir, leads not only to an impoverished reading of her work, but, just as importantly, to a failure to examine mainstream White feminism's own longstanding difficulties in addressing questions of race. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Western feminists like Gilman could unapologetically identify the greater difference between European men and women with Europe's superior civilization. By the latter third of the century, when a liberal commitment to racial equality and, among feminists, to a dream of sisterhood helped, ironically enough, to make race and racism all but invisible, another phenomenon arose: White, mainstream feminists, in a misguidedly democratic gesture, universalized a conception of gender relations that previously had been associated only with supposedly the most advanced of human races. Beauvoir's mid-twentieth-century classic bridges these moments of feminist ethnocentrism, themselves parts of both feminism's own story and the larger story of how categories of race and gender are linked in the modern West. Neither story can be ignored if feminism is to understand its past and take responsibility for its future.

Notes

- 1 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Bord and Sheila Malovany-Chavallier (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, [1949] 2010).
- 2 The title of a book popular in the 1980s: Mary Field Belenky, et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic, 1986).
- 3 Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 638–39, 655.
- 4 Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 4, 7–8.
- 5 Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 89.
- 6 Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 188. The term “femelle” is usually applied to animals rather than to humans. Thanks to Gaetano Deleonibus for pointing this out.
- 7 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 102.
- 8 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 206.
- 9 Debra Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir: Gendered Phenomenologies, Erotic Generosities* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 36–37; Sonia Kruks, *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 35; Patricia Moynagh, “Beauvoir on Lived Reality, Exemplary Validity, and a Method for Political thought,” in *Simone de Beauvoir's Political Thinking*, ed. Lori Jo Marso and Patricia Moynagh (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 13.
- 10 Sonia Kruks, “Simone de Beauvoir: Teaching Sartre about Freedom,” in *Sartre Alive*, ed. Ronald Aronson and Adrian van den Hoven (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 285–300.
- 11 Quoted in Kruks, *Retrieving Experience*, 34–35. (Kruks's translation.)

- 12 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel, [1948] 1976).
- 13 Kruks, *Retrieving*, 27–51.
- 14 Michelle Rosaldo, “The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Anthropology and Crosscultural Understanding,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 391–92.
- 15 Said, *Orientalism*, 205–7.
- 16 Grosrichard, 178.
- 17 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, trans. Hugh Barr Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1837] 1993), 190.
- 18 Hegel, *Lectures*, 178, 176.
- 19 Hegel, *Lectures*, 190.
- 20 Hegel, *Lectures*, 137.
- 21 Hegel, *Lectures*, 197, 199.
- 22 Said, *Orientalism*, 153–56.
- 23 For arguments against Said’s reading of Marx, see Ahmad Aijaz, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, (London: Verso, 1992), 233; C. Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus, eds. *Marxism, Modernity and Post-colonial Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Kunihiko Uemura, “Marx and Modernity,” In *Marx for the 21st Century*, ed. Hiroshi Uchida (New York: Routledge, 2006), 9–21. Said’s argument rests primarily on Marx’s 1853 dispatch to the *New York Times* concerning the situation in India, a piece that seems on its face to give an apology for British rule. However, Marx expresses a very different view later, especially after the Indian Rebellion of 1857, and even the dispatch in question is open to less damning readings (Karl Marx, *Surveys from Exile*, ed. David Fernbach (London: Allen Lane, 1973), 306–7; Said, *Orientalism*, 153–57). But however one reads the dispatch, Marx seems generally to have regarded India’s transformation from a village society to an industrial one not as a necessary stage in history’s ineluctable progress from East to West (and back again?) but as on a par with feudal Europe’s similarly cataclysmic entry into capitalism (Ahmad, *In Theory*, 233).
- 24 Uemura, “Marx and Modernity,” 14–16.
- 25 Ahmad, *In Theory*, 241.
- 26 Marx himself explicitly criticizes such flattened abstractions about “populations.” See Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, Trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Vintage, 1973); Mattick, Paul, Jr. 1993. “Marx’s Dialectic,” in *Marx’s Method in “Capital”: A Reexamination*, ed. Fred Moseley (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1993), 115–33.
- 27 Hegel, *Lectures*, 194–97.
- 28 Hegel, *Lectures*, 196.
- 29 Robert Wald Sussman, *The Myth of Race: The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 87.
- 30 Sussman, *The Myth of Race*, 178.
- 31 Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 761.
- 32 Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*. Trans. Richard Howard (New York: Putnam, 1965), 202.
- 33 Simone de Beauvoir, *All Said and Done*, Trans. Patrick O’Brien (New York: Warner, 1975), 468–69; Alice Jardine, “Interview with Simone de Beauvoir,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 2 (1979): 235.
- 34 For further discussion of Beauvoir and Marx, see my “Beauvoir and the Limits of Philosophy,” *Theory and Event* 15, no. 2 (2012). muse.jhu.edu/article/478362.

- 35 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Long March*, trans. Austryn Wainhouse (Cleveland: World, 1958); for tropes on history, see 35–36, 88; on sensuality and lack of personality, see 64–65; on sex and gender disorder, see 152–54 and 478; on backwardness in science and technology, see 203–4 and 363; and on the pre-Communist Chinese failure to be truly human, see 484, 282.
- 36 Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 3–5; 214.
- 37 Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 83; Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 22–55.
- 38 Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 750.
- 39 Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 641.
- 40 Debra B. Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir*; and Sara Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
- 41 Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 146.
- 42 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 283; 4.
- 43 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 638; 6.
- 44 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 62–66.
- 45 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 88.
- 46 Peggy Reeves Sanday, “Introduction,” in *Beyond the Second Sex: New Directions in the Anthropology of Gender*, ed. Peggy Reeves Sanday and Ruth Gallagher Goodenough (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 2.
- 47 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 45.
- 48 Judith Okely, *Simone de Beauvoir* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 71.
- 49 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 139.
- 50 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 80.
- 51 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 73–75.
- 52 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 17.
- 53 Beauvoir, *Ethics*, 37.
- 54 Beauvoir, *Ethics*, 38.
- 55 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 188.
- 56 “This fall is a moral fault if the subject consents to it; if this fall is inflicted on the subject, it takes the form of a frustration spells frustration and oppression; In both cases it is an absolute evil”. (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 16.)
- 57 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 569–70.
- 58 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 84.
- 59 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 88.
- 60 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 756.
- 61 Elizabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1989), 67–8.
- 62 Spelman, *Inessential Woman*, 71.
- 63 Spelman, *Inessential Woman*, 76.
- 64 Spelman, *Inessential Woman*, 159.
- 65 Toril Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), 289.
- 66 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 89.
- 67 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H.J. Patton (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 90.
- 68 Elizabeth V. Spelman, “Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views,” *Feminist Studies* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 109–31; Alison Jaggar and William

- McBride, "‘Reproduction’ as Male Ideology," *Women’s Studies International Forum* 8, no. 3 (1985): 185–96.
- 69 Sherry B. Ortner, "So, Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 173–80.

Bibliography

- Aijaz, Ahmad. 1993. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. London: Verso.
- Bartolovich, Crystal, and Neil Lazarus. 2002. *Marxism, Modernity and Post-Colonial Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. [1948] 1976. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Translated by Bernard Frechtman. Secaucus, NJ: Citadel.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. [1949] 2011. *The Second Sex*. Translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. New York: Vintage.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. 1958. *The Long March*. Translated by Austryn Wainhouse. Cleveland, OH: World.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. 1965. *Force of Circumstance*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Putnam.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. 1975. *All Said and Done*. Translated by P. O’Brien. New York: Warner.
- Bederman, Gail. 1995. *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880–1917*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Belenky, Mary et al. 1986. *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*. New York: Basic.
- Bergoffen, Debra. 1997. *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir: Gendered Phenomenologies, Erotic Generosities*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Burton, Antoinette. 1994. *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Grosrichard, Alain. 1998. *The Sultan’s Court: European Fantasies of the East*. Translated by Liz Heron. London: Verso.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm. [1837] 1993. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*. Translated by H.B. Nisbit. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jaggar, Alison, and William McBride. 1985. "‘Reproduction’ as Male Ideology." *Women’s Studies International Forum* 8 (3): 185–96.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1964. *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by Herbert James Patton. New York: Harper & Row.
- Kruks, Sonia. 1991. "Simone de Beauvoir: Teaching Sartre about Freedom." In *Sartre Alive*, edited by R. Aronson and A. Van den Hoven. Detroit: Wayne State University, 285–300.
- Kruks, Sonia. 2001. *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Markowitz, Sally. 2012. "Beauvoir and the Limits of Philosophy." *Theory and Event* 15 (2); muse.jhu.edu/article/478362.
- Marx, Karl. 1973. *Surveys from Exile*. Edited by David Fernbach. London: Allen Lane.

- Moi, Toril. 1994. *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Newman, Louise Michele. 1999. *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States*. New York: Oxford.
- Okely, Judith. 1986. *Simone de Beauvoir*. New York: Pantheon.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 1996. "Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture." Boston, MA: Beacon.
- Rosaldo, Michelle. 1980, Spring. "The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Anthropology and Crosscultural Understanding." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5 (2): 389–417.
- Said, Edward. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.
- Sanday, Peggy Reeves. 1990. "Introduction." In *Beyond the Second Sex: New Directions in the Anthropology of Gender*, edited by Peggy Reeves Sanday and Ruth G. Goodenough. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1–21.
- Spelman, Elizabeth V. 1982. "Spring. Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views." *Feminist Studies* 8 (1): 109–31.
- Spelman, Elizabeth V. 1989. *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*. Boston, MA: Beacon.
- Uemura, Kunihiko. 2006. "Marx and Modernity." In *Marx for the 21st Century*, edited by Hiroshi Uchida. New York: Routledge, 9–21.

5

INTERSECTIONALITY AND THE RACIAL GENDER-BINARY IDEAL

Introduction

For the past thirty years or so, the idea of intersectionality has been central to how feminist scholars have understood the relationship between gender and race and, especially, between sexism and racism. The legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw first introduced the term “intersectionality” in two landmark articles, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,” in 1989, and “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” in 1991.¹ Since then the term has gained currency as well outside of academia; in a recent Google search, it appeared in over 13 million entries. Often used in political campaigns and journalism, the idea of intersectionality has also attracted ire from politically conservative quarters, including the Florida Governor’s office.² And, as might be expected, it has come to mean many things to many people. Indeed, Crenshaw herself has described reading “things that say, ‘Intersectionality, blah, blah, blah,’” and wondering “whose intersectionality that is,” only to see herself cited. “I was like, ‘I’ve never written that. I’ve never said that.’”³

In what follows, I will focus primarily on Crenshaw’s version of intersectionality (or at least my understanding of it). Even so, the relationship between an intersectional perspective and one based on the racial gender-binary ideal is somewhat challenging to pin down. Both, of course, share the premise that the categories, and the oppressions, of race and gender are not autonomous from each other, but the two perspectives diverge from there. This chapter will attempt to clarify some of these divergences and their significance.

Crenshaw, a legal theorist, understands that what happens in the courts often parallels what happens outside of them. Whatever the setting, the

situation of Black women, marginalized by race as well as by gender, often falls through the cracks. In the mainstream feminist movement, White women tend to be centered; in the Black civil rights movement, dominated by men, Black women are similarly sidelined. In both contexts, Black women and their experiences are often marginalized. For this reason, Black women's subordination cannot be understood additively, as simply the sum of sexism and racism. Rather, such subordination is very often (although, on Crenshaw's view, not always)⁴ a distinctive combination of the two, something significantly different from the sexism experienced by White women or the racism experienced by Black men.

The issue of rape and sexual harassment illustrates this well. As Crenshaw reminds her readers, mainstream feminism, implicitly or explicitly, has tended to characterize the rape victim as a White woman and her attacker as a Black man. This narrative, of course, has been used to justify the lynching of Black men, but it also obscures Black women's vulnerability; Black women are at greater risk than White women for sexual assault from both Black and White men, but the White imagination, even a feminist one, is often quick to assume a White victim.⁵ For example, the week after the widely publicized 1989 rape of the Central Park jogger, who was White, a Black woman in Brooklyn was gang-raped and thrown down an airshaft with next to no mainstream media coverage of the attack.⁶ Moreover, because the White narrative of rape assumes not only an innocent White female victim but also a shadowy Black male rapist, Black women tend not to be the focus even when civil rights discourse addresses the problem. As Crenshaw argues, Black resistance to the narrative of the Black male rapist too often leaves the rape and sexual harassment of Black women out of the story, especially when the perpetrators are Black males – witness the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas case, which Crenshaw has discussed at length.⁷ And yet, “statistics show that Black women are more likely to be raped than Black men are to be falsely accused of it.”⁸ As for a mainstream analysis of White male sexual predation on Black women, that is all but ruled out, thanks to the stereotype of the hypersexual Black female who “asks for it.” In short, Black women occupy the intersection of sexism and racism, and so an understanding of rape that foregrounds Black women's experience will be importantly different from one foregrounding the experience of either White women or Black men.

U.S. antidiscrimination law and the courts that apply it, Crenshaw argues, fail to understand, let alone address, this general situation; instead, they mirror and perpetuate it. Because White women are viewed as the paradigmatic victims of sex discrimination, and Black men the paradigmatic victims of race discrimination, intersectional aspects of Black women's experiences again disappear from view. Instead, Black women are protected by law only insofar as their situations are similar to those of either White women or Black men. Along the same lines, while the courts consider White women as

appropriate representatives of *all* women, this status is not afforded to Black women; similarly, Black men, rather than Black women, are too often seen as the only appropriate representatives of Black people generally. Crenshaw's intersectional approach aims to remedy this situation. (Later in this chapter, I discuss some of the court cases Crenshaw uses to develop her argument.)

Some differences between the two approaches

First and foremost, Crenshaw's framework and that of this book have different starting points. This book begins by showing that what might seem to be the simple matter of sex/gender classification ("Male or female?" "Masculine or feminine?") is structured by a binary that, in the modern West, already implicates race in a fundamental way, even if this is not recognized. Intersectional approaches, by contrast, tend to start with conventionally accepted categories of gender and race: for example, Black, White, male, female (perhaps also gay, straight). Such categories are crosscutting, so some people are classified as both Black and female (for example), and in a racist, sexist society this designation makes them vulnerable to particular sorts of harms – i.e., intersectional ones. In talking about discrimination against Black women, Crenshaw uses the metaphor of two "streets" intersecting – one is the "street" of racism, the other of sexism. When Black women become accident victims at the intersection – as they often do – it can be impossible to tell exactly what happened.⁹ What is most important is rendering aid.

