

Analogy and (White) Feminist Theory: Thinking Race and the Color of the Cyborg Body

For some time now it seems to have been understood among feminist theorists, particularly white feminist theorists, that questions of race and colonialism are being suitably addressed within gender studies and that everyone is aware of the problems of approaching the questions of gender and sexuality from a seemingly unraced perspective, particularly since the very notions of race, gender, and sexuality have been thoroughly destabilized.¹ The consensus seems to be that the kinds of challenges posed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her landmark 1981 essay “French Feminism in an International Frame” or even later by bell hooks in her book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984) have now been met. At quick glance, the contemporary situation of gender studies seems promising. There has been a proliferation of critical works theorizing gender from the perspective of African American women, Latinas, Asian American women, and third-world women, as well as those who identify with the larger constituency of women of color. Witness titles such as Hazel Carby’s *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (1987) and *Race Men* (1998), Trinh T. Minh-ha’s *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (1989), Patricia Hill Collins’s *Black Feminist Thought* (1990), and Carole Boyce Davies’s *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (1994), as well as classic anthologies such as *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color* (Anzaldúa 1990) and *Third World Women and The Politics of Feminism* (Mohanty, Russo, and Torres 1991). Of the multitude of recent works by white feminists and gender studies theorists, several have been particularly influential: Teresa de

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¹ Throughout this article—starting with the title—I have put *white* in parentheses in several places because I want to supply the absent racial signifier that a lot of white feminism does not acknowledge. I retain the parentheses in order to mark the lack of racial recognition among white feminists.

Lauretis's *Technologies of Gender* (1987); Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993), and *Antigone's Claim* (2000); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1991); Jane Flax's *Disputed Subjects* (1993); Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994); and Judith Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* (1998).

Even a cursory comparison between the titles of critical works by women of color and those by white women reveals an undeniable fact that I want to discuss in greater detail: while women of color theorize about a particular group of women, many white feminists continue to theorize about gender/sexuality/women in general.² Such a dichotomy reproduces the paradigmatics of imperialism wherein the colonizers speak for all humanity and the colonized simply talk about their own condition. The universalizing impulse implicitly draws on the legacy of colonialism and the project of modernity, albeit in a globalized, postcolonial world. However, it would be misguided to argue that nothing has changed within white feminism since the late 1970s. All of the texts by white theorists mentioned above are cognizant of racial difference and often include a chapter or more on racial analysis. Indeed, it has become almost a given that works in gender and sexuality studies acknowledge multiple axes of oppression or invoke the mantra of race, class, gender, and sexuality. It seems anachronistic, therefore, to name a project of universalism within white feminist theory today.

But it is precisely because universalism seems undone by the inclusion of racial difference that the terms of this incorporation need to be carefully scrutinized. In a remarkably prescient analysis of sexism and racism, with particular reference to black women, Elizabeth V. Spelman refers to the critical practice of seeing as extra the racial burden that black women had to bear as "additive analysis." Spelman writes, "An additive analysis treats the oppression of a black woman in a sexist and racist society as if it were a *further* burden than her oppression in a sexist but non-racist society, when, in fact, it is a *different* burden" (1982, 43). Additive analysis, in other words, seeks to incorporate particularities and differences as additions to a common universalist narrative. Two decades since the publication of Spelman's essay, additive analysis still continues, albeit in different forms. By examining the terms of racial incorporation in two essays pub-

² Ruth Frankenberg (1993) focuses on the centrality of whiteness for white women's identity. Curiously enough, her work has not been given much importance within gender studies and has generally been bracketed within whiteness studies.

lished in the mid-1980s—Gayle Rubin’s “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality” (1984) and Donna Haraway’s “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” (1991; this essay first appeared in *Socialist Review* in 1985)—I argue that these essays offer the dominant paradigm for the imperialist incorporation of women of color in contemporary gender and sexuality studies: incorporation by analogy. This strategy denies primacy to the voices of the colonized that have proclaimed the preeminence of the racial difference, so memorably articulated by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*: “‘Dirty nigger!’ Or simply, ‘Look, a Negro’” ([1952] 1967, 109).

I focus on these two essays written twenty years ago not because of a stubborn desire to pigeonhole white feminism within a time warp but because both essays were landmarks in radically reconfiguring gender and sexuality theory and because they proleptically configured the pervasive mode of analogical racial incorporation that continues, albeit with significant changes, today. My critique of these essays is thus made in the spirit of advancing feminist theory. It is in this spirit that I will turn briefly at the end of this essay to more recent texts. I argue that while Butler’s *Bodies That Matter* (1993) and Haraway’s *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium* (1997a) substantially further feminist theory’s investigation of race, they simultaneously continue to include race analogically.

The tradition of analogy and its role in feminist theory

Because analogy has become the omnipresent trope linking together gender, race, sexuality, and even class within feminist/gender/sex theories, it is instructive to turn briefly to the historical role of analogy within race and gender theorizing and within rhetoric in order to examine the ideological precedents for the use of analogy within feminist theory. In her essay, “Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science,” Nancy Leys Stepan (1990) shows how race and gender analogies became paradigms guiding the research of nineteenth-century phrenologists and racial theorists. Having accepted analogies linking the low intelligence of (white) women and the “lower,” nonwhite races, scientists proceeded to verify their findings empirically. Stepan writes, “In the metaphors and analogies joining women and the lower races, the scientist was led to ‘see’ points of similarity that before had gone unnoticed. Women became more ‘like’ Negroes, as the statistics on brain weight and body shapes showed” (1990, 51). Accepted as paradigms and circulated as knowledge, such analogies

helped maintain the racial and gender status quo through the paradoxical similarity between white women and black men. Black women, Stepan argues, were virtually ignored in phrenological studies.

Because of historical precedents such as these in which all women and nonwhite races were deemed intellectually inferior and because of cultural paradigms that both generated and were bolstered by such findings, the infantilization of women and people of color was strengthened in the nineteenth century. In using race as analogous to gender, white feminist theory understandably draws on this shared legacy of marginalization. Yet although this critical move to make race analogous to gender/sexuality draws attention to continuities of oppression that have had a long history in the West, such analogies also operate by eliding crucial differences. Stepan argues that analogies and interactive metaphors in science function by actively suppressing knowledge that challenges the analogy. Thus, for instance, nineteenth-century phrenologists, knowing full well that brain weights of women were heavier in proportion to their body weights than men, searched for alternative measures to arrive at knowledge about comparative brain weight and size; they asserted the similarity between the African and the ape on the basis of the shape of the jaw but ignored the white man's similarity to the ape on the basis of his thin lips (Stepan 1990, 50–51).