But while powerful, the metaphor of the intersection also embodies something of a tension. An intersectional approach usually takes itself to be challenging the assumption that race and gender classifications, and the discriminations that follow from them, are wholly distinct, autonomous, or separable from each other (many terms might be, and have been, used here). But the metaphor of intersectionality itself also pulls in the opposite direction, implying that the axes of gender and race, or of racism and sexism, must nevertheless somehow be distinct. Otherwise, one might ask, what is intersecting with what? This tension is resolved by assuming that the connections between the relevant categories become operative and apparent *in their intersections* – in experiences, discriminations, and identities, for example – and, it's implied, only there. This book, by contrast, talks about a more basic, categorical linkage, on the level of the construction and meaning of these categories themselves.

To be sure, the enormous power of an intersectional focus lies in its ability to home in on the situations of marginalized groups rather than getting caught up in what might seem to be abstruse theoretical concerns about the status of general categories like those of race or gender. Indeed, as the story is sometimes told, an intersectional approach to thinking about gender took hold in the academy just as feminist studies came to be dominated by poststructuralist and other postmodernist theoretical frameworks, with their resolute

antiessentialism about such categories as “woman.”¹⁰ On some level, these two frameworks seemed to reinforce each other; a philosophical commitment to antiessentialism provided a theoretical armature (if one were needed) for addressing the situation of those women, especially women of color, who were marginalized by mainstream feminism. On the other hand, by showing how mainstream feminism had falsely universalized the experience of privileged women, intersectional critiques by (mostly) Black feminists provided a kind of political cover for the sometimes arcane theoretical antiessentialism of poststructuralism. But this complementarity had its limits. A theoretical perspective committed to claiming that all categories are (essentially?) shifting, uncapturable, and groundless – and, especially, to a politics based on such a view – is a double-edged sword. Rather than giving voice to marginalized positions, a politically unreflective, theory-driven antiessentialism runs the risk of simply dismantling such categories before anything significant can be learned about the harm they inflict. Even worse, an antiessentialist perspective might also be used outright to thwart marginalized groups’ claims to equality, if not to erase these groups altogether. As Crenshaw writes:

One version of antiessentialism, embodying what might be called the vulgarized social construction thesis, is that since all categories are socially constructed, there is no such thing as, say, Blacks or women, and thus it makes no sense to continue reproducing those categories by organizing around them. Even the Supreme Court has gotten into this act. In *Metro Broadcasting, Inc. v. FCC*, the Court conservatives, in rhetoric that oozes vulgar constructionist smugness, proclaimed that any set-aside designed to increase the voices of minorities on the air waves was itself based on a racist assumption that skin color is in some way connected to the likely content of one’s broadcast.¹¹

The legal theorists Devon Carbado and Cheryl I. Harris give a similar and equally troubling example. In the important voting rights case of *Shaw v. Reno*, Justice Sandra O’Connor, writing for the majority, objects that a remedy for past racism that itself involves race reinforces

the perception that members of the same racial group — regardless of their age, education, economic status, or the community in which they live — think alike, share the same political interests, and will prefer the same candidates at the polls. We have rejected such perceptions elsewhere as impermissible racial stereotypes.¹²

Under the guise of rejecting racism, such a perspective ignores the reality of it – and the need for redress.

It is no wonder, then, that intersectional theorists tend to be more critical than some poststructuralists (not to mention the occasional Supreme Court Justice) of a wholesale rejection of categories like race and gender. Thus, as Leslie MacCall has explained it, intersectional theory seeks to steer a middle course between, on the one hand, simply accepting and organizing around mainstream identity categories (like “woman”) and, on the other, “dismantling these categories altogether” – that is, taking what MacCall calls an “anticategorical approach.”¹³ The feminist anticategorical views that McCall has in mind, of course, have a different aim from those of conservative jurists; for anticategorical feminists, the problem with essentialism is that any attempt to draw boundaries around an identity category like “woman” will marginalize or exclude some who should be included: women of color, certainly but also lesbian, queer, and trans women; women who do not have a Christian background; differently-abled women. Thus, this version of antiessentialism implies that accepting the idea of an essence has the cost of further marginalizing the already vulnerable. Writing in 2009, McCall claimed that this anticategorical approach dominated feminist studies, illuminating the “artificiality” of categories

in history with the method of genealogy, in literature with deconstruction, and in anthropology with the new ethnography. In each case, the completeness of the set of groups that constitutes a category is challenged.¹⁴

It’s worth noting that this way of charting the theoretical terrain does not leave much room for the approach this book takes. While an analysis centered on the racial gender-binary ideal may be genealogical, it is not exactly *anticategorical*, at least not in McCall’s sense; its point is not to challenge, and certainly not to challenge on the basis of some prior theoretical commitment, “the completeness of the set of groups that constitutes a category.” Instead, it looks closely at the historical construction of particular categories and the relationships between them in order to understand more fully the way our social world is organized. While Crenshaw is surely right to claim that the categories of race and gender *do* have meaning, and, above all, that their meanings are connected, my aim has been to highlight their fundamental, structural connection *at the categorial level* rather than taking them as given and looking only at their points – experiences, institutions, discriminations, etc. – of intersection. Indeed, for all of their enormous value and power, intersectional theories are ill-equipped to illuminate a fundamental aspect of the race-gender connection: *the racial character of the conception of the gender binary itself*.

Crenshaw herself does make a gesture toward recognizing that the categories of race and gender are not really separable in the way the intersection metaphor might imply. In “Mapping the Margins,” she writes,

The concept [of intersectionality] does engage dominant assumptions that race and gender are essentially separate categories. By tracing the categories to their intersections, I hope to suggest a methodology that will ultimately disrupt the tendencies to see race and gender as exclusive or separable.¹⁵

The tension between this comment, tucked into a footnote, and the bulk of Crenshaw's work seems to echo the general tension in the intersectionality metaphor itself, between recognizing both the distinctness and the inseparability of the intersecting categories. Here, she seems to suggest that while race and gender may, in the end, be somehow inseparable, the best – perhaps the only? – way to illuminate this inseparability is to look at these categories' intersections. And to do this, one must start with discrete categories.

The legal theorist Devon Carbado goes further, implying that intersections are simply the only places to examine such categories' interconnections. So in answering those who call, if sometimes vaguely, for a more categorial approach – that is, one that focuses on the interconnections of categories themselves – Carbado objects that the

very articulation of the idea that race and gender are co-constitutive . . . discursively fragments those categories – into race and gender – to make that point. The strictures of language require us to invoke race, gender, sexual orientation, and other categories one discursive moment at a time.¹⁶

To be fair, if there were no clear strategy for thinking systematically and on a categorial level about the mutual constitution of race and gender, Carbado's default position might make sense. After all, it is easy enough to claim in a vague, general way that such categories as race and gender are somehow inextricably linked on the categorial level, but where does one go from there? In the absence of a clear, substantive way of understanding this categorial connection, Carbado's somewhat exasperated tone is understandable.

This book, however, suggests a way for such an analysis to go forward. The idea, once again, is simply this: categories of sex, gender, and race in the modern West have been linked, indeed mutually constituted, on the categorial level *through the ideal of binary sex/gender difference*. The Western imaginary has regularly associated with the supposedly “more advanced” races (or more recently, with “normal” Whiteness)¹⁷ a set of pronounced differences – of body, mind, and soul – between males and females; correspondingly, the male-female couples of supposedly lower races are viewed as having fallen short in one way or another. In one sense, of course, this is hardly a new observation. Eurocentric stereotypes of men and women of racialized groups have long been sexualized in various ways. But this book describes a more general structure, anchored by the White gender-binary

ideal, in which all of these familiar sexualized stereotypes function. So it's not just the case that dominant, normative definitions and ideals of masculinity and femininity, taken separately, encode Whiteness – as an intersectional approach will reveal – but rather that *binary gender difference itself* is coded as White. Correspondingly, Whiteness is characterized by the gender difference exhibited by the ideal binary couple. And other so-called races, in turn, have been identified and ranked according to how closely the men and women of these groups supposedly conform to this gender-binary ideal – or fall short of it.

This suggests another fundamental difference between an intersectional approach and the one this book takes. A primary focus of this book might be described as the relationship between the gender-binary ideal and the ideology of White supremacy. That is, it shows how the gender binary in the modern West has signified Whiteness, and, correspondingly, how Whiteness has been inextricably linked to the gender-binary ideal. The intersectional project has a different focus: the adverse effects suffered by those, like Black women, who belong to more than one marginalized group.¹⁸ As Crenshaw writes, she is concerned with addressing “the needs and problems of those who are most disadvantaged and with restructuring and remaking the world where necessary.”¹⁹ Speaking very generally, one might say that this book attempts to understand how the gender-binary norm in the modern West, a basic principle of White supremacist ideology, contributes to the problem Crenshaw identifies: the lack of legibility, in the law and elsewhere, of Black and other multiply marginalized women. And, of course, vice versa; this lack of legibility shores up White supremacy. This is certainly not to deny that intersectional analyses address the Whiteness of the category of woman in the law, in mainstream feminism, and beyond; without a doubt, they do. But such analyses do not foreground or even directly address the Whiteness of the *gender binary itself*; indeed, I'm not sure they can, given their framework. In any case, they have other work to do.

Different frameworks, different readings

With these general contrasts in mind, I turn to some of the legal cases Crenshaw analyzes. In *DeGraffenreid vs. General Motors*, five Black women claimed that the seniority system of General Motors discriminated against them. General Motors did not hire Black women until 1964, and the Black women it did hire after 1970 subsequently lost their jobs during a recession because they lacked seniority. In the court's view, there were no grounds to claim sex discrimination, since GM had regularly hired *White* women even before the 1964 Civil Rights act. Instead, the court suggested that the plaintiffs consolidate their case with one alleging race discrimination. But the plaintiffs were not interested; the point of their

suit was to allege neither race nor sex discrimination alone but rather a combination of both – that is to say, *intersectional* discrimination. The court responded:

The legislative history surrounding Title VII does not indicate that the goal of the statute was to create a new classification of “black women” who would have greater standing than, for example, a black male. The prospect of the creation of new classes of protected minorities, governed only by the mathematical principles of permutation and combination, clearly raises the prospect of opening the hackneyed Pandora’s box.²⁰

Here is Crenshaw’s reaction:

Thus, the court apparently concluded that Congress either did not contemplate that Black women could be discriminated against as “Black women” or did not intend to protect them when such discrimination occurred. The court’s refusal in *DeGraffenreid* to acknowledge that Black women encounter combined race and sex discrimination implies that the boundaries of sex and race discrimination doctrine are defined respectively by white women’s and Black men’s experiences. Under this view, Black women are protected only to the extent that their experiences coincide with those of either of the two groups. Where their experiences are distinct, Black women can expect little protection as long as approaches, such as that in *DeGraffenreid*, which completely obscure problems of intersectionality prevail.²¹

Another case, *Moore vs. Hughes Helicopters*, illustrates a related problem: the assumption that Black women are not appropriate representatives of their gender – that is, of women generally. In *Moore*, the plaintiff introduced statistical evidence showing that men were significantly more likely than women to be promoted to supervisory and upper-level craft positions, which suggested sex discrimination. In addition, White men were more likely to be promoted than Black men were. However, there was more equality between Black and White men than between men and women generally. Thus, Moore sued on the basis of sex discrimination. Here is an excerpt, quoted by Crenshaw, from the Ninth Circuit Court’s affirmation of the district court’s refusal to recognize Moore as the representative of her gender:

Moore had never claimed before the EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] that she was discriminated against as a female, but only as a Black female. This raised serious doubts as to Moore’s ability to adequately represent white female employees.²²

I quote Crenshaw's response at length:

(T)he curious logic in *Moore* reveals not only the narrow scope of anti-discrimination doctrine and its failure to embrace intersectionality, but also the centrality of white female experiences in the conceptualization of gender discrimination. *One inference that could be drawn from the court's statement that Moore's complaint did not entail a claim of discrimination "against females" is that discrimination against Black females is something less than discrimination against females.* More than likely, however, the court meant to imply that Moore did not claim that all females were discriminated against but only Black females. But even thus recast, the court's rationale is problematic for Black women. The court rejected Moore's bid to represent all females apparently because her attempt to specify her race was seen as being at odds with the standard allegation that the employer simply discriminated "against females." The court failed to see that the absence of a racial referent does not necessarily mean that the claim being made is a more inclusive one.²³

(Emphasis added)

On Devon Carbado's reading of these cases, Black women in *DeGraffenreid* were considered too *similar* to White women – seen as the norm – to be accorded their own protected status; in *Moore*, White women still serve as the norm, and Black women are seen as too *different* from White women to represent women as a group. Thus, Carbado writes, "Too similar to be different and too different to be the same, black women are 'impossible subjects.'"²⁴

Viewing the case with the racial gender-binary norm in mind, however, suggests a more fundamental problem: while White culture, including the judicial system, may well view Black women as more or less different from the normative White woman, such difference can at the same time be construed as a falling short of the ideal, of being *less* than "real" women. Considered this way, Black women are impossible subjects because they are seen as *inferior* subjects. If that is the case, no wonder they are regarded as unsuitable representatives of their gender as a whole. Of course, if simple difference alone were at stake, Black women would be no less appropriate than White women as representatives of their entire gender; considered as a simple matter of logic, difference is a symmetrical relation, and White women are as different from Black women as Black women are from White women. (Crenshaw, in an article I will discuss later in this chapter, argues explicitly that this sort of similarity/difference framework is inadequate for understanding intersectional discrimination, but she hasn't yet fully articulated this view in "Demarginalizing.") However, when it comes to considering *social* differences, we have left the province of simple logic; whether real or imagined, such differences tend to signify and support social hierarchies. And there

is another matter worth considering here: even if *Moore* is read as simply reflecting the kind of White solipsism that finds it difficult to acknowledge that Whiteness is as different from Blackness as Blackness is from Whiteness, such a reading suggests that the category “female” – understood as a natural category, given by biology – is race-neutral to start with, and that Black and White women are simply different from each other. Chapter 1 suggests, however, that even this category may not escape the racial gender-binary norm; except in a few very circumscribed biological contexts – a discussion about gametes, for example, or reproductive processes – the term “female” functions in a structure that turns out not to be race neutral. The modern Anglo-European imaginary sees “female” as one half of a raced sex/gender binary ideal that Black women and Black men – like other racialized women and men – fail to meet fully.

In light of the racial gender-binary ideal, then – or at least the female half of it – Crenshaw may be overly generous in assuming that the court did not mean “that discrimination against Black females is something less than discrimination against females.” It may instead have simply said the quiet part out loud (as the saying goes). And this is significant. If Black females are thought somehow to be “less than” women, particular forms of intersectional discrimination are likely to follow from this. Indeed, the courts themselves might be reluctant to show Black women the same consideration afforded to those women who *do* meet the standard. Crenshaw gives the court the benefit of the doubt, speculating that it sees Black women as simply different from normative White women. But especially when it comes to the norms of femininity, it is quite easy (not to mention convenient) to move back and forth between considering someone to be different and considering her to be inferior; or, put another way, it is possible, as Chapter 1 suggests in another context, to regard differences as inferiorities. Indeed, that familiar dynamic has structured the meaning of *White* femininity from the beginning.

Viewing such cases through the lens of the racial gender-binary ideal, then, may offer some important insights. But the intersectional approach has a different strength, one that makes it enormously flexible and powerful: rather than getting involved in an analysis of categories themselves, it locates those marginalized by existing categories and simply addresses whatever harms that arise. As Crenshaw writes,

(T)he point of the intersectional metaphor was to draw attention to the multiple ways that patterns of power can converge.... these interactions are dynamic, historically and contextually specific, and – although they might be prefigured by certain patterns – they cannot be fully mapped in advance.²⁵

So even if, as I suggest above, instances of discrimination against Black women and other women of color may sometimes – even often – derive from their perceived failure to satisfy the female component of the gender-binary ideal, this is not necessarily always the case. Indeed, as Crenshaw emphasizes, intersectional discrimination can be quite varied, depending on the specifics of particular situations. For example, in *DeGraffenreid*, a perfect storm of conditions – General Motors’ past discriminatory employment patterns, the company’s seniority employment policies, and an economic recession – led to Black women losing their jobs. Or, to take an example Crenshaw discusses in “Mapping the Margins,” the immigration status of Latina victims of domestic violence, coupled with specific U.S. immigration policies, discourages these women from seeking help, leaving them particularly vulnerable to harm.²⁶

However, when instances of discrimination *do* result from a failure to conform to the White gender-binary ideal, a strictly intersectional approach handles such cases less well. Although they don’t have the gender-binary ideal in mind, Carbado and his coauthor Mitu Gulati demonstrate its relevance in “The Intersectional Fifth Black Woman.” Here, Carbado and Gulati describe a hypothetical case in which five Black women apply for a position at a law firm; four are hired. Even if the court were willing to apply an intersectional analysis, the failed candidate – whose name, we are told, is “Tyisha” – would appear to have little justification for claiming to be a victim of discrimination, since the other four candidates, all of whom are female and Black, were hired. But Carbado and Gulati list some differences between Tyisha and the others: the successful candidates have names like Susan, Mary, Helen, Sarah, and Tiffany; they come to their interviews wearing makeup, relaxed hairstyles, and skirt-suits with white cotton blouses; they live in White neighborhoods with their White husbands; they enjoy tennis and golf. Tyisha, by contrast, is a single mother living in a predominantly Black, inner-city neighborhood; she appears at her interview without makeup, her hair in dreadlocks, and dressed in a trousers suit with a Kente cloth scarf; she was an activist in law school and now belongs to the Nation of Islam.²⁷

It is not difficult to conclude that although the interviewers might have been willing, even eager, to hire Black women, they found Tyisha to be “too Black,” as Carbado and Mulati write; she is “more vulnerable than the other Black women to implicit or explicit negative racial stereotypes.”²⁸ Put another way, she fails to conform closely enough to the norms of self-presentation expected of Black professional women – and these norms are largely modeled on expectations for *White* professional women. Carbado and Mulati conclude that “how Black women work or how others perceive them to work their identity affects whether and how they are discriminated against.” They don’t rule out the capacity of an intersectional approach to handle such cases, either by recognizing gender performance as an additional intersectional axis or by recognizing some “intra-intersectional distinction.”²⁹

But either way, the successful Black women in this hypothetical case – the Marys, Susans, Helens, Tiffanys, and Sarahs – are willing and able to meet the expectations of the White space they are entering; Tyisha is not. Seen from a certain White perspective, Tyisha is not just *different*; she has failed to make the White-defined grade. As the plausibility of the hypothetical fifth Black woman example shows, even when they are given standing as Black women, those who are seen as respecting and conforming to White feminine norms may be able to benefit, at least in certain contexts, in a way others cannot. And this problem is not quite captured by a straightforward intersectional analysis.

The racial gender-binary ideal and the attack on Black families

The hypothetical case of the intersectional fifth Black woman involves only the female half of the gender-binary pair. The gender-binary ideal as a whole, of course, applies not only to females but to males and, above all, to the relationship between them. Previous chapters have shown how this ideal has shaped not only classifications of gender and race but also mid-twentieth-century feminism and early homosexual rights discourse. Is there also some more contemporary issue, one concerning racial and gender discrimination, that this ideal might illuminate more clearly, or at least from a different angle, than a straightforwardly intersectional approach does? One need look no further than the infamous Moynihan Report, which attributes Black social and economic inequality to the “tangle of pathology” of the Black family – that is, it blames the victim. It argues that the

Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is out of line with the rest of the American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male and, in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well.

The report grants that there “is, presumably, no special reason why a society in which males are dominant in family relationships is to be preferred to a matriarchal arrangement,” but adds that

ours is a society which presumes male leadership in private and public affairs. The arrangements of society facilitate such leadership and reward it. A subculture, such as that of the Negro American, in which this is not the pattern, is placed at a distinct disadvantage.³⁰

Crenshaw presents the Moynihan Report, and the commentary on it, to demonstrate the need for an intersectional analysis. The problems Black families

face are not a consequence of the slack morals of Black women, or even, as the sociologist William Julius Wilson argues somewhat less moralistically, of the lack of marriageable Black men: “On Wilson’s view,” Crenshaw writes,

we must change the economic structure with an eye toward providing more Black jobs for Black men. Because he offers no critique of sexism, Wilson fails to consider economic or social reorganization that directly empowers and supports these single Black mothers.

The best way to improve the situation of Black families is to improve the situation of Black women, Crenshaw argues. Besides, she asks, if social reorganization is being considered, why *not* reorganize in a way that maximizes Black women’s choices?³¹

Regarding the Moynihan Report through the lens of the racial gender-binary ideal illuminates it from a somewhat different perspective. Even though it blames Black families’ problems on slavery’s legacy rather than on biology, the Report’s talk of “pathology” passes judgment on the Black reproductive couple.³² This may be particularly insulting to Black women, but it insults Black men as well, implying that their only real problem is their lack of patriarchal authority. Of course, the White society that loudly touts the virtues of the mythical, heterosexual nuclear family has never been committed to enabling Black families to conform to it; otherwise, social policy concerning healthcare, housing, employment, criminal justice, and education would look much different. To some extent, the profit motive explains such resistance: in 1971, for example, a Georgia state representative objected that if Nixon’s Family Assistance Program were put into effect, “(t)here’s not going to be anybody left to roll these wheelbarrows and press these shirts.”³³ But unadulterated racism is a factor as well. What else explains hostility in the United States to the sorts of universal welfare policies common in other Western industrial democracies? As Heather McGhee has argued, White people in the United States seem willing to forego social benefits for themselves and their families for the sake of depriving Black families of them.³⁴

The presumption that there is something wrong with Black families continues to be expressed in the starkly different levels of autonomy afforded to White and Black (and other racialized) families. In recent years, conservative White parents have increasingly agitated for and been granted “parental rights.” The freedom to remove their children from public schools and instead either homeschool or send them to private, often segregated, Christian ones is no longer enough; they now routinely target any public-school curricula or library holdings that, in the words of a 2021 Oklahoma law, might make a student “feel discomfort, guilt, anguish or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race or sex.”³⁵ (Such laws, it goes without saying, are aimed at protecting the sensibilities of *White* students.) And if

parents are still unsatisfied, they can homeschool without much oversight, as one explicitly Nazi-themed home-schooling network in Ohio demonstrates.³⁶

By contrast, Black families, far from controlling others' children, are too often deemed unfit to raise their own. Dorothy Roberts has exhaustively cataloged the ways that Black mothers, often single parents, are disrespected by governmental welfare agencies at every turn, assumed to be inadequate until proven otherwise. Relentlessly surveilled by medical, educational, law enforcement, and welfare workers, they are required to jump through endless time-consuming, expensive, and degrading hoops, often without justification.³⁷ Once under surveillance, Black mothers have good reason to fear their children will be taken from them, sometimes permanently and too often without real cause. And, Roberts argues, it's difficult to justify these practices by claiming an interest in children's welfare. Once custody is lost, often little effort is made to place children with relatives; instead, they are consigned to a degrading foster-care system, often with disastrous results.³⁸ While the U.S. foster-care system may be grim for all children, the treatment of Black children is particularly brutal. As Roberts explains, U.S. welfare policies have always treated Black and White children differently. During slavery, of course, Black children were routinely separated from their mothers and fathers; after the Civil War, "White scholars justified the continued domination of Black children by linking Black women's presumed sexual depravity to Black women's presumed maternal deficiency." White former enslavers often refused to return Black children to their emancipated parents, and Black Codes, passed in 1865 and 1866, further interfered with Black families' autonomy. One 1866 North Carolina law, for example,

allowed Black children to be "bound out" to work for white planters without their parents' approval. These laws gave judges unfettered discretion to place Black children in the care and service of white people if they found the parents to be unfit, unmarried, or unemployed and if they deemed the displacement "better for the habits and comfort of the child."³⁹

Orphaned or not, Black children were often separated from their families, sometimes forcibly, and entered into Jim Crow apprenticeship systems.⁴⁰ They were not seen *as* children, innocent and vulnerable, but as cheap labor.

Corresponding to the Black child who is not seen as a child, of course, is the Black mother who is not seen as a mother – unless she is taking care of her employers' (or enslavers') children. In 1908, the White Southern writer Eleanor Tayleur, roughly Havelock Ellis's contemporary, wrote that Black mothers abused their children because they lacked "the brooding mother-love and anxiety which the white woman sends after her children as long as they live."⁴¹ Over a century later, as Roberts writes, "[f]oster care compounds the lie that Black parents are incapable of caring for their children with the belief that Black children are damaged and disposable."⁴²

The gender-binary ideal is central here, and not only with respect to how White culture imagines the relationship between Black men and women; it is central as well to how Black children are imagined. As has been well documented, Black boys are routinely and unfairly targeted by police; often perceived to be larger and older than they actually are, they are endangered by others' perceptions of them as threatening.⁴³ The situation for Black girls, while perhaps less discussed, is no less dire. One recent study shows that starting at the age of five years, Black girls are thought to be older and worldlier, especially in sexual matters, than White girls of the same age. Stereotyped – just as their mothers are – as aggressive and unfeminine, they are judged to be less in need of protection, mentorship, and support than White girls, and they are disciplined more frequently in school than either White girls or boys of any race. Black children are, in a word, “adultified.”⁴⁴ But this is just to say that Black children are viewed, prematurely, as men and women – indeed, as *Black* men and women, complete with the associated racial gender stereotypes.

The material roots of such adultification of Black children surely lie in the system of slavery; at two or three years old, they might be put to work, and by eight to twelve years sent to the fields.⁴⁵ But if a “scientific” justification were needed for treating Black and White children so differently, the racial gender-binary ideal could provide one. The supposedly declining vigor of the White, city-dwelling male was a particular focus of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century White anxiety about racial degeneration. Increasingly beset by the demands of modern life and employed in mental rather than physical labor, he was feared to have lost the masculine passion and energy necessary even to reproduce his race, let alone to lead it. His ailment was “neurasthenia,” according to the neurologist George Beard, who coined the term. As Gail Bederman writes,

Neurasthenia resulted when a highly evolved person seriously overtaxed his body's finite supply of nerve force – the same nerve force which masturbation squandered. . . . A neurasthenic, according to Beard, was like an undercharged electric battery. He lacked adequate power. When the demands on his nervous energy were greater than his “charge” he would grow ill.

Men “became neurasthenics because the increased pace and technological advancement of modern civilization paced greater demands on them as businessmen and professionals.”⁴⁶ Men of “primitive” race were thought to be spared this ill but only because they were uncivilized, inferior mentally and morally.

Beard's friend, the influential educator and psychologist G. Stanley Hall, arrived at a cure suggested by the ever-useful biogenetic principle, the view

(discussed in Chapter 2) that a human embryo recapitulates *in utero* all previous stages of evolution. With a nod to Lemarck, Hall extended this principle beyond the womb, claiming not only that the human embryo recapitulates less evolved organic forms, but also that the infant and then the child recapitulate earlier stages of human civilization. Thus, as civilization evolves, childhood and adolescence ideally last longer and longer, culminating with the late-maturing, perfect White specimen, morally and mentally sound, ready to take up the White man's burden. But there was a problem: mental demands were routinely being made on boys and male adolescents of advanced races prematurely, before they were quite ready, sapping their strength and leaving them vulnerable as men. Hall thought a proper education was the solution. As Bederman writes,

By encouraging small boys to embrace their primitive passions instead of repressing them educators could “innoculate” boys with the primitive strength they would need to avoid developing neurasthenia. As adults they could be safely civilized, refined, and cultured – but only if they had fully lived and outgrown a temporary case of savagery as small boys.⁴⁷

This theory inspired various imaginative educational reforms, including, as Stephen J. Gould relates, teaching White children to recite Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*, with the hope that the poem's driving rhythm, supposedly suggestive of primitive drumming, would encourage the child to recapitulate his inner savage.⁴⁸

Gould does not specify the sex of these pint-sized White Hiawathas, but clearly this lesson was intended for little boys. Some, like Beard and Hall, thought that girls needed only to avoid squandering their reproductive energies on mental pursuits better left to their brothers. But it seems that girls, too, were subjected to a version of the biogenic imperative. Michelle Ann Abate has argued that in the mid-nineteenth century, the vogue for feminine weakness and delicacy among middle- and upper-class White girls, the future mothers of White children, came to be regarded as a danger to the race. Tomboyism presented an alternative, and sensible clothing, physical exercise, and a wholesome diet were prescribed

to improve the strength and stamina of the nation's future wives and mothers and, by extension, the offspring that they produced. In this way, tomboyism was more than simply a new childrearing practice or gender expression for the nation's adolescent girls; it was a eugenic practice or, at least, a means to help ensure white racial supremacy. . . . From their inception, tomboys demonstrated how unruly female behavior that was formerly seen as socially “bad” could be racially good.