Sander Gilman's (1985) analysis of the nineteenth-century European obsession with the buttocks and genitalia of Hottentot women is particularly helpful here. French anatomist Georges Cuvier's dissection of Saartjie Baartman's body parts revealed her to be in close proximity to the highest ape—the orangutan (Gilman 1985, 232). Associated with animalism and animal appetites, the Hottentot woman became a marker of unbridled sexuality to whom “deviant” women in Europe could be compared. Thus Cesare Lombroso and Guillaume Ferrero in their 1893 study of criminal women found amazing similarities between the genitalia of prostitutes and those of Hottentot women, while others linked the physical anomalies of lesbians and Hottentots (Gilman 1985, 245). As Gilman concludes, “the colonial mentality which sees ‘natives’ as needing control is easily transferred to ‘woman’—but woman as exemplified by the caste of the prostitute” (1985, 256).

Racial sciences at the height of colonialism thus demonstrate powerfully the dangers of the race and gender/sex analogy. Not only did this analogy function by suppressing crucial variations, it also foregrounded interesting racial fissures and power dynamics. Only “deviant” European women, for instance, could be sexualized like Hottentot women. Yet it would be a mistake to think of the situation of European prostitutes and lesbians as completely analogous to that of the Hottentot woman. To be sure, all

three groups were marked as sexually deviant; only the Hottentot, however, could be paraded naked for public view. Colonial power operated through white men who were also empowered to control white colonial women, but it was the natives who were disciplined by physical force. And as many African American feminists have pointed out, although white women were infantilized like African Americans, white women mostly allied themselves with a racist patriarchal order (Carby 1987, 6).

The epistemological function of analogy has also been a subject of vigorous debate among philosophers and rhetoricians. Ever since Roman Jakobson's famous (1973) postulation of the fundamental polarity between metaphor and metonymy at the very heart of language, the two poles have marked differences between relationships of resemblance and contiguity, Freudian identification and symbolism as opposed to displacement and condensation, or poetry and prose (Jakobson 1973, 126). For Jakobson, the two modes represent not only verbal differences but cultural patterns (1973, 123). Understandably, analogy and resemblance, as constituent elements of metaphor, have not fared well with poststructuralism's emphasis on heterogeneity. Although Paul Ricoeur ([1975] 1977) attempts to resuscitate metaphor from its disrepute by emphasizing the play of similarity and difference in metaphor and by associating resemblance "as the site of clash between sameness and difference" ([1975] 1977, 196), he does not bridge the divide between relations of likeness and unlikeness and those of contiguity. While I do not wish to claim any utopian possibilities for metonymy or posit a neat structuralist break between metonymy and metaphor, I find that the reliance on a dominant mode of analogy and metaphor amid postmodern gender/sexuality theorizing reveals the epistemological fracture caused by racial difference. Therefore, I argue that the role of racial analogy, resemblance, and metaphor within feminist/gender theory needs to be thoroughly investigated. Postcolonial theory has already revealed how analogy and metaphor have been fundamental in constituting colonial discourse. As Edward Said so powerfully demonstrated, Orientalism as colonial discourse operated in part by making woman a metaphor for the Orient (1978, 6, 187–88). And the disciplining of the colonies only involved the flip side of analogy—the postulation of absolute difference between colonizer and colonized, civilized and primitive—whether temporally, as Johannes Fabian (1983) asserted, or epidermally and ontologically, as Fanon ([1952] 1967) postulated. These binaries then depended on further analogies, such as those between primitives and children. Thus, part of the task of postcolonial studies has been to critique the exploitative analogies of colonial discourse.

The political role of analogy as epistemology is clear in Barbara Maria

Stafford's recent (1999) attempt to revitalize analogy for the present moment. Like Ricoeur, Stafford complicates analogy by stressing the play of similarity and difference within it. However, Stafford's impetus for reviving analogy within theory resembles all too closely the anxiety of white feminism in the seventies. Stafford writes, "Today . . . we possess no language for talking about resemblance, only an exaggerated awareness of difference. In light of the current fragmentation of social discourse, the inability to reach out and build consensus on anything that matters, analogy's double avoidance of self-sameness and total estrangement again seems pertinent" (1999, 10). Although Stafford stresses the complexity of analogy, her nostalgia for a unified past that we can readily decode as an unproblematic narrative of a unified Western culture, as modernity without the baggage of colonialism or modernism without postcoloniality, is apparent. Indeed, the absence of any discussion of race or postcoloniality in a work so concerned with an appropriate aesthetic for the present moment is telling.

In an interesting argument for analogy as a vehicle for a cross-cultural epistemology, Stafford writes, "Analogizing has the virtue of making distant peoples, other periods, and even diverse contemporary contexts part of our world. Only by making the past or the remote or the foreign proximate can we hope to make it intelligible to us" (1999, 51). While Stafford is right in suggesting that analogizing creates a familiarization of otherness, a familiarization we might well argue is preferable to the absolute difference postulated in colonial discourse, we also need to ask who is doing the analogizing and to what purposes. Whose "our world" and "us" is Stafford referring to? Should we (nonindigenous peoples), for instance, be able to understand Native American concepts of land through analogies from Euro-American Lockean individualism and capitalist relations? Should we (Westerners) be entitled to interpret subject formation within, say, Indian joint families through familiar Western Oedipal narratives?³ I suggest that the analogizing move within white feminist theory, working similarly through assimilation and the incorporation of racial difference, may constitute a neocolonial moment more dangerous than the earlier absence of race and, thus, may need close scrutiny.

Thinking race

In "Thinking Sex" (1984) Rubin makes a powerful argument for articulating a radical theory of sexuality based on an analytical separation of

³ For brilliant refutations of this formulation, see Nandy 1980, 13.

gender and sexuality, a recognition of sex as an independent vector of oppression, and a Foucauldian distrust of the idea of presocialized sexual instincts: "I hope to contribute to the pressing task of creating an accurate, humane, and genuinely liberatory body of thought about sexuality" (1984, 275). Rubin begins by demonstrating the political significance of sexual prohibitions and delineating periods of social stress during which sexuality becomes more acutely contested. In England and the United States, the late nineteenth century was an important era of sexual policing, resulting in the first antiobscenity law in the United States in 1873 (Rubin 1984, 268). Likewise, in the 1950s the red scare converged with the homosexual menace, leading to the surveillance and harassment of homosexuals. Emphasizing the social nature of sex and the production of new sexualities, Rubin points out five ideological formations that strongly influence sexual thought: "sex negativity, the fallacy of misplaced scale, the hierarchical valuation of sex acts, the domino theory of sexual peril, and the lack of a concept of benign sexual variation" (1984, 278). Finally, Rubin details the horrific sex laws consequent on the ideological formations that influence sexual behaviors and points out the limits of feminism in articulating a liberatory sexual politics, focusing particularly on the antiporn stance of Catharine MacKinnon.

As the broad outline of Rubin's argument suggests, race is not central to or an important part of rethinking sexual politics. If all references to race were entirely missing from Rubin's essay, that omission alone would be enough to give us pause. After all, the history of the United States is replete with instances of repressive state apparatuses meting out punitive justice for crossing the racial-sexual border. And as many African American feminists have pointed out, bourgeois white sexuality has always been constructed through its difference from aberrant black sexuality (see Carby 1987, 20–39). But race is not an absent signifier in Rubin's essay, and the point is not to fault Rubin for a lack of critical race awareness. Indeed, Rubin is very much aware of the ideological nexus of race and sexuality but chooses to treat race as peripheral to the articulation of a sexual politics. The problem, I will argue, is that, as in much feminist/gender theorizing today, race is incorporated in the essay through analogy and thus naturalized into an appendage of a more important discourse of sexuality.