Abate argues as well that the tomboy heroines of various popular fictional texts (including that perennial favorite, Jo March of *Little Women*) were

racialized and, indeed, that Blackness and tomboyishness “mutually construct or at least reinforce each other throughout these periods [the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries].”⁴⁹ Just as Jo March does, other fictional tomboys give up their rough, uncivilized ways when they mature and finally embrace their fates as wives and mothers. Once grown, Hiawatha and tomboy – made for each other – become the ideal White couple.

None of this, of course, applied to children who were not White. Like their parents, they were viewed as incapable of fulfilling gender-binary norms to start with. For the Native American or Black child, whose development was thought to be arrested at the state of savagery, there was really not much phylogeny to recapitulate. Indeed, because of this they did not differ much from their inadequately gender-differentiated parents. Education and nurturance – indeed, childhood itself – would be wasted on them.

The racial gender-binary ideal, then, has long saturated racist stereotypes of the Black family. Mothers and fathers, boys and girls, no one escapes being judged against this ideal – or, for that matter, is seen as conforming to it. Intersectional feminists are of course right to focus on Black women and girls, for all of the reasons Crenshaw gives. At the same time, the failure to meet the gender-binary ideal has long been a central component of the racist stereotype of the Black family as a unit, extending even to the children. And for Moynihan and his followers, this supposed failure is the central problem to be fixed.

Intersectionality, dominance theory, and the gender-binary ideal

An intersectional framework like Crenshaw’s aims to provide an alternative to a feminism based on the single axis of gender, one that sidelines or ignores race and instead falsely universalizes privileged women’s experiences and interests. In light of this, it may come as a surprise that Crenshaw emphasizes the compatibility of her approach with one that many proponents of intersectionality would roundly reject: that of the radical-feminist legal theorist Catharine MacKinnon, who bases her theory on the single axis of gender domination. In “Close Encounters of Three Kinds: On Teaching Dominance Feminism and Intersectionality,” written for a symposium in MacKinnon’s honor, Crenshaw discusses the debt her own intersectional approach owes to MacKinnon.⁵⁰ MacKinnon was instrumental in laying the groundwork for understanding sexual harassment in the workplace as a civil rights violation rather than as mere flirting – or, as Gloria Steinem memorably put it, “just life.”⁵¹ She is also famous (or perhaps infamous) for her feminist crusade against pornography. But what’s relevant here is that like many other prominent White feminists of the latter part of the twentieth century, she has been accused of promoting a feminism centered on White women. Perhaps the title of her 1989 book suggests why: *Feminism Unmodified*.⁵² Her analysis, proudly single axis, has seemed to some insufficiently attentive to

the particular experiences of women of color, especially Black women, as well as to race generally. Indeed, the legal theorist Angela Harris claims that when MacKinnon *does* talk about Black women, they serve as a kind of intensifier: their situation is like White women's, only worse.⁵³ What's more – although I doubt this is her considered view – MacKinnon has even come close to suggesting that racism itself might be reducible somehow to sexual oppression.⁵⁴

These, of course, are exactly the kinds of problems that the intersectional turn in feminist thought was designed to address, so it is noteworthy that Crenshaw comes to MacKinnon's defense. In the course of regularly teaching classes on intersectionality over many years, Crenshaw writes, she has repeatedly observed that the same students who dismiss MacKinnon for essentializing gender and gender domination in a way that privileges White women have no problem with civil rights discourse that similarly essentializes race and racism by privileging Black men. The cases, these students seemed to think – mistakenly, on Crenshaw's view – are not analogous. Underlying this view is the assumption that there is a

profound racial difference between women and, correspondingly, an essential intra-racial sameness between men and women of color. In sum, this analytic frame gravitates perilously close to a reification of race that appears as formulaic as the view of an essential sameness among women that the students are arguing against. Expressed both in terms of the presumed whiteness of MacKinnon's feminist subject and presumed commonality among nonwhite women, race serves as the foundation of their critique of MacKinnon's gender fundamentalism.⁵⁵

Central to Crenshaw's defense of MacKinnon is their shared rejection of what both call a sameness/difference approach to arguing on behalf of subordinated groups. As MacKinnon writes in *Feminism Unmodified*, this framework suggests two paths to equality for women: "The leading one is: be the same as men." But for "women who want equality yet find that you are different, the doctrine provides an alternate route: be different from men." MacKinnon calls the latter the difference approach "because it is obsessed with the sex difference. The main theme in the fugue is 'we're the same, we're the same, we're the same.' The counterpoint theme (in a higher register) is 'but we're different, but we're different, but we're different.'" ⁵⁶ The dilemma, then, is that, on the one hand, granting women rights on the basis of their similarity to a male model both reinforces that model as the measure of humanity and penalizes women for failing to meet it. On the other hand, insisting that women's rights be dependent on their *differences* from men comes perilously close to attributing some sort of essential feminine nature to them. But, in fact, "the differences we attribute

to sex are lines inequality draws, not any kind of basis for it.”⁵⁷ Neither approach is satisfactory because dominance is key here, not questions about sameness and difference.

On some intersectional accounts – the sort Crenshaw’s students favor – this is where MacKinnon goes wrong: to talk simply about the domination of men over women is to view race as secondary, or unrelated, to gender, if it is considered at all. And this can’t help but marginalize Black women and other women of color, the very groups most in jeopardy. But Crenshaw sees the situation differently. The problem Black women face is domination on the basis of both gender *and* race. So while an intersectional approach is right to focus on experiences particular to Black women, over-emphasizing the differences between Black and White women runs into the same problems as MacKinnon saw in a feminism based on women’s differences from men: both rely on a sameness-difference framework where a dominance framework would be more appropriate. What’s more, Crenshaw points out that those who read “Demarginalizing” tend to concentrate only on how considering White women as the paradigmatic subject of gender discrimination excludes the experiences of Black women when they are too different from White women’s. But that, Crenshaw reminds us, is only half of the problem – and only half of her argument. The other half, illustrated by *Moore* – another key case discussed in “Demarginalizing” – is that Black women’s perceived difference from White women sometimes prevents Black women from representing women as a group. Clearly, emphasizing Black women’s *differences* from White women will not solve this second problem.⁵⁸ Thus, Crenshaw, by her own account, rejects a sameness/difference approach altogether in favor of one that focuses on the domination of Black women both by sexism and racism.

Along the same lines, Crenshaw, unlike many proponents of an intersectional perspective, doesn’t necessarily rule out the idea, often dismissed as essentialist, that one can be discriminated against or subordinated “as a woman” – a phrase that has been called the Trojan Horse of feminism.⁵⁹ On Crenshaw’s view, to dismiss this perspective as essentialist is neither here nor there. The real issue is a political and pragmatic one: is the phrase “as a woman” used in a way that marginalizes Black women and other women of color? Crenshaw does not deny that aspects of MacKinnon’s discussion are tone deaf, or worse, when it comes to race, but MacKinnon’s claim that anyone who is classified as female is all too likely to suffer, say, some sort of sexual harassment or employment discrimination is not one of them. As MacKinnon has argued in her own defense, it’s simply false that Black women can *never* serve as representatives of their gender. Mechelle Vinson, the plaintiff in the landmark case that established sexual harassment as a kind of sex discrimination, is a Black woman; so is Lillian Garland, whose case established that unpaid leaves for pregnancy should not count as discrimination

on the basis of sex. Both cases, MacKinnon argues, depend on these plaintiffs understanding themselves as being discriminated against *as women*, an understanding shared by the court.⁶⁰ Crenshaw agrees completely; taking a dominance approach to gender discrimination is fine as long as it is also informed, when necessary, by a dominance approach to race discrimination – and, above all, informed in a way that addresses how both converge in the experiences of women of color.⁶¹

The challenge, then, is to see the axes of gender and race as working together and to give them equal weight – a challenge, Crenshaw finds, that does not interest most of her students. Indeed, although a perspective focused on the axis of race and one focused on the axis of gender may share a dominance perspective, in the eyes of many the two perspectives are simply at odds with each other. Crenshaw doesn't think this has to be. She understands an intersectional approach as starting from MacKinnon's feminist dominance framework, which distinguishes women's point of view from the androcentric one of the law, and then, when necessary, going a step further, distinguishing Black women's situation from White women's:

Rethinking this contest [between dominance and intersectional approaches] offers the opportunity to articulate an alternative frame, one in which the interface between dominance theory and intersectionality is understood not as intractably oppositional but as setting forth similar critiques at different levels of abstraction. . . .⁶²

Dominance theory reveals law's gender; intersectionality reinforces this exposure, and brings to the fore its whiteness as well.⁶³

The racial gender-binary ideal suggests another way to understand this interface. As Chapter 1 explains, it is a fact that some humans – about half of them – are designated at birth as female. Whatever the basis for this, once one is so designated, one is extremely likely to be subjected, in countless ways, to the familiar norms and ideals of femininity – ones concerning, among other things, maternal fitness, emotionality, passivity, sexual expression, physical comportment, and beauty. This exhaustive sorting into male and female is often taken to correspond to a foundational biological fact, independent of ideology or social practices. But, with the exception of certain narrow biological and medical contexts, such sorting has long functioned within a structure organized by a *racial* gender-binary ideal. And so while all of those sorted as female are subject to the norms given by the category of “female,” only White women – or at least the most privileged among them – actually come close to meeting these norms. Or, at least, are imagined to meet them, or can hope to meet them, in a way that women of color, especially Black women, cannot. Indeed, that is part of what it means to be a White woman. In a criticism of MacKinnon, Angela Harris expresses the idea like this:

[I]n speaking of the beauty standards set for (white) women, MacKinnon remarks, “Black women are further from being able concretely to achieve the standard that no woman can ever achieve, or it would lose its point.” The frustration of black women at being unable to look like an “All-American” woman is in this way just a more dramatic example of all (white) women’s frustration and oppression. When a black woman speaks on this subject, however, it becomes clear that a black woman’s pain at not being considered fully feminine is different qualitatively, not merely quantitatively, from the pain MacKinnon describes. It is qualitatively different because the ideology of beauty concerns not only gender but race.⁶⁴

Or, to put the point even more strongly, the ideology of beauty *constructs* not only gender but race, as Chapter 2 argues. And isn’t the systematic promotion of an ideal that only White women can possibly hope to meet an instance of domination? Indeed, of *intersectional* domination. Even in areas where it might seem valid to talk about women being oppressed *as women* – in sexual harassment or rape cases, or in reproductive matters – Black women are subjugated in a way that both reflects and constructs racial meanings. In her 1983 classic *Women Race and Class*, Angela Davis singles out both of these quintessential areas of “woman’s oppression.” Davis’s discussion suggests not only that White and Black women understand rape and limits on reproductive freedom differently, but that these differences help construct the very meanings of race and gender categories. While White women are denied birth control, Black women are sterilized; while the respectable White women’s sexuality is denied, Black women’s supposed promiscuity disqualifies them as rape victims.⁶⁵ In both sorts of cases, all females are subjected to patriarchal norms because they are female, and the law – traditionally written, interpreted, and administered by men – is slow to respond to the effects of these norms. But when the law finally deigns to recognize such harms and apply remedies, both harms and remedies have tended to take *White* women as the paradigm. Hence the need for an intersectional approach.

Of course, a perspective based on the racial gender-binary ideal understands such issues not solely in terms of the perceived failure of Black women to meet White feminine norms but of the perceived intra-racial disorder between Black men and Black women generally. Such perceived disorder also draws on racist stereotypes of Black males – as, for example, Angela Davis makes clear when she draws a parallel in White supremacist ideology between the Black male rapist and the promiscuous Black female; indeed, “once the notion is accepted that Black men harbor irresistible and animal-like sexual urges, the entire race is invested with bestiality.”⁶⁶ Needless to say, any relationship between bestial man and bestial woman will fall far short of the evolved White domesticity imagined by, say, Herbert Spencer – or Patrick Moynihan.

A White – supremacist view of the relationship between Black men and Black women also provides an illuminating lens through which to examine a related issue Crenshaw discusses: the difficulty, bemoaned by MacKinnon, in cross-race feminist organizing against rape. Cardabo and Harris, commenting on MacKinnon’s “Close Encounters,” remark that part of what inhibits cross-race feminist solidarity is that historically, thanks to segregation, “Black women and Black men have quite literally grown up with each other – in the same homes, schools, social settings, churches, and communities – in ways that Black women and white women have not.”⁶⁷ What’s more, “no woman exists outside an intersectional relationship with men. All women have at least one social identity that intersects with a social identity of a man.” Carbado and Harris see MacKinnon as overlooking the legacy of a history in which White families, including White women, enslaved Black women, whose children were too often the product of rape by their enslavers.⁶⁸ This history is hardly a recipe for feminist solidarity, whatever White and Black women might have in common – at least in the abstract.

The racial binary-gender ideal suggests a related reason that cross-gender race solidarity might trump cross-race feminist solidarity. Although Black men may be privileged over Black women in various contexts, as Crenshaw emphasizes, Black women’s supposed failure to meet White sex/gender norms is matched by Black men’s parallel one. These alleged failures function together; from a White supremacist perspective, they are seen as mirroring each other, as defining a race. Mightn’t *this* be a potential source of solidarity between Black men and women (or, for that matter, between men and women of any number of racialized groups)? In “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” Hortense Spillers discusses how the enslavement of Africans enacted an “un-gendering” of both males and females: “I would suggest that ‘gendering’ takes place within the confines of the domestic,” Spillers writes, “an essential metaphor that then spreads its tentacles for male and female subjects over a wider ground of human and social purposes.” But in the slave ship,

one is neither female, nor male, as both subjects are taken into “account” as quantities. The female in “Middle Passage,” as the apparently smaller physical mass, occupies “less room” in a directly translatable money economy. But she is, nevertheless, quantifiable by the same rules of accounting as her male counterpart.⁶⁹

Black women have been classified as female but deprived of gender; Black men have been classified as male and similarly deprived – in both instances not just by racial science and ideology, but socially and materially.