Early in the essay, Rubin demonstrates a clear awareness of the prohibitive nature of the race-sex power apparatus. As an illustration of right-wing ideology linking sexual deviance with political weakness, she cites the pamphlet *Pavlov's Children*, which charged the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States with allying to "destroy racial

cohesion,⁴ by exposing white people (especially white women) to the alleged ‘lower sexual standards of black people’” (Rubin 1984, 273).⁴ The lines between sexual normality and abnormality, health and unhealthiness, and virtue and vice are sharply drawn through the axis of race. Indeed, as mentioned above, beginning with the advent of modernity and colonialism, the sexual mores of the West began to be defined in contradistinction to the practices of the peoples of Africa, Asia, and South America. The exhibition of Saartjie Baartman’s body in Paris in the early nineteenth century was the culmination of decades of prurient Western male obsession with the supposedly lascivious body parts of Hottentot women (Gilman 1985, 225–40). In the United States, in addition to affiliation with Europeans, difference from African Americans has centrally defined white sexuality.

After this initial citing of the relationship between race and sexuality, race does not disappear from Rubin’s essay but rather appears through a proliferation of analogies. It is this nature of racial incorporation that needs close scrutiny because it demonstrates not simply an omission but a problematic technique of appropriation via inclusion. Here are a few instances of Rubin’s incorporation of race:

It is impossible to think with any clarity about the politics of race or gender as long as these are thought of as biological entities rather than as social constructs. . . . One may then think of sexual politics in terms of such phenomena as populations, neighborhoods, settlement patterns, migration, urban conflict, epidemiology, and police technology. (Rubin 1984, 277)

This kind of sexual morality [revulsion at homosexuality] has more in common with ideologies of racism than with true ethics. It grants virtue to the dominant groups, and relegates vice to the underprivileged. (1984, 283)

This system of sex law [criminalization of sodomy] is similar to legalized racism. (1984, 291)

The use of S/M [sadomasochistic] images in the movie *Not a Love Story* was on a moral par with the use of depictions of black men raping white women, or of drooling old Jews pawing young Aryan girls, to incite racist or anti-Semitic frenzy. (1984, 298)

For most of this century, the sexual underworlds have been marginal

⁴ See *Pavlov’s Children: They May Be Yours* (Los Angeles: Impact, 1969).

and impoverished, their residents subjected to stress and exploitation. . . . The level of material comfort and social elaboration achieved by the gay community in the last fifteen years is unprecedented. But it is important to recall what happened to similar miracles. The growth of the black population in New York in the early part of the twentieth century led to the Harlem Renaissance, but that period of creativity was doused by the Depression. (1984, 296)

As the above examples make amply clear, although the vector of racial difference is clearly present in the essay, racial analogies help mainly to clarify the nature of sexual oppression and sexual intolerance. Let us focus for a moment on the particular manner in which race and sex/gender are linked: “race or gender,” “in common with,” “similar to,” “on a moral par with,” and “similar miracles.” First, in each case there is an assumption of a problematic similarity that denies possible incongruities between the two. Second, and more important, despite the seeming equivalence suggested by the analogies, racial oppression as used above serves merely to illustrate the horrific nature of sexual oppression. The category of race is simply colonized under the broader category of sex, and the stark problems of systemic racial oppression are elided. To state some obvious examples: there is no parallel in sexual oppression to the racial oppression that legitimized the enslavement of Africans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (although the latter certainly included elements of sexual oppression as well); racial difference is marked on the body with a visibility not apparent in a person’s different sexual practices, such as sadomasochism versus “vanilla.” The analogical relationships mentioned above, however, function to suppress the specific differences introduced by race.

The seeming equivalence of the analogy and the horizontal seriality suggested by the commas often used by gender theorists to include concerns of race and class in routinely used phrases such as “race, class, and gender” belie a hierarchy of ontologies that privilege whiteness. When the (universalist) theorist of gender or sexuality argues that modalities of race function similarly, the theorist’s primary object of analysis is not simply gender or sexuality but white gender and white sexuality, particularly when gender and sexuality are not marked as such. For, as Langston Hughes long ago recognized, and as theorists of whiteness have more recently explained, whiteness has the privilege of being unmarked and simply understood as the norm (1926, 692) or, as Betsy Nies suggests, as “the absent signifier” (2002, xv).⁵ The theorist studying gender or sexuality

⁵ For a landmark analysis of white as unmarked norm, see Dyer 1988. Although whiteness

and, after a comma, race, simply repeats white privilege by assuming that whiteness need not be named and uses *race* to refer to people of color. At this point I wish to make the following assertion based on an analysis of Rubin but by no means limited to her text alone: racial analogy in white feminist/gender/sexuality studies functions as a colonial fetish that enables the (white) theorist to displace the potentially disruptive contradictions of racial difference onto a safer and more palatable notion of similarity, thus offering theory that can be easily assimilated within the politics of liberal multiculturalism.⁶

The (colonial) fetishistic role of analogy in “Thinking Sex” helps explain why, in an essay replete with concrete examples of homophobic harassment and the criminalization of specific kinds of “aberrant” sexual behavior, there is no mention of the horrific history of the systemic violence attendant on sexuality crossing the racial border. Surely if, as Rubin argues, sex has been policed and sexual behaviors have been subject to surveillance leading to the social, economic, and political marginalization of those deemed unacceptable, interracial sexuality has been the most vigorously prosecuted in the United States, except, of course, in the plantation master’s rape of slave women. The race-sex anxiety consequent upon Reconstruction culminated in an orgy of lynchings only to be followed by stringent antimiscegenation laws in many states. These laws policed not only white-black but other white-nonwhite borders as well. Indeed, until 1931 an American woman could lose her citizenship if she married a man of Asian descent (Haney-López 1996, 47). Interracial dating, and certainly marriage, are still far from the norm in the early twenty-first century unless fueled by the third-world sex tourism industry, which provides Western men everything from prostitutes to submissive and pleasing mail-order brides.⁷ But to conceive of interracial sexuality—marital or otherwise—as aberrant, along with sadomasochism, cross-generational sexuality, and homosexuality, would challenge Rubin’s assertion about marital heterosexuality as normative. The contradictions posed by interracial sexuality to

studies seem like a recent theoretical emergence, Nies (2002) usefully reminds us that writers of color have long studied the meanings of whiteness.

⁶ My use of the term *fetish* here evokes Homi Bhabha’s brilliant explication of the racial stereotype in colonial discourse as phobic and as a fetishistic disavowal of the split difference provoked in the colonizer by the colonized (1994, 71–75). I do not intend to attribute a negativity to the term *fetish* in its use in sexual practice.