This White supremacist refusal of Black gender difference is a particularly stark illustration of how the racial gender-binary ideal works more generally to classify and denigrate many racialized populations. But, especially with

respect to the United States and other countries involved in the transatlantic slave trade, this refusal is also a special case. If the great racial chain of being is thought to have a lowest rung, the racist imaginary has more often than not consigned Africans to it, and their supposed failure of masculinity and femininity is integral to this ranking. So while the gender disorder attributed to Black men and women is usefully seen in the larger context of White supremacy's diagnosis of various sorts and degrees of gender disorder among all but those doing the diagnosing, it is also a singular and brutal instance of this diagnosis, one where physical force and the powers of the state have done their best to bring about the very gender disorder science claimed to have discovered. Against this ungendered background, even as Black female reproductive capacity was appropriated and exploited, the White gender-binary ideal and the racism it codifies could emerge in sharp relief.

I will end this section by raising a possible objection to my discussion thus far: might focusing on the gender-binary ideal in the way I have cede too much? Mightn't one argue instead that Black women, and other women of color, are just as fully women as White women are, however different their experiences may be, and leave it at that? Echoing Sojourner Truth's famous question, Crenshaw sometimes seems to take this perspective. After all, why *shouldn't* the particular harms suffered by Black women be addressed under laws against sex discrimination? And why shouldn't Black women be able to represent their gender as a whole, just as White women can? This leads back to a key difference between Crenshaw's intersectional approach, which makes use of antecedently accepted categories, and the one I take in this book, which inquires into these categories' construction and mutual relations as well as into their relation to White supremacy. In a legal context, an intersectional approach like Crenshaw's is crucial: those classified as female are subject to particular sorts of overlapping harms, and laws against gender discrimination should apply to *all* females, regardless of their race and the racialized forms that sex discrimination might take. That is what Crenshaw insists on (as does MacKinnon, if perhaps less clear-sightedly). But the fact that roughly half the population is classified as female and then subjected to sex/gender norms should not be taken to mean that there is some objective category of "woman" – general and race-neutral, grounded in biology or perhaps in some other way – that privileged White women have simply seized, defined, and refused to share. Instead, an approach that foregrounds the racial gender-binary ideal understands the category "woman" as situated in a structure that encodes and promotes White supremacy. Of course, as part of their positive agendas, women from marginalized groups might promote subversive, prescriptive, creative, and/or transformative understandings of "woman." Even if the category is a modern, European creation, its meaning can be adopted, adapted, appropriated, resisted, disrupted, replaced, or transformed; it can also be infused with understandings of gender that draw

on precolonial or other oppositional frameworks. On some views, this is what intersectional feminist approaches are all about: marginalized groups of women constructing for themselves explicitly intersectional identities outside of mainstream White norms, selectively engaging with these norms, or even claiming the sorts of identities usually reserved for privileged women.

But this does not take place in a vacuum, and it is not a simple matter. Consider Melissa Harris-Perry's analysis of the traditional first-lady role Michelle Obama chose to assume during her husband's presidency.⁷⁰ Largely devoted to her own children and family rather than to the sorts of policy issues that a Harvard-trained lawyer might otherwise favor, the image Obama projected as first lady might appear retrograde from a White, liberal-feminist perspective. But, as Harris-Perry points out, this more traditional image also challenged the dominant stereotypes associated with American Black women, who – in Spillers' words – having been “robbed of the parental right” are expected to nurture others' children but never their own.⁷¹ At the same time, Harris-Perry cautions, Obama's choice “is also dangerous for black women, who have so little space in which to speak back against patriarchy and sexism among black men. . . .” Indeed, Obama's “‘success’ as a woman can be used as a rhetorical weapon against the majority of African American women who are unmarried” and “encourage the discourse that establishing appropriately patriarchal families will offer solutions to the social ills facing black communities.”⁷² In any case, the lives of Black and other marginalized groups of women, like the lives of all women – indeed, of everyone – are shaped, in one way or another, by dominant ideologies and responses to them. Even if one belongs to a subculture with its own, perhaps less oppressive, gender norms, one is still likely to be assaulted at every turn by stereotype threats and other aggressions, micro and otherwise. At the very least, shining a light on the racial character of the gender-binary ideal helps clarify the structure within which such stereotypes take shape.

And, of course, there are various ways to engage with – and/or resist – this structure. In *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*, C. Riley Snorton relates the harrowing story of William and Ellen Craft, who fled enslavement, light-skinned Ellen successfully posing as William's disabled, male master – one example of Black trans identity/performance.⁷³ Ava Betty Brown is another. Arrested in Chicago in 1957 for dressing like a woman, she was undressed at the police station and “found to be physically a man.” Testifying in court that she was “double-sexed,” she added that her friends and business associates all knew her as Betty; “Everything I own is in the name of Betty Brown... If I am a man, I don't know it.”⁷⁴ She didn't deny the possibility that she *was* a man, exactly – she just denied having first-person knowledge of its truth. Nor did she insist on that other sort of truth – the truth of *really* being a woman, or of being a *real* woman. Snorton contrasts

Brown with the very blonde, very White Christine Jorgensen, who became a celebrity in the United States after her 1952 sex reassignment surgery in Europe. The *Chicago Daily Defender* called Brown “a Chicago version of the Christine Jorgensen story,” but Jorgensen’s transition involved not only surgery but the “embodiment of the norms of white womanhood, most notably domesticity, respectability, and heterosexuality.”⁷⁵ As Snorton writes, Betty Brown, by contrast, shows “other ways to be trans, in which gender becomes a terrain to make space for living, a set of maneuvers with which blacks in the New World had much practice.”⁷⁶

Crenshaws ends “Demarginalizing” with a paraphrase of the nineteenth-century Black activist and intellectual Anna Julia Cooper: “When they enter, we all enter.”⁷⁷ Snorton, with a nod to Spillers, is particularly interested in those who remain outside – who do not, cannot, or choose not to enter, at least not through the existing categorial portals. For them, the ungendering of Blackness “opens onto a way of thinking about black gender as an infinite set of proliferative, constantly revisable reiterations figured ‘outside’ of gender’s established and establishing symbolic order” – a symbolic order that is raced as White.⁷⁸

Gender and the scope question

I will end this chapter with a somewhat theoretical question that arises for both an intersectional framework and the one I take in this book, both of which focus on the gender system of the modern West. The basic question is this: how broad a scope should the term “gender system” be taken to have? Does it refer simply to a mode of social organization in the modern West? Or more broadly, to modes of organization in other times and places? Each approach invites its own version of the question. I will first discuss how it applies to the gender-binary, categorial approach I have outlined in this book and return later in this section to how it applies to the intersectional approach.

For the approach this book takes, centered around the racial gender-binary ideal, the question is this: if race and gender really do constitute each other in the modern West as fundamentally and thoroughly as I have claimed, what, if anything, can be meant when one talks about gender *in abstraction* from race? How, for example, might gender be understood in, or by, non-Western or pre-modern cultures – that is, in contexts where race, a modern Western category, is not an issue? Can such cultures be said to have a gender system at all? For surely, it might be objected, there must be *some* intelligible way to talk about gender more generally – whether crossculturally, historically, and/or in contemporary cultures, if there are any, that have escaped the West’s conception of race. Is there a way to do this? And if not, can we do without some universally applicable notion of gender?

It might seem that doing without is simply not an option; the universality of *some* sort of gender system, whatever cultural variations there may be, has long been taken for granted by feminists and non-feminists alike. However, the view that gender is a universal turns out *not itself* to be universal. According to the sociologist Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, for example, traditional Yoruba culture had neither a practice nor a conception of gender, both of which, she argues, were rather impositions of colonizers. As for an anthropological record that seems to provide evidence for a traditional Yoruba gender structure, she views this as based on mistranslation and cultural myopia, if not outright racism.⁷⁹ Indeed, Oyěwùmí suggests that contemporary Western feminism, despite its often-stated opposition to biological determinism, grounds the assumption that gender must be universal on that very doctrine.⁸⁰ Certainly, in response to Oyěwùmí one might dig in one's heels and insist that gender *must* be a cultural universal, that even if the meanings and practices of gender are not hard-wired in humans they arise inevitably from the need to regulate sexuality and reproduction, universal facts of human life.⁸¹ But this begs the question against Oyěwùmí, who is, in fact, offering a counterexample to just this assumption, one that she regards as Eurocentric. Indeed, while Oyěwùmí argues that Yoruba society was not structured by gender, María Lugones, at least sometimes, seems to go further, claiming that *only* the modern West has a concept and practice of gender, which she views as a colonial imposition designed to oppress non-European populations.⁸²

I will return to this view below. But even if one accepts Oyěwùmí's weaker claim – that not all societies have gender systems – and regards organization according gender instead as *nearly* universal, there's still the question of what this almost-universal might look like. Does it have a single, shared origin or foundation – in the public/private distinction, for example, or the universality of female caregiving for infants? The groundbreaking feminist anthropologist Michelle Rosaldo, who suggested something like this in 1974, had by 1981 decided this question was the wrong one to ask since it imposes a Western perspective rather than encouraging an understanding of particular cultures in their specificity.⁸³ Need a gender system be male dominated? The feminist anthropologist Sherry Ortner once thought so, also in 1974; but by 1994 she, too, had qualified her view significantly.⁸⁴ Must it be structured by a binary? Certainly anthropologists have catalogued a wide variety of sexual and gender identities and practices crossculturally. But what, exactly, should count as a gender-binary system? Even the modern West, which has long insisted on the binary character of sex, and often of gender – grounded in biology, god's will, or both – at the same time has assumed that racialized males and females fall short of it. Indeed, one could even say that the modern Western conception of gender is binary only in a limited sense, since the sex/gender binary as an ideal.

But even if, for the sake of argument, we were to consider all systems of gender to be binary in some important sense, the gender binary in the modern West is so thoroughly saturated with racial significance that it is no easy task, and perhaps an impossible one, to untangle its binary component from its racial one. I suspect something like this concern might motivate the view, sometimes suggested by Lugones, that gender – a centerpiece of the West’s hierarchical, imperialist project – is simply a Western invention. A provocative claim, indeed. But how does one decide if it is correct?

Here we are brought back, if circuitously, to a hoary question familiar to feminist theorizing, one I have managed so far to touch on only very lightly: the question of essentialism. In its usual feminist iteration, the question is: what, if anything, justifies calling roughly one half of humankind “women”? A related, less frequently asked question is: what, if anything, justifies calling various modes of social organization, in different times and places, “systems of gender”? Many of the answers feminists once gave to the first question, of course, make the mistake of constructing a definition that centers privileged, White, heterosexual women. There is a parallel danger in answering the second question in a similarly blinkered way: in trying to arrive at a crosscultural, perhaps even universal, characterization of what a gender system is, it is all too easy to take the modern Western understanding of gender as paradigmatic. Indeed, that was Rosaldo’s reason for critiquing her own earlier view. Like the larger culture of which it is part, Western feminism has tended to falsely universalize not only a certain conception of woman, but also a certain notion of binary gender difference – that is, one that turns out to be structured by the racial gender-binary ideal. A Eurocentric perspective sees the modern West as the only place where men and women have worked out the proper relationship between the (two) genders – or are on the brink of working it out, or at least see clearly the need to do so and have an idea of what this would look like. In light of this, feminist approaches, including intersectional ones, should be as wary of ethnocentrism in understanding what a gender system as they have learned to be in understanding what a woman is.

The pitfalls of feminist essentialism, then, should serve as a warning against an ethnocentric essentialism in understanding what constitutes a gender system. Of course, depending on whom one asks, a commitment to essentialism can mean many things, from subscribing to a theory of metaphysical or biological essence to simply having confidence that one’s terms – terms like “woman,” “race,” “gender” – have a meaning stable enough to be understood in ordinary conversation (even if not necessarily in Congress – or academia). But if essentialism can take many forms, so too can its rejection. Feminist theoretical discussions of essentialism have tended to be informed, broadly speaking, by a Continental post-structuralist philosophical perspective. But post-structuralism – a view, as its name implies, which is a successor

to structuralism – emerges from a very specific philosophical framework and tradition. There are others. Cressida Heyes, a feminist philosopher, finds a promising and tractable alternative to poststructuralist antiessentialism in the work of the twentieth-century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein’s perspective on what it is for a term to have a meaning steers between two extremes: the sort of antiessentialism that despairs of meanings altogether and the sort of essentialism that insists on finding the essence of womanhood, or at least determining the necessary and sufficient conditions for correctly applying the term “woman.”⁸⁵ Heyes uses Wittgenstein to suggest how to understand the meaning of the term “woman,” a strategy, as I’ll suggest just below, that has its limitations. However, this Wittgensteinian strategy will be invaluable in thinking through what might count as a gender system.

Heyes’s argument makes use of a central tenet of Wittgenstein’s later work: the failure to discover some quality that all X’s – games, chairs, women, what have you – have in common does not show that the term “X” is meaningless so long as these X’s, as a group, share what Wittgenstein famously calls a family resemblance. This requires not that every X share a quality with all other X’s, or even that any two X’s possess some common quality, but that the entire group be held together by strands of similarity. Heyes quotes Wittgenstein on number:

And we extend our concept of number as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres.⁸⁶

The same operation, Heyes writes, can be performed on the concept of woman:

If we adopt the notion that women bear family resemblances to one another, we can avoid a misleading ontology that sets up mutually exclusive, bounded categories.

On this account there need be no definitive set of characteristics that women share, but rather we can understand ourselves as connected to each other by a network of overlapping similarities, some of which may be biologically real – like breasts, a vagina, a uterus, the capacity to conceive and bear a child, XX chromosomes; others of which may be more obviously constructed – like a particular relation to one’s mother, ethical attitudes, experiences of subordination and so on. But no *single* characteristic is necessary to make an individual a woman, and none is sufficient. Thus, on this view, it is perfectly possible to make sense of the fact that two “distantly related” individuals can both be women and share none of the same characteristics except that they are called “women.”⁸⁷

In general, this approach has much to recommend it. Whatever the disagreements between them, many antiessentialists and essentialists seem implicitly to agree about one thing: in order for a word truly to have a meaning, there must be an essence that provides that meaning (or at least a set of necessary and sufficient conditions governing the use of the word). So the challenge to the feminist essentialist is to produce this essence (or set of conditions) – or else to admit that antiessentialists are right, after all, and that the meaning of “woman” (like the meanings of most terms) is unstable, chimerical, contradictory, or constantly in flux. One might be allowed, even urged, on political grounds to embrace a “strategic essentialism,” as the poststructuralist feminist Gayatri Spivak once famously suggested, but one shouldn’t fool oneself about what one is doing.⁸⁸ Wittgenstein, as Heyes realizes, presents a third option.

However, this Wittgensteinian approach has a significant limitation for feminists in search of the meaning of “woman.” A family-resemblance approach, as described above, focuses on similarities and differences, and, as Crenshaw sees clearly, such an approach is not particularly successful at illuminating and addressing power relations. That is to say, a family-resemblance approach is not likely to foreground the sort of structural inequalities between women – based on racism, heteronormativity, ethnocentrism, ableism, religion, and the like – that give rise to many of the differences between women that feminism must grapple with. The feminist philosopher Ann Garry addresses this problem by stipulating that intersectional differences be included among the characteristics that make up a family-resemblance understanding of the term “woman.”⁸⁹ But I am not convinced that is good enough, since the structural power dynamics – for example, systemic racism as it plays out between women, as elsewhere – that are responsible for these very differences still remain in the background. Simply allowing that women of different groups have different experiences, and that these experiences reflect the privileges of some and the disadvantages of others – privileges and disadvantages that are, indeed, often linked – skirts the problem. Indeed, it is doubtful whether such a perspective – one might call it a “diversity perspective” – even manages to challenge the default centrality of White privileged women. This is not to deny that a Wittgensteinian approach may be just what’s needed in certain feminist contexts. But it does not seem ideal for thinking about structural inequalities between women.

More promising is the use of a family-resemblance approach to think about what might count as a *system of gender*, especially in a crosscultural context. (And, arguably, this is the more conceptually basic question anyway. For if “woman” is fundamentally a social category rather than, say, a biological or psychological one, it makes sense to understand it relationally, in the context of a system structured by social relationships; that is to say, the existence of women implies the existence of a gender system.) It may be problematic to

talk generally, second-wave-feminist style, about “*the* gender system” – or, for that matter, about male dominance or patriarchy or the public-private distinction – across history and culture. But a Wittgensteinian approach will allow the use of such terms to group together various practices or modes of social organization in different times and places, and to do so in a way that is perfectly intelligible – but without being essentialist. All that is necessary is to understand these different modes of social organization – i.e., these gender systems – to be connected through strands of family resemblance.

Of course, this approach will not satisfy everyone. Oyèwùmí, as discussed above, has claimed that pre-conquest Yoruba culture was not structured by gender. How is this claim to be evaluated? From a Wittgensteinian perspective, after the translation issues Oyèwùmí discusses are resolved and various relevant empirical facts are established, a decision will simply have to be made; there is no antecedent fact that will settle the matter. This approach leaves open the possibility of counting some sorts of cultural practices as gender systems even in cases where, for example, those with penises do not have higher social status than those with vaginas, or where labor is not divided according to what sort of genitalia one has, or where relationships of kinship are understood in some unusual way. Perhaps some social practices and modes of organization might count as gender systems even if they have only a very attenuated, merely historical, relationship to the facts, however they are understood, of human reproduction and sexuality. Of course, there are bound to be disagreements: What sorts of features should count as constituting a family resemblance in a particular instance? Which of a concept’s many strands should be considered most central? In the case of what is meant by “gender system” – much as in the case of what is meant by “woman” – many of these questions will be pragmatic or political. Indeed, on a view inspired by Wittgenstein, someone’s, or some group’s, insistence that a particular strand – say, classification according to genitals, or the hierarchical relation between males and females, or even a connection to reproduction – be counted as the essence of a gender system might be understood not as a true or false claim about the meaning of a term but rather as a way to emphasize a particular feature’s importance. This is certainly happening now, very vocally, in Congress and elsewhere, with respect to the term “woman.” And it may also be happening when Lugones takes gender to be a Western colonialist invention. First and foremost, she is drawing attention to what she considers to be the supremely important, overlooked, and damaging way the Western gender system has served colonialism and racism. But, of course, one need not be an essentialist to insist on this; one can recognize the modern Western gender system as deeply racist and colonialist but still talk about similarities between this Western system and others too far removed for racism or colonialism to be relevant. One may point, for example, to the ubiquity across cultures of male domination, sexual

violence, the division between the public and the private spheres, marriage, patriarchy, or gender binarism. And one may do so without insisting that any of these is the essence or foundation of all gender systems, or even that any of these can be understood fully apart from the context of the particular society of which it is part.

There is, however, a very important caveat here. If one starts with a Western conception of gender, one is likely to regard that conception, and one's own culture, as paradigmatic, and this is likely to shape what strands of similarity one judges to be relevant. The best remedy, I think, would be for theorists from a variety of cultural locations to do the theorizing.⁹⁰ At the very least, it is helpful to imagine what family resemblances *might* emerge if the judgment about how to understand a concept were made from a very different cultural location – an imaginative act for which humility and an open, receptive attitude are minimum conditions. Despite these issues, however, the family resemblance approach seems to me preferable to asserting gender as a cultural universal in some strong, essentialist sense and in the process smuggling in culturally specific elements – surely a recipe for misunderstanding both one's own and others' social worlds.

The Wittgensteinian approach, then, suggests a way to talk about gender crossculturally or historically even while acknowledging the deeply racialized character of the modern Western gender system. But, as I remark earlier, the scope question applies to intersectional approaches as well as to the one developed in this book. If I am correct about the centrality of the racial gender-binary ideal to the modern Western system of gender, a Wittgensteinian approach will be of little help here. To see why, consider again the metaphor of intersectionality. If the axis of gender is taken to be one operative specifically in the modern West, and if the modern West's gender system is already imbricated by race through its incorporation of the gender-binary ideal, a problem arises: although the axis of gender is said to intersect with that of race, this axis cannot be specified fully *apart* from the idea of race. And a corresponding problem arises if one starts with the axis of race, which cannot be fully specified apart from the idea of gender. One solution might be to think of the axis of gender more generally, operative not only in the modern West, where it cannot be disentangled from racial categories, but elsewhere as well. But this, of course, again raises the specter of essentialism. We might turn to Wittgenstein and understand gender crossculturally in the way described above, as comprising a group or collection of practices held together through strands of family resemblances. But that creates more complications: if the term "gender system" refers to no full-blown cultural universal with an essential core but instead to a collection of culturally specific systems that bear a family resemblance to each other, then what, exactly, is doing the intersecting? Is it illuminating – does it even make sense – to say that the *collection* intersects?

Indeed, even if it did make sense to talk about the collection doing the intersecting, there is the corresponding question of what, exactly, this collection intersects with. How, exactly, should the category of *race* be understood here? If it is taken not as a biological reality but as an historically constructed system specific to the modern West, it looks as though gender, understood as a crosscultural collection of practices, is universal in a way that race is not. If so, there's an asymmetry between race, understood as specific to the modern West, and gender, understood crossculturally as a family of practices related through family resemblance. Perhaps this asymmetry could be dealt with by understanding the modern West's system of race along the same lines as I have suggested we think of gender – for example, as a particular version of a more general human tendency toward ethnocentrism or in-group favoring, itself understood as a collection of practices and categories that bear a family resemblance to each other. But resolving the asymmetry problem like this has the cost of leaving us with not one but two extremely abstract categories, each understood as an internally heterogeneous family of practices. What it would mean for these to intersect is difficult to grasp, and the metaphor loses its heuristic power.

These problems, I want to emphasize, are by no means an argument against using an intersectional approach to understand the situations of groups occupying particular social locations, defined by culturally specific categories in specific contexts – the work, indeed, that Crenshaw intends for it do. But such problems lurk in the background if the axis of gender is unreflectively assumed to be something general or universal that just happens to intersect, in the modern West, with the axis of race. Certainly one can *abstract* notions of gender or race from the structure organized by the racial gender-binary ideal; indeed such abstractions are crucial for certain purposes. The concern, though, is that such abstracted notions – male/female, masculine/feminine – invariably assume a gender binarism. And in the West, this binarism implicates race.

In any case, there is something backward, not to mention confusing, about first abstracting a culturally specific category of gender from a culturally specific gender/race structure organized by the racial gender-binary ideal, then assuming this category to have an unspecified but vaguely global scope, and finally pointing back to the original structure as the place where gender, understood in this more general way, intersects with race. Such confusion is only compounded when gender is thought of uncritically as some sort of full-blown cultural universal, especially if the intersectional approach is exported to contexts where the modern Western category of race does not apply. For while gender categories (in the societies that have them) may well be inflected by various other culturally specific social classifications and hierarchies, one must always look to see if, and how, this is so. Otherwise, there is the danger of universalizing falsely, projecting local Western

understandings of gender onto contexts where they don't apply. Guarding against this, moreover, requires not only questioning the universality of gender binarism but also seeing the hidden ways that the gender binary is bound up with race in the modern West. After all, one way that racism works in a liberal society is by erasing its traces, rendering itself invisible. Intersectional feminist analyses point out the consequences of missing the racial coding of the notion of "woman"; this book has suggested that the gender binary itself is also racially coded. Even into the early twentieth century, this coding was explicit, unembarrassed, and impossible to miss. That it is now more hidden just means that it is easier to talk about race and gender as if they were different things entirely. Perhaps this is part of what lies behind a nagging sense that even to talk about race and gender intersecting in the modern West is to overstate the autonomy of each and to overlook some more basic connection. Not only are race and gender inextricably bound where they intersect – in experiences, oppressions, institutions, social situations; they also constitute each other at the very categorial level through the racial gender-binary ideal.

I will end this chapter by admitting that the foregoing quick discussion of how to think about gender crossculturally is not only schematic but also a bit misleading. Human cultures, however they are defined, are hardly autonomous islands, cut off from intercourse with each other. In particular, the long reach of the West has left few, if any, corners of the world untouched. Lugones is surely correct to understand the Western gender system as a grand imperialist project, a way to racialize, categorize, and subordinate non-European women (and men) globally. So, in a sense, there *is* a universal sex/gender system after all, at least insofar as the West has managed to impose its system far and wide. How this sex/gender system has shaped, and been shaped by – indeed, how it has *intersected* with – various indigenous ones is another part of this exceedingly complex story.

Notes

- 1 Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 8 (1989): 139-67; and "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241-99.
- 2 A.G. Gancarski, "Ron Desantis Cites Queer Theory and Intersectionality in Defense of African American Studies Course Ban," in *Florida Politics*, <https://floridapolitics.com/archives/583030-gov-desantis-condemns-queer-theory-and-intersectionality-to-defend-african-american-studies-course-ban/>, accessed October 15, 2023.
- 3 Jane Coastan, "The Intersectionality Wars," *Vox*, May 28, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>, accessed 11/4/23.

- 4 Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing," 149.
- 5 Crenshaw, "Mapping," 1266–82.
- 6 Crenshaw, "Mapping," 1291.
- 7 Crenshaw, "Mapping," 1298; also see her "Whose Story Is It, Anyway? Feminist and Anti-Racist Appropriations of Anita Hill," in *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Pantheon, 1992), 402–40.
- 8 Crenshaw, "Mapping," 1274.
- 9 Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing," 149.
- 10 This seems to be, roughly, Crenshaw's view. For a nuanced, recent discussion of the role of intersectionality has played in women's studies, see Jennifer C. Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).
- 11 Crenshaw, "Mapping," 1296.
- 12 Devon W. Carbado and Cheryl I. Harris, "Intersectionality at 30: Mapping the Margins of Anti-essentialism, Intersectionality, and Dominance Theory," *Harvard Law Review* 132, no. 8 (June 2019): 2215–16.
- 13 Leslie MacCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30, no. 3 (Spring, 2005): 1779–90.
- 14 MacCall, "Complexity," 1778.
- 15 Crenshaw, "Mapping," 1244, note 9.
- 16 Carbado, "Colorblind Intersectionality," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 4 (Summer 2013): 816.
- 17 For a particularly good analysis of the gender binary and "normal Whiteness," see Julian B Carter, *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1880–1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).
- 18 Devon Carbado, in "Colorblind Intersectionality," comes closer to a focus on the default "Whiteness" of individual categories (like "woman") but his approach can't easily accommodate the Whiteness of the gender binary as an organizing category.
- 19 Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing," 167.
- 20 Quoted in Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing," 142.
- 21 Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing," 142–43.
- 22 Quoted in Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing," 134.
- 23 Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing," 144.
- 24 Carbado, "Colorblind Intersectionality," 813.
- 25 Crenshaw, "Close Encounters of Three Kinds: On Teaching Dominance Feminism and Intersectionality," *Tulsa Law Review* 46, no. 151 (2017): 165.
- 26 Crenshaw, "Mapping," 1249–50.
- 27 Devon Carbado and Mitu Gulati, "The Intersectional Fifth Black Woman," *DuBois Review* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 536.
- 28 Carbado and Gulati, "Intersectional Fifth," 538.
- 29 Carbado and Gulati, "Intersectional Fifth," 536, 538.
- 30 *The Moynihan Report: The Negro Family and the Case for National Action*, 1965, Chapter IV: "The Tangle of Pathology" <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/moynihan-rport-1965/#chapter4> (accessed October 25, 2023).
- 31 Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing," 165–66.
- 32 Roderick A. Ferguson discusses continuities between the Moynihan Report and some aspects of Black nationalist and other Black perspectives. See Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Towards a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 119–25.