⁷ For an analysis of the continuum between the sex industry organized for Western consumption and the mail-order bride business, see Enloe (1989) 1990, 36–40, and JanMohamed 1992.

what Rubin calls the “erotic pyramid” are therefore displaced onto analogy rather than considered at all.

Let us examine for a moment Rubin’s figure of the sex hierarchy, with the charmed inner circle and the aberrant outer one. The racial exclusions of the outer circle or outer limits are readily apparent: the circle encompassing the bad, abnormal, unnatural, and damned sexuality makes no mention of interracial sexuality. By contrast, if we disavow the discursive privilege of whiteness and construe the partners of the charmed circle as interracial, the charmed circle—heterosexual, married, monogamous, procreative, noncommercial, in pairs, in a relationship, same generation, in private, no pornography, bodies only, vanilla—is obviously no longer charmed. I am not arguing that same-raced heterosexual, married, and monogamous sexual relationships are not the norm. It would be foolish to think otherwise. What I am suggesting is that once interracial sexuality enters the picture, the charmed circle gets disrupted, shattered, and rewritten. For example, because of the history of slavery and the oversexualization of African American women so well documented by black feminists (see White 1985), there may be more societal tolerance of a white man engaging in commercial sex with a black woman than of a white man being married to a black woman. Rubin’s sex hierarchy, then, shifts significantly under the lens of interracial sexuality.

However, my purpose is not simply to call attention to what Rubin does not theorize but also to argue that what gets deliberately excluded—interracial sexuality—constitutively affects white sexuality itself; to ignore the effects of interracial sexuality is therefore also to stabilize (white) sexual hierarchies in the very act of critiquing them. Since Rubin is indebted to Michel Foucault for her ideas about sex as socially produced and her ideas about sexual stratification, it is significant to note that Foucault’s omissions are reproduced in her work. As Ann Laura Stoler has argued, Foucault’s specification of a history of sexuality in Europe problematically ignores how this sexuality was part of, and affected by, sexuality in the colonies: “In short-circuiting empire, Foucault’s history of European sexuality misses key sites in the production of that discourse, discounts the practices that racialized bodies, and thus elides a field of knowledge that provided the contrasts for what a ‘healthy, vigorous, bourgeois body’ was all about” (2000, 6).⁸ The same relationship might be posited for the exclusion of

⁸ Stoler also points out that in the 1970s, when Foucault was working on *The History of Sexuality* ([1976] 1990), scholarship in Britain and France had plenty to say about Western imperialism and disciplinary knowledge (Stoler 2000, 6).

considerations of race and interracial sexuality in Rubin's analysis of sex hierarchies and stratifications in the United States.

A final illustration proves my contention that inclusion by analogy functions fetishistically to exclude the disturbing and troubling aspects of racial difference by mimicking the politics of liberal multiculturalism. Rubin writes, "We have learned to cherish different cultures as unique expressions of human inventiveness rather than as the inferior or disgusting habits of savages. We need a similarly anthropological understanding of different sexual cultures" (1984, 284). Such an argument disturbingly resembles the right-wing ideology of the Reagan years that produced the oxymoronic term *reverse discrimination* and that argued the inconsequentiality of race. While cherishing different cultures might well be a marketing logo for Benetton, it hardly describes the interracial vicissitudes of Britain or the economic and militaristic disciplining of Latin America by the United States, both of which were apparent by the mid-1980s.

The color of the cyborg body

To turn from Rubin's analyses of (racially unmarked) sexual stratifications and oppressions to Haraway's utopian meditations on human-machine borders in "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1991) is to pose cognate, albeit different, questions about the relationship between feminist/sexuality/gender studies and race. Unlike Rubin, Haraway calls attention to her own raced subject position, stringently critiques the idea of a common feminist language, uses the insights of some men and women of color in her theory, and frequently marks the position of women of color as a site for her conception of a cyborg identity. But it is precisely because Haraway invokes women of color so frequently in her essay and because the cyborg myth has been so enthusiastically received by white poststructuralist feminists that we need to understand and interrogate the relationships between the cyborg myth and women of color.

What is a cyborg? Haraway provides different descriptions, all of which emphasize the cyborg's partial, shifting, nontotalizing, and subversive nature:

A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. (Haraway 1991, 149)

The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence. (1991, 151)

Holistic politics depend on metaphors of birth and invariably call on the resources of reproductive sex. I would suggest that cyborgs have more to do with regeneration. . . . We require regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibility for our reconstitution includes the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender. (1991, 181)

The cyborg is a resource for two major domains: the new computerized and globalized mode of production and the need for a broad though not totalizing feminist solidarity. The idea of the cyborg, derived from the human-machine figures of science fiction, provides a resource, Haraway suggests, for combating the information-based society of late capitalism, which has intensified domination in new ways. She argues that the preponderance of computer technology in creating antilabor household economies and globalization can be significantly challenged by embracing the breaching of the human-machine border signified by the cyborg. For feminism, the cyborg promises possibilities other than those based on the maternal, the pre-Oedipal, or the universalizing. The cyborg provides “pleasure in the confusion of boundaries” (1991, 150) and critiques the imperialism of a common feminist language. Haraway’s aspiration is to provide an image for a politics that can “embrace partial, contradictory, permanently unclosed constructions of personal and collective selves and still be faithful, effective—and, ironically, socialist-feminist” (1991, 157).

There is nothing particularly new or different about the politics Haraway articulates if one compares it to the strategies of the New Left in the sixties, to different versions of French poststructuralist theory, or to some versions of postcolonial theory in their postmodern, discursive guise. As Michael Ryan suggests, the New Left’s strength was precisely its diversity and diffuse nature. He argues that the binarism posited between a unified, authoritative, effective politics and ineffective anarchy is simplistic: “It is possible to combine a sense of commonality amid diversity, firmness of resistance, and aggressivity of attack with a plurality of different struggles” (1982, 216). Similarly, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s (1985, 167–71) ideas of resistance are based on radical pluralism, the blurring of frontiers, and the unsutured character of the social. For Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1983, 76), the schizophrenic (like the cyborg) ruptures wholeness and puts disjunctions to affirmative use: “He is and remains in disjunction.” Deleuze and Guattari’s later concepts, such as rhizomatic thought and nomadism, are similar attempts to name disruptive ontologies. Finally, Haraway’s politics has much in common with Homi Bhabha’s (1994, 11, 207–9) valorization of interstitial and border spaces

as sites for solidarity, and with his celebration of hybridity as a metaphor for postcolonial writing, colonial discourse, and colonized identities.⁹

I point to the similarities between Haraway's cyborg theory and theories of several other poststructuralists in order to suggest that there is nothing inherently subversive for feminism about such theorizing unless the theory can be shown to have specific, material, and located ramifications (a fact Haraway seems to have partially recognized in *Modest_Witness* [1997a], which I will briefly discuss at the end of this essay). Indeed, as Susan Bordo suggests, the epistemological *jouissance* suggested by the image of the cyborg denies locatedness and fantasizes itself as a postmodern "dream of everywhere" (1990, 136, 144–45).¹⁰ Here it is important to distinguish between *locatedness* and a simple celebration of the *local* as endless possibility. I am not advocating what Manuel Castells (1997) describes as a defensive and retrenched localism (manifested most disturbingly in the "not in my backyard" ideal) in the face of globalization as a basis for feminist identity but rather a relationship to materiality and sociopolitical specificity as a basis for theorizing, much in the manner of Castells's own analyses (1997, 61–62). In arguing for a relationship to locatedness, I am taking a stance about critical responsibility in a postcolonial world. As third-world environmentalists such as Vandana Shiva (1997) and subaltern studies historians have demonstrated, policies and political concepts of postcolonial nations cannot be understood through universal (read: Western) concepts alone, even though local concepts need to be related to the global. Witness Shiva's call for international legal ecological policies based on an understanding of indigenous knowledges and Partha Chatterjee's (1986) critique of the Western idea of nation as inapplicable to postcolonial countries. In the United States, critical race theorists have argued for what legal theorist Richard Delgado (1995) terms the *call to context*, which challenges the traditional juridical preference for universalism over particularism and abstract principles over perspectivism. This is particularly important, Delgado points out, in normative discourse such as civil rights (1995, xv).

⁹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have also argued that we are in an age of empire with no outside, no local-global dialectic, and only the universal. Yet Hardt and Negri's (2000, 212–13, 253) idea of a nonlocalizable empire is actually premised on a very specific migrancy—that of people from the underdeveloped world to the developed. These migrants, to a large extent, constitute the multitude that Hardt and Negri nebulously theorize as a possibility against empire. Thus, they completely ignore such major migrations as those from Pakistan to India, Bangladesh to India, Afghanistan to Pakistan, etc. (see Hardt and Negri 2000, 19).

¹⁰ See also critiques of Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" in Weed 1989.

Feminists and gender theorists might simply repeat the universalizing knowledge claims of colonialism by celebrating an ahistorical and acontextual blurring of boundaries. For instance, might the blurring of racial boundaries be an obfuscation of the systemic racial oppression and racial hierarchies that continue to affect women's lives? I will return to this point shortly, but for the moment I want to suggest that neocolonial and imperial knowledge claims can be contested only through theories derived from located knowledge. Indeed, my own arguments for context-specific theory derive in part from Haraway's own paradigm of situated knowledge. Positing an alternative to a value-free relativism that she declares to be the "perfect mirror twin of totalization" (1988, 584), Haraway suggests an alternative that is "partial, locatable, critical knowledg[e]" sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology" (584). "Our problem is how to have *simultaneously* an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own 'semiotic technologies' for making meanings, and a nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a 'real' world, one that can be partially shared" (579).

It is in the spirit of Haraway's own call for partial and locatable knowledge that I propose to examine the relationship between Haraway's concept of the cyborg and the women of color who figure so prominently in the essay. Such an analysis will also reveal the problematic nature of the concept of woman of color as used by Haraway. I have already mentioned the overly celebratory nature of Haraway's cyborg myth as a means of resisting the domination of a thoroughly technologized information culture and as a description of that culture. Haraway writes, "By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism: in short, we are cyborg. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. . . . This chapter is an argument for *pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries and for *responsibility* in their construction" (1991, 150). The cyborg enables a productive blurring of the binaries such as male/female, self/other, and culture/nature that have sustained Western cultural hierarchies.

Just as the cyborg provides the means whereby to resist repressive dichotomies through unnatural fusions and illegitimate couplings, Haraway suggests that the political constituency of women of color provides a means of constructing a political solidarity out of coalition and affinity rather than out of essential identity. Unlike identities based on sameness or unity, this postmodern identity is premised on "otherness, difference, and specificity" (Haraway 1991, 155). Chela Sandoval's (1984) model of

oppositional consciousness, which suggests a mode of articulation seized by those denied stable identities of race or gender, demonstrates to Haraway the subversive potential of the coalition of women of color (1991, 174). Thus *women of color* becomes for Haraway a cyborg identity, “a potent subjectivity synthesized from fusions of outsider identities” (1991, 174). By the end of the essay, the analogous relationship of women of color to the illegitimate and hybrid fusion of the cyborg is clear. Haraway moves to delineate aspects of the cyborg myth by looking at “two overlapping groups of texts . . . constructions of women of color and monstrous selves in feminist science fiction” (1991, 174). What follows are illustrations of subversive political identities formulated by women of color such as Audre Lorde and Cherríe Moraga and feminist science fiction writers such as Joanna Russ, Samuel R. Delaney, James Tiptree Jr., Octavia Butler, and Vonda McIntyre.

Following a partial trajectory of Haraway’s complex essay still leaves us with a few nagging questions: Why are women of color needed in order to formulate a cyborg myth centrally based on the monstrous fusion of human and machine? Who are the women of color referred to in the essay? Let us attempt to answer the second question first. Clearly the term *women of color* (it usually appears in quotation marks in the essay) alludes to radical African American, Latina, Native American, and Asian American feminists who constituted themselves as a group apart from white U.S. feminists. Sandoval’s (1984) formulation of oppositional consciousness, which Haraway cites, was preceded by the formation of Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press and the publication of the influential anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Moraga and by Gloria Anzaldúa in 1981. Subsequently, the term *women of color* gained widespread critical and pedagogical usage.

Let us now see how Haraway explains the first question raised above. Haraway sees the writings of women of color as postmodern resistance writing or cyborg writing. Like all colonized groups, women of color seize the power to write in order to resignify hegemonic Western myths: “The poetry and stories of US women of color are repeatedly about writing, about access to the power to signify; but this time that power must be neither phallic nor innocent. . . . Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other. . . . Figuratively and literally, language politics pervade the struggles of women of color” (Haraway 1991, 175). Haraway’s claims for the writings of women of color are similar to the arguments of scholars who see minority writing or postcolonial writing as resistance writing alone. However, such an ar-

gument not only reifies the very binaries of center and margin, colonizer and colonized, that Haraway as poststructuralist wishes to blur but also homogenizes, through a colonial imperative, the margin itself, a tactic strongly critiqued by feminists like Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991, 51). Let us revisit, for a moment, the two groups of texts Haraway compares: constructions of women of color and monstrous selves in feminist science fiction. One includes a variety of texts (presumably including autobiographies, novels, poetry, and drama) by a racially marked group, while the other deals with grotesque bodies in a specific genre. One would be hard-pressed to find similar generalizations about white U.S. women's writings, but women of color become fair game here, as did all third-world texts in Fredric Jameson's much contested claim about these texts being national allegories (1986).