- 33 Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 130.
- 34 Heather McGhee, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* (New York: One World, 2021).
- 35 Graham Piro, “Chilling Effects Remain as Oklahoma’s ‘Divisive Concept’ Law Becomes Effective,” *The Fire*, July 2, 2021, <https://www.thefire.org/news/chilling-effect-remains-oklahomas-divisive-concepts-law-becomes-effective> (accessed November 1, 2023).
- 36 Laura Meckler, “Ohio Officials are Investigating Pro-Nazi Ohio Homeschoolers,” *The Washington Post*, February 2, 2023. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/02/02/ohio-officials-are-investigating-pro-nazi-home-schoolers/>
- 37 Dorothy Roberts, *Torn Apart: How the Child Welfare System Destroys Black Families – and How Abolition Can Build a Better World* (New York: Basic Books, 2022), 161–90.
- 38 Roberts, *Torn Apart*, 223–48.
- 39 Roberts, *Torn Apart*, 97.
- 40 Roberts, *Torn Apart*, 90–92.
- 41 Quoted in Roberts, *Torn Apart*, 102. See also Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 21.
- 42 Roberts, *Torn Apart*, 226.
- 43 “Black Boys Viewed As Older, Less Innocent Than Whites, Research Finds,” American Psychological Association, 2014, <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2014/03/black-boys-older> (accessed November 4, 2023).
- 44 “The Case for Focusing on Black Girl’s Mental Health,” Black Women’s Justice Institute, [https://www.nbwji.org/post/the-case-for-focusing-on-black-girls-mental-health#:~:text=Black%20girls%20are%20six%20times,school%2C%20than%20any%20other%20group.](https://www.nbwji.org/post/the-case-for-focusing-on-black-girls-mental-health#:~:text=Black%20girls%20are%20six%20times,school%2C%20than%20any%20other%20group.;); “Gender, Justice, and Opportunity,” Georgetown Law, [https://genderjusticeandopportunity.georgetown.edu/adultification-bias/\(both accessed November 1, 2023\).](https://genderjusticeandopportunity.georgetown.edu/adultification-bias/(both%20accessed%20November%201,%202023).)
- 45 Steven Mintz, “Childhood and Transatlantic Slavery,” in *Children and Youth in History*, Item #57, <https://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/case-studies/57.html> 2023.
- 46 Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
- 47 Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 97.
- 48 Steven J. Gould, *Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), 114.
- 49 Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008), xiii.
- 50 Crenshaw, “Close Encounters,” 151–89.
- 51 Jewish Women’s Archive, “Documentary ‘Gloria: In Her Own Words’ Premieres on HBO,” August 15, 2011, <https://jwa.org/thisweek/aug/15/2011/gloria-steinem>
- 52 MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987)
- 53 Angela P. Harris, “Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory,” *Stanford Law Review*, 42 (February 1990): 575, note 68.
- 54 Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Only Words* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 63–64.
- 55 Crenshaw, *Close Encounters*, 174.
- 56 Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 33–34.
- 57 MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified*, 8.
- 58 Crenshaw, *Close Encounters*, 164.

- 59 Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1988), 13.
- 60 MacKinnon, "From Practice to Theory, or What is a White Woman Anyway?" *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, 4, no 13: 15, 18, 20.
- 61 Crenshaw, "Close Encounters," 175–77.
- 62 Crenshaw, "Close Encounters," 156.
- 63 Crenshaw, "Close Encounters," 169.
- 64 Harris, "Race and Essentialism," 596.
- 65 Angela Y. Davis, *Women Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981), 172–221.
- 66 Davis, *Women, Race, and Class*, 182.
- 67 Carbado and Harris, "Intersectionality at 30," 2230.
- 68 Carbado and Harris, "Intersectionality at 30," 2234.
- 69 Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 71.
- 70 Melissa V. Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 269–99.
- 71 Spillers, "Mama's Baby," 77–78.
- 72 Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, 290.
- 73 C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 74. 74–84.
- 74 Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 162.
- 75 Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 141, quoting Emily Skidmore, "Constructing the 'Good Transsexual': Christine Jorgensen, Whiteness, and Heteronormativity in the Mid-Twentieth Century Press," *Feminist Studies* 37, no. 2 (2011): 271.
- 76 Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 175.
- 77 Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing," 167.
- 78 Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 74.
- 79 Oyèrónkẹ̀. Oyèwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 100–107.
- 80 Oyèwùmí, *Invention*, 8–11.
- 81 That was the response of junior Women's and Gender Studies faculty colleagues in my feminist theory reading group about a decade ago. Some senior feminist philosophers' comments at a conference in 2009 also seemed to me to dismiss Oyèwùmí's claims very quickly.
- 82 With respect to the resistance to the colonial imposition of gender, Lugones writes: "The suggestion is not to search for a non-colonized construction of gender in indigenous organizations of the social. There is no such thing: 'gender' does not travel away from colonial modernity." In María Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," *Hypatia*, 25, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 746.
- 83 Michelle Z. Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview," in *Woman Culture & Society*, ed. Michelle A Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1974), 17–43 and "The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Anthropology and Crosscultural Understanding," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5 no. 2 (Spring 1980): 389–417.
- 84 Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. Rosaldo and Lamphere, 17–42 and Ortner, "So, Is Female to Male As Nature is to Culture?" in *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture*, ed. Ortner (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1994) 173–80.
- 85 Some philosophers of language distinguish between these two sorts of questions, but the distinction is not relevant here.
- 86 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* trans. Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997 [1953]), § 67. Quoted by

- Cressida J. Heyes, *Line Drawings: Defining Women Through Feminist Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 77.
- 87 Heyes, *Line Drawings*, 84.
- 88 Grosz, Elizabeth, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in *The Post-colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990), 11.
- 89 Ann Garry, "Intersectionality, Metaphor, and the Multiplicity of Gender," *Hypatia* 26, no. 4 (Fall 2011) 826–50.
- 90 As Oyèwùmí argues, in *Inventions*.

Bibliography

- Abate, Michelle Ann. 2008. *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Bederman, Gail. 1995. *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880–1917*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- American Psychological Association. 2014. *Black Boys Viewed as Older, Less Innocent Than Whites, Research Finds*. Accessed October 15, 2023. <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2014/03/black-boys-older>.
- Carbado, Devon. 2013. "Colorblind Intersectionality." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38 (4): 811–45.
- Carbado, Devon W., and Cheryl I Harris. 2019. "Intersectionality at 30: Mapping the Margins of Anti-essentialism, Intersectionality, and Dominance Theory." *Harvard Law Review* 132 (8): 2193–39.
- Carbado, Devon, and Mitu Gulati. 2013. "The Intersectional Fifth Black Women." *Dubois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 10 (2): 527–40.
- Carter, Julian B. 2007. *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1880–1940*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Coaston, Jane. 2019. *The Intersectionality Wars*. May 28. Accessed November 4, 2023. <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Policy." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1): 139–67.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6): 1241–99.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1992. "Whose Story Is It, Anyway? Feminist and Antiracist Appropriations of Anita Hill." In *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*, edited by Toni Morrison, 402–40. New York: Pantheon.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 2010. "Close Encounters of Three Kinds: On Teaching Dominance Feminism and Intersectionality." *Tulsa Law Review* 46 (1): 151–89.
- Davis, Angela Y. 1981. *Women, Race, and Class*. New York: Random House.
- Ferguson, Roderick A. 2004. *Aberrations in Black: Towards a Queer of Color Critique*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
2011. *Documentary "Gloria: In Her Own Words" Premieres on HBO*. August 15. Accessed October 15, 2023. <https://jwa.org/thisweek/aug/15/2011/gloria-steinem>.
- Gamble, Justin. 2023. *Race Left out of Rosa Parks Story*. March 22. Accessed November 2, 2023. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/22/us/florida-textbook-race-rosa-parks-raej/>

- index.html#:~:text=The%20omission%20of%20race%20in,the%20materials%2C%20CNN%20previously%20reported.
- Gancarski, A.G. 2023. *Florida Politics*. January 23. Accessed October 15, 2023. <https://floridepolitics.com/archives/583030-gov-desantis-condemns-queer-theory-and-intersectionality-to-defend-african-american-studies-course-ban/>.
- Garry, Ann. 2011. "Intersectionality, Metaphors, and the Multiplicity of Gender." *Hypatia* 26 (4): 826–50.
- Gould, Stephen J. 1981. *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. 2014. "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution: Interview with Gayatri Spivak." In *The Post-colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, edited by Sarah Harasym. New York: Routledge. 1–16.
- Harris, Angela P. 1990. "Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory." *Stanford Law Review* 42 (3): 581–616.
- Harris-Perry, Melissa V. 2011. *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Heyes, Cressida J. 2000. *Line Drawings: Defining Women through Feminist Practice*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Institute, National Black Women's Justice. 2021. *The Case for Focusing on Black Girls' Mental Health*. June 7. Accessed October 15, 2023. <https://www.nbwji.org/post/the-case-for-focusing-on-black-girls-mental-health>.
- Institute, National Black Women's Justice. n.d. *Justia: US Law: 2020 Oklahoma Statutes, Title 7*. <https://law.justia.com/codes/oklahoma/2922/tit-70/section-10-24-157>.
- Law, Georgetown. n.d. *Gender, Justice, and Opportunity*. Accessed November 1, 2023. <https://genderjusticeandopportunity.georgetown.edu/adultification-bias/>.
- Lugones, Maria. 2010. "Towards a Decolonial Feminism." *Hypatia* 25 (4): 742–59.
- MacCall, Leslie. 2005. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30 (3): 1771–800.
- MacKinnon, Catharine A. 1988. *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- MacKinnon, Catharine A. 1991. "From Practice to Theory, or What Is a White Woman, Anyway?" *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 4 (13): 13–22.
- MacKinnon, Catharine A. 1993. *Only Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Magubane, Zine. 2014. "Spectacles and Scholarship: Caster Semenya, Intersex Studies, and the Problem of Race in Feminist Theory." *Signs: Journal of Woman in Culture and Society* 39 (3). 761–85.
- McGhee, Heather. 2021. *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*. New York: One World.
- Meckler, Laura. 2023. *Washington Post*. February 2. Accessed October 15, 2023. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/02/02/ohio-officials-are-investigating-pro-nazi-home-schoolers/>.
- Mintz, Steven. n.d. *Childhood and Transatlantic Slavery*. <https://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/case-studies/57.html>.
- Morrison, Toni. 1993. *Playing in the Dark*. New York: Vintage.
- Moynihan, Daniel P. 2007. *The Moynihan Report: The Negro Family and the Case for National Action*. January 1. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/moynihan-report-1965/#chapter4>.
- Nash, Jennifer C. 2017. *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Ortner, Sherry B. 1974. "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture." In *Woman, Culture, and Society*, edited by Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 17–42.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 1996. "So, Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" In *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture*, edited by Sherry B. Ortner, 173–80. Boston, MA: Beacon, 173–80.
- Oyèwùmí, Oyèrónkẹ́. 1997. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Piro, Graham. 2021. *Chilling Effect Remains as Oklahoma's 'Divisive Concept' Law Becomes Effective*. July 2. Accessed November 1, 2023. <https://www.thefire.org/news/chilling-effect-remains-oklahomas-divisive-concepts-law-becomes-effective>.
- Quadagno, Jill. 1994. *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty*. New York: Oxford.
- Roberts, Dorothy. 2022. *Torn Apart: How the Child Welfare System Destroys Black Families – and How Abolition Can Build a Safer World*. New York: Basic Books.
- Rosaldo, Michelle Z. 1980. "The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Anthropology and Crosscultural Understanding." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5 (2): 389–417.
- Rosaldo, Michelle Z. 1974. "Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview." In *Woman, Culture, and Society*, edited by Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 17–43.
- Skidmore, Emily. 2011. "Constructing the 'Good Transsexual': Christine Jorgenson, Whiteness, and Heteronormativity in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Press." *Feminist Studies* 37 (2). 270–300.
- Snorton, C. Riley. 2017. *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Spelman, Elizabeth V. 1989. *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*. Boston, MA: Beacon.
- Spillers, Hortense J. 1987. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* 17 (2): 64–81.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. [1953] 1997. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell.

AFTERWORD

Although skepticism about the binary character of sex/gender may be growing (a Google search for “non-binary gender” just now, for example, came up with 135,000,000 entries and one for “non-binary sex” with 98,200,000), one recent poll suggests that a majority of Americans believe that one’s gender is determined by the sex one is assigned to at birth. Such a view, of course, assumes the grand binary character of biological sex, which Chapter 1 questions.¹ But while the binary of sex may commonly be viewed as beyond doubt, an objective fact fixed in the body, there is considerably more skepticism about there being a similarly biological basis for dividing humanity into races. Although talk implying the objective, biological reality of race may still crop up in academia from time to time, the idea has long been discredited there.² The American Anthropological Association’s website, for example, makes a point of stating that most genetic variation occurs within rather than between “so-called racial groups”; that “physical variations tend to occur gradually rather than abruptly over geographical areas”; and that physical traits (for example, hair texture and skin color) are inherited independently from one another, “so that knowing the range of one trait does not predict the presence of another.”³ Furthermore, the website continues, studies of early childhood development and behavior confirm the view that “human cultural behavior is learned, conditioned into infants beginning at birth, and always subject to modification.”³ What’s more, there may be less of a gap than one might imagine between the views of anthropologists and those of the general public. A 2018 poll in the United States found unexpectedly nuanced views about race, with only a third of respondents linking it strongly to genetics.⁴

And yet, the idea of race will not give up its grip. As Barbara and Karen Fields write:

Confronted with the intellectual arguments against the concept of race, my undergraduates react by grasping for another word to occupy the same conceptual space. “I don’t feel comfortable using the word ‘race’ after your class but I don’t know what else to call it,” is a characteristic response. At the suggestion “Why not ancestry, if that’s what you’re talking about?” they retreat into inarticulate dissatisfaction.⁵

A commitment to the grand binary of biological sex, however, creates a perfect opportunity for the sex/gender-binary ideal to re-anchor a conception of race to the body after all, even when one knows that race, as an objective, biological phenomenon, is nothing but a myth. And the (mistaken) assumption that the sex/gender-binary ideal is *itself* race-neutral only increases its power to serve as such an anchor.

To see how this might work, it will be helpful to consider again two ideas raised in earlier chapters. The first is the intersectional approach to thinking about the relationship between sex/gender and race, and the second is the outsized role beauty played in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century race theory.

Intersectional analyses typically focus on multiply marginalized women, who experience a combination of racism and sexism not as two separate things but rather as a complex combination of both. But intersectionality also works in the other direction, so to speak – from the outside, shaping how people (and not necessarily only White people) see women who are not White.⁶ There is nothing surprising about this; we are social creatures, and what we experience is, in large part, the consequence of how others regard us. And if one is, say, a Black woman, one’s intersectional experience of marginalization is to a large degree a consequence of others seeing one intersectionally – that is, of their seeing one’s race and gender in combination, not as two different things. Chapter 1 mentions a study, undertaken with such intersectionality “from the outside” in mind, that demonstrates that Black women are more likely to be mistaken for men than White women are. Significantly, Black women are also judged to be less attractive – just as the racial gender-binary ideal would predict.⁷

As Chapter 2 shows, from the very start the “scientific” construction of hierarchical racial categories drew power from a racist aesthetic ideal. But perhaps that doesn’t put the point strongly enough; this ideal sometimes seems to have *driven* racial science. I am thinking here of the well-known nineteenth-century Swiss biologist Louis Agassiz. As we saw in Chapter 2, Agassiz, originally a monogenist who believed in a single Adam, changed his mind after he visited America. In a letter to his mother, he expressed

quite frankly his visceral, disgusted reaction to the appearance of the Black servants – the first Black people he had ever seen – who waited on him in his Philadelphia hotel. By his own account, this reaction contributed to his conversion to polygenism.⁸ And consider again Pieter Camper. How compelling would his precise craniological measurements have been without their connection to Greek sculpture and the racial aesthetic ideal it exemplified? Especially when fueled by White narcissism, an internalized racial ideal may have a power, perhaps verging on the erotic, that is not easily dislodged by the realization, for example, that skull shape has nothing to do with intelligence or character. Even after anthropologists debunk the notion of biological race, the White sex/gender-binary ideal, as it is expressed aesthetically, may tie race once more to the body – indeed, as in Agassiz’s case, to the body that sees as well as to the bodies that are seen. Observed males and females may be subjected to racially coded evaluations, but such evaluations are likely to be felt viscerally in the (often White) bodies of the observers. In another context, Freud talks about how art uses aesthetic pleasure to bribe its audience to accept its point of view. But not much of a bribe will be necessary for those who, like the Fields’s students, are already ambivalent about letting go of a biologically based notion of race.⁹ The aesthetic appeal of the White gender-binary ideal may turn out to be more than a match for the American Anthropological Association’s demystification of racial thinking.