Here I would argue in similar fashion to Aijaz Ahmed ([1987] 1992) that many texts by women of color are not about access to the power to signify or about subverting either the central origin myths of Western culture or myths of original innocence. Texts like Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* ([1950] 1989), Le Ly Hayslip's *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (1989), and Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989), for instance, affirm to an extent the binaries of Western rationality, modernity, and progress and Eastern irrationality, prejudice, and backwardness. Furthermore, the very assumption that texts by U.S. women of color are centrally *about* subverting Western myths suggests that minority texts are significant only insofar as they relate to the center. Many texts by U.S. women of color—Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone* (1993) are powerful examples—are not fundamentally about subverting Western myths. And simply to suggest that writings about women of color are “repeatedly about writing” is simply to reiterate the discursive postmodern truism that all fiction is metafiction. Moreover, the very distinction between women of color and feminist science fiction writers begs the obvious question: Is Butler (who is included in the category of feminist science fiction) not a woman of color?

Earlier in this essay I pointed out the similarities between the politics of the cyborg myth and that of poststructuralist theory. I would argue that the similarity also extends to the proclivity of some poststructuralists, in their attempts to question and destabilize Western ontologies to view the East, in a kind of reverse Orientalism, as a repository of horizontality, multiplicity, and difference. Thus Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic model is derived from the East, Oceania in particular (1987, xiv, 18–19, 22), while the idea of the plateau comes from what they see as Gregory Bateson's work on the nonorgasmic libidinal economy of Balinese culture

in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972). Poststructuralist feminism, of course, has a long history of romanticizing the East. Luce Irigaray's recently translated *Between East and West* (2002), which looks back to pre-Aryan India as a golden age of gender in a manner reminiscent of colonial British Indologists, is in line with Julia Kristeva's earlier analysis of foot binding as a strong cultural recognition of the phallic mother (1977, 81–84). I am not suggesting that Haraway's deployment of women of color is coded with the degree of nostalgia present in the uses of the East by Irigaray and Kristeva, but the need to locate a homogenized non-Western other onto which fantasies can be projected, precisely in order to subvert the hierarchies of Western metaphysics, is an overdetermined Western—and, I might add, neocolonial—gesture in which Haraway is implicated.¹¹

If the constituency *women of color* names somewhat problematically the writing practices of these U.S. women, Haraway's broader use of the term to similarly encompass female workers in multinational corporations in third-world countries as well as in the Silicon Valley bespeaks an indiscriminateness that dangerously elides cultural, spatial, political, and class differences. Haraway's women of color include “unnatural cyborg women making chips in Asia” (1991, 154), women in the Silicon Valley, “young Korean women hired in the sex industry” (174), and the “real-life cyborg (for example the Southeast Asian village women workers in Japanese and US electronic firms described by Aihwa Ong)” (177). Of course one must praise Haraway as a feminist for drawing attention to the most oppressed of workers within the circuit of multinational capitalism. It is also scintillating to have these workers brought together in a subversive, oppositional moment with U.S. women writers of color. But juxtaposition does not translate into a connection or a relationship. Indeed, the obfuscation of the differences denies not only class differences but also the distinction between what Spivak calls the subjects of “post-modern neocolonialism” (1989, 226) who are reentering a “feudal mode of power” (226) and ethnic subjects in the United States who are “still caught in some way within structures of colonial subject-production; and especially, from the

¹¹ Joan W. Scott sees a similar problem in Haraway's use of women of color in relation to traditional socialist feminism. Scott writes, “What is the difference between Haraway's looking to these groups for the politics of the future and (the association such a gesture has for me) the romantic attribution by white liberal or socialist women to minority or working-class women of the appropriate (if not authentic) socialist or feminist politics?” (1989, 216–17).

historical problem of ethnic oppression on First World soil" (226).¹² So while one might agree with Haraway that the alliance between Asian women workers making microchips and antinuclear demonstrators spiral dancing in Santa Rita jail would be energizing and powerful, it cannot be articulated without an acknowledgment of the spatio-political difference of the demonstrators that positions them, in however weak a fashion, as beneficiaries of globalization and with different interests than Asian women laborers who, in the interests of feeding their families, might not always join the protesters against multinationals.

I have focused at length on the deployment of the category *women of color* because Haraway's attempt to articulate an oppositional ontology and politically effective strategy for feminism that includes women of color is to be lauded. Yet if the practice entails a disregard for situatedness and locatedness, it avails itself of the universalizing and unmarked privileges of whiteness discussed earlier. As Abby Wilkerson suggestively points out, it might be worth asking "whether many white feminists have enthusiastically taken up the cyborg myth precisely because of what it does not say about race" (1997, 170). Wilkerson argues that taking up the hybrid identity of the cyborg might well be a way of not assuming responsibility for whiteness while appropriating the identity politics of women of color (1997, 170–71). The same might be said of similar universalizing gestures animating poststructuralist theorists' use of the East, as I discuss above.

We are now in a position to understand the relationship between the cyborg and women of color. At one level there is no relationship, only oneness. Since in the informatics of domination we all cannot help being cyborgs, women of color are cyborgs. But the ultimate relationship is again analogical. Just as the cyborg is a fusion of human and machine, a monstrous and illegitimate fusion, so, the argument goes, is the constituency of women of color, forged as it is without identity. Thus is it not surprising that race sometimes figures in Haraway's essay in a similar fashion as it does in Rubin's: "race, gender, and capital require a cyborg theory of wholes and parts" (Haraway 1991, 181); "the causes of various women-

¹² Spivak draws on the distinction Chatterjee makes between the elaborate constitution of the subject through educational and legal apparatuses in the colonial era and the lack of any such constitution or training in the age of electronic capitalism, where subjects are reentering a feudal mode of power characterized by sheer dominance (Spivak 1989, 224). Spivak herself talks about the necessity of distinguishing between the subjects of postmodern neocolonialism and immigrants in the United States, but her argument only makes sense if we substitute *raced subjects* or *ethnics* for the term *immigrants*. Native Americans, African Americans, and many Latinas, for instance, are not immigrants, and the argument would not hold for white immigrants.

headed households are a function of race, class, or sexuality” (167); and “some of the rearrangements of race, sex, and class rooted in high-tech-facilitated social relations can make socialist-feminism more relevant to effective progressive politics” (165). Cyborg identities, mediated through the politics of women of color, help defuse—or to use Wilkerson’s terminology, deny the responsibility of working with—whiteness and white feminist social location. Haraway’s stated reasons for turning to women of color make this clear. Haraway writes: “For me—and for many who share a similar historical location in white, professional middle-class, female, radical, North American, mid-adult bodies—the sources of a crisis in political identity are legion. The recent history for much of the US left and US feminism has been a response to this kind of crisis by endless splitting and searches for a new essential unity. But there has also been a growing recognition of another response through coalition—affinity, not identity” (1991, 155). I argued earlier that analogy functions like a colonial fetish enabling the white feminist theorist to displace racial difference onto a safer notion of similarity. We can now add the following: racial analogy within (white) feminist theory helps whiteness retain its privilege by being uninterrogated.

Performance and its others

I would like to examine the pervasiveness of the gender/race/sex analogy by briefly analyzing the methodology of Judith Butler, arguably one of the most influential theorists of gender/sexuality since the publication of her *Gender Trouble* in 1990. I do not intend this analysis to be by any means an exhaustive critique of Butler’s impressive oeuvre but rather a focused examination of her theorizations about race and gender in a few limited moments. Because Butler has, in fact, made sustained attempts to think productively about race and gender, an analysis of her theories reveals both the limits and possibilities of taking race seriously as a systemic category within gender and queer theory.

In *Gender Trouble* Butler proposes the idea of gender as a performance constructed in the very act of performing, the performance a challenge to the ubiquity of gender categories. Although at moments Butler alerts readers to the punitive system of gender performances within compulsory social systems, the book proliferates the idea of gender as infinite, individualistic performance, as rebellious carnival, without much attention to the pains and problems of performing (1990, 139). Considerations of race are virtually unaddressed in the book. However, at the end, Butler confronts the epistemology of theories that “elaborate predicates of color,

sexuality, ethnicity, class, and able-bodiedness” and “invariably close with an embarrassed ‘etc.’ at the end of the list” (143). Butler suggests that the “etc.” should not be read as a sign of failure but as a sign of the “illimitable process of signification itself,” the “excess that accompanies any effort to posit identity once and for all” (143). Problematically, what Butler questions here is the idea of an identity prior to signification, not the analogizing of vastly different vectors such as able-bodiedness and color.

In *Bodies That Matter* (1993), a book that begins, significantly, with an epigraph from Haraway’s “A Cyborg Manifesto” (1991), Butler begins to ponder the problems of the analogical model, although race is arguably still added to arguments about gender and sexuality. The bulk of the introduction theorizes the constructedness of “sex” and interrogates the critical assumption of a prior, unmarked category of sex onto which gender is culturally imposed. Instead of constructedness, Butler proposes the notion of matter, a process that “*produce[s] the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter*” (1993, 9). Sex and the contours of the body, Butler argues, are regulated by the heterosexual imperative. It is only much later in the introduction, after the theorizations of the body, sex, and matter have been made, that Butler introduces, as part of her chapter summaries, the idea that “normative heterosexuality is clearly not the only regulatory regime in the production of bodily contours” (1993, 17). Structurally, that is, body, sex, and matter are constituted as the main items of theory to which race is added. As Butler argues, race is not simply another domain separable from sexual difference, “but . . . its ‘addition’ subverts the monolithic workings of the heterosexual imperative as I have described it so far” (18). Although Butler is clearly aware of the problems of simply adding race to the understandings of the body and of sex, her own positioning of race in the introduction is nonetheless additive. Yet Butler goes on to suggest a focus on the specificities as well as intersections of race and gender construction: “It seems crucial to resist the model of power that would set up racism and homophobia and misogyny as parallel or analogical relations. The assertion of their abstract or structural equivalence not only misses the specific history of their construction and elaboration, but also delays the important work of thinking through the ways in which these vectors of power require and deploy each other” (18). Butler’s attention to the problems of analogizing, though constituting only a small portion at the end of the introduction, is a welcome turn in gender theory and, indeed, a crucial methodological process that needs to be sustained if race is not to be marginalized within gender studies. Butler’s decision to focus on texts such as *Paris Is Burning* (1991) and

Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929) is also an important step in theorizing conjunctures, convergences, and relationships between race and gender. Yet in the spirit of furthering rigorous analysis into these very areas, I want to suggest that Butler's analyses need to be interrogated through the critical paradigms she herself sets up at the end of her introduction.

I want to focus here specifically on questions of race and appropriation, particularly brought to light by bell hooks's criticism of *Paris Is Burning*, to which Butler responds (see hooks 1992, 145–56). Butler considers the ways in which drag is a site that questions the manner in which hegemonic heterosexuality reproduces itself through imitation and performance. Reading the desire on the part of Venus Xtravaganza, the drag queen who is the subject of *Paris Is Burning*, to become a “real” woman, and drag performance as a “contesting of realness” (1993, 130), Butler argues that such performances expose the norms that regulate realness and also the fact that “norms of realness by which the subject is produced are racially informed conceptions of ‘sex’” (1993, 130). hooks's critique of the film centers on director Jennie Livingston's role as a white lesbian woman ethnographer photographing subjects of color but imperialistically concealing her own standpoint in the film. Butler accedes to the problem of the raced gaze but offers a reading that presents itself as problematically analogical. Butler writes, “hooks is right to argue that within this culture the ethnographic conceit of a neutral gaze will always be a white gaze. . . . But what does it mean to think about this camera as an instrument and effect of lesbian desire?” (1993, 136). In other words, Butler rewrites the question of race as a question of sexuality, the underlying assumption being that one can be substituted for the other. Thus, although Butler suggests that to an extent the camera assumes the place of the phallus, she suggests that the cinematic gaze is not simply white and phallic *because* the occasion of drag balls constructs kinship relations outside the heterosexual family. Being outside heterosexuality, by analogy, means being outside whiteness. Butler writes, “If the signifiers of whiteness and femaleness . . . are sites of phantasmatic promise, then it is clear that women of color and lesbians are . . . excluded from this scene” (1993, 136). I do not wish to counter the claim that whiteness as hegemony legislates heterosexuality as the norm that, in turn, excludes lesbians from many articulations of whiteness, but this does not mean that lesbians are excluded from whiteness in the way that women of color are.¹³ What the analogy

¹³ Mason Stokes (2001) offers nuanced analyses of the relationship between race and sexuality by focusing on antiblack writing between 1852 and 1915. Stokes cautions against always seeing queerness as a subversive way out of whiteness (183). He also suggests that

also excludes is the possibility that some lesbians might enjoy their access to the phenotypical privileges of whiteness at the same time as they are denied access to other aspects of white privilege.

The argumentative equivalence of race and gender in the analysis of *Paris Is Burning* is mirrored, in turn, in analogical descriptions that the film cannot sustain. Questioning the results of Venus's denaturalization of gender and sexuality, Butler writes, "As much as she crosses gender, sexuality, and race performatively, the hegemony that reinscribes the privileges of normative femininity and whiteness wields the final power to *renaturalize* Venus' body" (1993, 133). However, although one might well argue that Venus desires whiteness and its privileges, she never attempts to pass as white; she does not cross racial lines in the film (as she does gender lines) unless we, through a complete substitution of gender for race, consider any drag to be a subversion of whiteness, in which case whiteness becomes, as Richard Dyer powerfully argues, everything and nothing at once (1988, 45–46).