But this situation is neither necessary nor unchangeable. As I write in the Introduction, this book was prompted by an encounter, many years ago, with a passage in Havelock Ellis that suggested how racial classifications and categories of gender have been co-constructed through the racial gender-binary ideal. It stands to reason that those most likely to understand the workings of this ideal will be those who fail to meet it, in one way or another – and there are many ways to fail. One doesn’t need a complicated philosophical theory about the epistemic privilege of marginalized groups to suspect that the more one has to gain from a structure like the one I have described, the less likely one is to question it. Even so, I hope I have shown just how easy it is to do just that, at least once this structure is clearly in view – if one is willing.

Notes

- 1 Pew Research Center, “Americans Complex Views on Gender Identity and Transgender Issues,” June 28, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2022/06/28/americans-complex-views-on-gender-identity-and-transgender-issues/> According to this study, “61% of Americans, up from 51% in May of 2022, say defining gender as the sex listed on a person’s original birth certificate is the only way to define male and female in society. 36%, down from 42%, say this definition of gender is antiquated and needs to be updated to include identity.”
- 2 Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (London: Verso, 2014), 53–56; 101.

- 3 American Anthropological Association Statement on Race, N.D., <https://americananthro.org/about/policies/statement-on-race/>, accessed November 1, 2023.
- 4 John Yates, “Study of Race and Genetics Finds Americans Have Nuanced Understanding of Race,” August 15, 2018, <https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2018/august/study-on-race-and-genetics-finds-americans-have-nuanced-understanding-of-race/>.
- 5 Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 101–2.
- 6 As Janine Jones makes clear in “Reasoning up Front with Race,” in *Why Race and Gender Still Matter: An Intersectional Approach*, ed. Mauve O’Donovan, Namita Goswami, and Lisa Yount (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 133–55.
- 7 Phillip Atiba Goff et al., “‘Ain’t I a woman?’ Towards an Intersectional Approach to Person Perception and Group-Based Harms,” *Sex Roles*, 59 (2008): 392–403.
- 8 Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 44–45.
- 9 Sigmund Freud, “Creative Writers and Daydreaming,” in *On Freud’s “Creative Writers and Daydreaming,”* ed. Ethel Spector Person, Peter Fonagy, and Servulo Augusto Figuera (London: Karmac Books, Ltd., [1908] 2013), 13.

Bibliography

- American Anthropological Association. n.d. *American Anthropological Association Statement on Race*. Accessed November 1, 2023. <https://americananthro.org/about/policies/statement-on-race/>.
- Parker, Kim, Juliana Menasce Horowitz, and Anna Brown. 2022. *Americans’ Complex Views on Gender Identity and Transgender Issues*. June 28. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2022/06/28/americans-complex-views-on-gender-identity-and-transgender-issues/>.
- Fields, Karen E., and Barbara J. Fields. 2014. *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life*. London: Verso.
- Freud, Sigmund. [1908] 2013. “Creative Writers and Daydreaming.” In *On Freud’s “Creative Writers and Daydreaming,”* edited by Ethel Spector Person, Peter Fonagy, and Servulo Augusto Figuera. London: Karmac Books Ltd, 1–13.
- Goff, Phillip et al. 2008. “‘Ain’t I a Woman?’ Towards an Intersectional Approach to Person Perception and Group-Based Harms.” *Sex Roles* 59: 392–403.
- Gould, Stephen J. 1981. *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Jones, Janine. 2017. “Reasoning up Front with Race.” In *Why Race and Gender Still Matter: An Intersectional Approach*, edited by Mauve O’Donovan, Namita Goswami, Lisa Yount. New York: Taylor and Francis, 133–55.
- Yates, John. 2018. *Study on Race and Genetics Shows Americans Have Nuanced Understanding of Race*. August 15. <https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2018/august/study-on-race-and-genetics-finds-americans-have-nuanced-understanding-of-race/>.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

INDEX

- Abate, Michelle Ann 162
Agassiz, Louis 49, 187, 188
analogies between sex/gender inferiority and race inferiority: feminization of non-European races 2, 52, 56–8, 68, 69, 70, 78, 93, 114; masculinization of European races 2, 51, 56, 57, 61, 68, 70, 76, 78, 103, 110, 113, 114; and racial gender-binary ideal 55–62, 68, 70, 78, 156; Stepan's analysis 55–8
- beauty: and evolution 53, 54, 64, 66, 67; as gendered 51–3, 63, 66–9, 166, 167, 187; and the racial gender-binary ideal 49–55, 57, 63, 67, 70, 166; as racial marker 50, 51, 63, 67, 68, 187
- Beauvoir, Simone de 6, 16, 125–42
Bederman, Gail 3, 4, 161, 162
binary of gender: as racial marker 19, 22; as shaping theories of binary sex 18–19, 22, 152
biogenetic hypothesis (theory of recapitulation): and crisis in masculinity (neurasthenia) 162; and education of White children 162; and Freud 75, 79, 80; and non-White children 163
Blackwell, Antoinette Brown 58
Bleys, Rudi C. 91, 92, 115
Blüher, Hans 107–10, 114
Blumenbach, Johann Friedrich 51, 69
Boyarin, Daniel 77
Burke, Edmund 1, 51
Burton, Antoinette 3, 4, 54
Butler, Judith 16
- Carbado, Devon 88, 150, 152, 155, 157, 168
Carpenter, Edward 6, 89, 90, 95, 99, 107, 110–19, 128
Carter, Julian B. 4
commensurability of racial and gender classifications: and the racial gender-binary ideal 40, 58, 63–4, 68–71; Schiebinger on 58, 59; Stepan on 56–8
Crenshaw, Kimberlé 2, 7, 147–59, 163, 165, 166, 168, 169, 171, 175, 178
- Darwin, Charles 7, 30, 49, 55, 57, 58, 64, 67, 71, 125
Davis, Angela Y. 167
degeneration: and the formation of races 48, 51, 53, 54, 63, 71, 75, 93, 94, 161; and homosexuality 78, 93–6, 104, 115; and Jews 75, 93; as racial danger 51, 52, 75, 92, 94, 95, 161
disruption of the gender-binary ideal: C. Riley Snorton on 170–1; in Freud 74–80; Melissa Harris-Perry on 170
domesticity and marriage: as divinely ordained 53, 55–6, 92, 107; as

- product of evolution 53–4, 65–6;
and racial gender-binary ideal 163;
and treatment of women 54–5, 133,
135–9
- domination framework of Catherine
MacKinnon: compared to difference
framework 135, 164–5; intersectional
critique of 7, 163–9; Kimberlé
Crenshaw on 7, 163–6, 168, 169;
racial gender-binary ideal and 7, 166–7
- Dowling, Linda 98, 99
- Dreger, Alice 13
- Eagleton, Terry 37
- effeminacy: and Jewish men 77, 109;
and orientalism 97, 129, 132; in
relation to male homosexuality 93,
94, 97–100, 104, 107–9, 112, 113
- Ellis, Havelock 1–4, 6, 57, 62–74, 78,
79, 93, 94, 110, 126, 128, 134,
160, 188
- essentialism: Crenshaw’s approach to
150; in feminist thinking 1, 2, 4,
140–1, 150, 151, 165, 173, 175; in
thinking about race 150, 164, 165,
173; in thinking crossculturally about
gender 38, 173, 174, 173–7
- evolution 3, 5, 33, 34, 49, 53, 54, 57,
58, 67, 71–4, 92, 101, 114, 115, 116,
125, 126, 132–4, 136, 137, 141, 162
- femininity: as one half of gender-binary
ideal 56, 59, 70, 156; as tied to
modernity 24, 26–7, 98–9, 102–3,
111, 112, 133
- feminist ethnocentrism: in
contemporary feminism 127, 142,
172–4; in late nineteenth- and early
twentieth-century feminism 4, 12, 54,
108, 134, 139; in Simone de Beauvoir
127, 135, 139, 142
- Fox-Keller, Evelyn 13, 15
- Freud, Sigmund 4, 6, 11, 63, 74–80, 94,
108, 109, 188
- Geller, Jay 4, 108, 109
- gender and the scope question:
for approach based on racial
gender-binary ideal 171–9; for
intersectional approach 177–9
- gender binary as racial ideal: in
arguments for homosexual
respectability 89, 91, 104, 108,
113–14, 118; in evolutionary theories
3, 53, 55–8, 60–2, 63, 66–7, 70, 125,
126; in feminist perspectives 54–6,
58, 59, 79, 125–6, 133, 138–9, 142,
153, 172, 178; overlooked character
of 4, 5, 55–6; as reconciling one- and
two-sex models 39–40, 56–8, 59–62,
63, 69–71
- Gilman, Sander C. 1, 6, 74–8, 80, 92,
93, 134
- Harris, Angela 164, 166, 168
- Harris, Cheryl I. 150
- Harris-Perry, Melissa 170
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich
129–32, 137
- Herophilus 35, 37
- homosexuality (male): association
with lower race 89, 90–2, 110; and
atavism 95, 115; as constructed
category 89–91; and degeneration
78, 93, 94, 95, 96, 104, 113, 115;
and effeminacy 93, 94, 97–8, 104,
108, 109, 113; internal heterogeneity
of category 90–1; and inversion 90,
94–6, 103, 110–13; and masculinity
102–4, 111, 113, 114; and racial
gender-binary ideal 6, 89, 91, 104,
108, 110–11; respectability of 6, 89,
94, 96, 104, 118
- Hornius, Georgius 48
- inheritance of acquired characteristics
(Lamarckism): “congenital
circumcision” of Jewish males
75–6; in creation of races 64; as
explanation of homosexuality in
certain populations 96, 104–5,
154–8, 159–63
- intersectional framework: contrasts
with racial gender-binary framework,
applied 153–8, 158–63, 167–8;
contrasts with racial gender-binary
framework, theoretical 149–50,
151–3; intersectionality “from the
outside” 187
- intersex conditions: Caster Semenya
affair 19–21, 78; as racialized in
different ways 19–22; in relation to
understanding sex as a binary 15,
19, 20

- Jones, Janine 19
 Jowett, Benjamin 99, 100, 105
 Jung, Carl 74, 75, 77, 80
- Kant, Immanuel 5, 53, 62, 141
 King, Helen 23, 24, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35–9, 47
 Krafft-Ebing, Richard von 3, 103
- Laqueur, Thomas 6, 12, 22–40, 47, 56, 78, 79
 Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm 48
 Lugones, María 4, 172, 173, 176, 179
- Marx, Karl 54, 128, 130, 131, 132, 138
 masculinity 23, 68, 77–9, 98, 107, 111–12, 113, 125, 133, 153, 169
 McCall, Leslie 151
 McWhorter, Ladelle 4
 menstruation: in females as mark of race 61–2; in Jewish men 16, 18, 40, 61, 75; one-sex model explanation of 25, 31–2, 61; in relation to male beard 61, 62, 64
 Moi, Toril 139, 140
 Mosse, George 50, 93
 Moynihan, Patrick 74, 158, 159, 163, 167
- neoteny 71, 72
- Oakely, Ann 16
 Okely, Judith 135
 one-sex model of the body: Laqueur's explanation of 23–8, 30–9, 56, 78, 79; as persisting into nineteenth century and beyond 22–6, 60, 61, 62, 78–80; as pre-racial 39–40, 79; in relation to two-sex model 23–8, 30, 31–3, 37–9, 57, 61, 64, 132
 orientalism 125–44
 Ortner, Sherry 141, 172
 Oyewùmí, Oyeronké 4, 172, 176
- Paracelsus 48
 Plato 24, 89, 95, 98, 99, 101, 102, 105–7, 113
- race: and feminist theory 2, 19–20, 21–2, 54–5, 127, 133, 134–44, 150, 133–6, 158–9; invisibility of 4–5, 19, 34, 140–2, 188; lacking biological basis 7, 186–8; monogenesis 48, 49, 92, 187; persistence of belief in the reality of 187–8; polygenesis 48–9, 53, 92, 130
 Rosaldo, Michelle Z. 129, 172, 173
 Rubin, Gayle 118, 119
- Schiebinger, Londa 14, 51, 55, 58–62
 sex/gender distinction: as contested 7, 12–13; and John Money 16
 sexual and gender stereotypes of racialized populations: association of Jews with homosexuality 91, 93, 108, 109; degeneration of Jews 75, 93; failure of racial gender-binary ideal in Jews 73, 76, 79, 80; feminization of Jewish men 5, 61, 76, 108–9; and orientalism 58, 92, 97, 104, 108, 129, 137, 139–40; of people of African descent 3, 74, 75–8, 92, 129, 168; sexual vice, of Jews 91, 93, 109, 139; stereotypes of Black family 74, 158–63; stereotypes of Black men 134, 148, 168, 169; stereotypes of Black women 19, 60, 65, 148, 157, 167, 169
 Snorton, C. Riley 4, 170, 171
 Spelman, Elizabeth 139–41
 Stepan, Nancy C. 55–8, 64
 Stocking, George Jr. 7, 49, 53
- two-sex model of the body (sex-binary): as arising in modernity 26–39; attempts to establish through biology 6, 28–30; as racial ideal 15–6, 20–2, 38, 39, 60; in relation to gender binary 12–13, 14–15, 18–19, 22, 23; in relation to intersex 15, 16–18, 22; unverifiability of 14–15, 27–30, 40
- Vogt, Karl 49
- Wittgenstein's family resemblance theory: as alternative to essentialism 174–7; and intersectional theory 177–8; and meaning of "gender system" 176–7; and meaning of "woman," 174–6
 Wynter, Sylvia 4