The subsumption of race under gender/sexuality via analogy—in spite of Butler's intentions to the contrary and the near absence of race in discussions of normative and radical kinship in *Antigone's Claim* (2000)—suggests that feminist/gender/sexuality theories have far to go before they recognize the racial projects to which we, particularly the formerly colonized, have all been subjected to since modernity. Although *Antigone's Claim* does not warrant extended discussion here because it does not invoke the race-gender analogy, it is worth pointing out that it does make universalizing claims about kinship systems without being sufficiently cognizant of its West-centered perspective. While challenging the heterosexual imperative of the Oedipal configuration for the family, for instance, Butler suggests a different familial configuration resulting from factors such as migrations, divorces, and blended families. However, the extended family structure endemic to many Asian cultures, and which third-world theorists such as Ashis Nandy (1980) have argued challenges Oedipal configurations (although not heterosexuality), is never mentioned.¹⁴

the anxiety attendant on white reproduction makes heterosexuality (via miscegenation) a threat to whiteness unless heterosexuality facilitates white homosociality (18).

¹⁴ Butler mentions African American kinship systems in *Antigone's Claim* (2000) but critiques the fact that these do not question but simply replace patriarchy. Her argument that African American theorists have not critiqued the patriarchy inherent in the theory that African American men have been denied masculinity (69) ignores the very same critiques made by Michelle Wallace (1978, 22–23) and by hooks (1990, 58–59).

Coda: On localization and vampirism

My analysis of the pervasiveness of the race-gender analogy raises the obvious question about whether it is possible to theorize race and gender in any way other than analogically. Has analogy been so powerfully deployed that we simply cannot escape it when we think of race and gender? To the extent that feminist theory—white or otherwise—refuses specificity, there is always a danger of analogizing. Take, for instance, Sandoval's attempt to articulate an oppositional politics in *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000). Although Sandoval critiques Haraway's appropriation of the methodologies of women of color into examples of cyborg feminism (Sandoval 2000, 71), her book remains indebted to Haraway's construction of the cyborg as a generalized locus of difference and contradiction. Perhaps that is why the predominant mode of analysis in *Methodology of the Oppressed* is analogizing different forms of dissident consciousness, such as Roland Barthes's punctum (a meaning that cannot be named, because it is not part of a collective code; Barthes 1981, 27), Anzaldúa's *mestizaje* (mixture, hybrid; Anzaldúa 1987), and Haraway's cyborg feminism. While it might well be important to demonstrate the undeniable structural similarities among these concepts, the very methodology of generalization and analogy might blind us to problems apparent only through localized readings. For instance, to bypass the reading of Anzaldúa's *mestizaje* in the context of Mexico, where it was the official policy of amalgamation and adopted in order to disempower black races, is to miss the crucial contradiction here between progressive feminism and hegemonic racial hierarchies.¹⁵

Thus I would argue that while the analogical model continues to proliferate, there are other models that emerge from more localized studies. Collins demonstrates, for instance, how an emphasis on the interconnection of race, gender, and class has important ramifications for African American women who, by forcing courts to see them as doubly or triply oppressed, can claim better protection under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (1990, 224).¹⁶ Similarly, Anne McClintock, in her brilliant analysis of Victorian imperialism, argues that race and gender “come into existence *in and through* relation to each other—if in contradictory and conflictual ways” (1995, 5). And it is the contradictory and conflictual relationship that McClintock stresses. Different forms of fetishization, such as the fetishization of white skin, national flags, and lesbians cross-

¹⁵ For an analysis of the hegemonic problems of celebrating *mestizaje*, see Hedrick 2003.

¹⁶ *Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*, Public Law 88-352, *U.S. Code* 42 (1964), sec. 2000(e).

dressing as men, McClintock argues, cannot simply be lumped under “a single mark of desire without great loss of theoretical subtlety and historical complexity” (184).

An important critique of the race-gender analogy has been offered by Siobhan B. Somerville (2000), who argues that simple analogies between race and gender/sexuality actually perpetuate a separation between the two and obscure the ramifications of a specific history of analogizing at a particular historical moment. Somerville’s project is to demonstrate that such analogies have a specific history, that “the formation of notions of heterosexuality and homosexuality emerged in the United States through (and not merely parallel to) a discourse saturated with assumptions about the racialization of bodies” (2000, 4).¹⁷ The discourse on race, that is, facilitates the discourse on sexuality. So I speculate that the possibilities for decolonizing (white) feminist/gender/sexuality theories might lie precisely in analyses grounded in a specific, local moment, for these analyses would begin the work of undoing the universalism that has been the mark of whiteness.

It is fitting to conclude my speculations on the disruptiveness of localization to the race/gender/sexuality analogy by briefly examining Haraway’s analytics of race in *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium* (1997a). Although the essay on race, “Race: Universal Donors in a Vampire Culture” (1997b), begins with a numbingly familiar series of analogies—“Race, like nature and sex, is replete with all kinds of rituals of guilt and innocence in the stories of nation, family, and species . . . race, like sex, is about the purity of lineage; the legitimacy of passage” (213)—the bulk of the essay derives its interpretive impetus from historically specific articulations. Through a table that periodizes twentieth-century kinship categories through key objects of knowledge—race, population, and the genome—in three periods in the twentieth century, Haraway both contextualizes the categories of race, sex, and nature and suggests related discontinuities and unfamiliar connections along the chart by seeing the chart as a hypertext. The most insightful of Haraway’s observations derive from rigorous localized analysis. Thus Haraway demonstrates both the humanist impulse behind the Human Genome Project and the raced, colonial workings through which indigenous peoples were once again the objects of knowledge rather than partners in a research agenda (1997b, 249).

¹⁷ However, Somerville often uses strategies very similar to Butler’s in seeing the primacy of the sexual. See, e.g., the analysis of Jean Toomer based on the term *queer* (Somerville 2000, 136) and the insistence that compulsory heterosexuality is “integral” to the logic of racial segregation (137).

To trouble the categories of biological kinship, Haraway draws on the figure of the vampire. The vampire “both promises and threatens racial and sexual mixing” and “feeds off the normalized human” (1997b, 214). Suggestive of violence, pollution, and mixing, the vampire is a figure for the alien, the immigrant, and the cosmopolitan and is embroiled in racism, sexism, and homophobia. The figure of the vampire clearly facilitates Haraway’s inquiry into leakages among kinship categories. Yet like the cyborg, the figure also tends to become, like whiteness, everything and nothing at once. Haraway asks, in response to *Time* magazine’s 1993 cover of a morphed portrait of a woman’s face created by a computer mixing of different races, a figure she labels SimEve, “Nothing here is scary, so why am I trembling?” (1997b, 264). In a similar manner, I ask about the figure of the vampire: Everything is so messy, so why am I so suspicious? My suspicion arises from the ease with which Haraway’s use of the vampire allows us to be on the other side of kinship and the dramas of identity and reproduction. As Haraway concludes in her chapter, “I believe that there will be no racial or sexual peace, no livable nature, until we learn to produce humanity through something more and less than kinship. I think I am on the side of the vampires, or at least some of them” (1997b, 265). But where and how, within the specific matrices of racial and gendered/sexual oppression, can vampirism be a choice? I suggest that like the postmodern figure of the cyborg, the vampire, recuperated metaphorically for illegitimacy and racial crossing, can function to metaphorize the specificities of race and sex out of existence and once again make room for universalizing analogy.

Department of English
University of Florida

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