

Chapter 3

Situating Bio-Logic, Refiguring Sex: Intersexuality and Coloniality

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Abjection, Monstrosity, and the Myth of a 'Pure' Socius

Key to understanding the twinned logics of monstrosity and abjection is an understanding of their genesis with reference to underlying contingencies regarding the constitution of a clean and proper body. The formulation of concepts of cleanliness and propriety, as Mary Douglas contends in *Purity and Danger*, is arbitrary in the sense that no body, no substance conceptualized as 'dirty', as 'improper', is inherently or necessarily so. Rather, the marking of specific bodies and bodily functions as dirty and/or improper is inextricably intertwined with the constitution of a discrete, identifiable, 'pure' constitution of a given socius, concomitantly lending a certain intelligibility not only to individual bodies, but to individual bodies as they are tamed, maintained, effectively *produced* by institutional apparatus—juridical, medical, scientific, and otherwise. Conceptions of monstrosity and abjection do not effect isolated, atomized bodies, but rather serve to establish a link between corporeality and the social body, to demarcate and subsequently police the boundaries which construct acceptable, obedient subjects. Anne McClintock, paraphrasing Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*, writes, 'the abject is everything that the subject seeks to expunge in order to become social' (McClintock 1995: 71). Notions of the abject, in effect, help to create what in Foucauldian terms we could call 'docile bodies'; through curtailing excess, casting out and maligning improprieties and 'impurities', the social subject is constructed. Most commonly, the abject is discussed in terms of fluids and flows which trouble the sanctity of bodily boundaries: semen, pus, menses, urine, excrement, all manner of outflowing viscosities which trouble the boundaries of the subject and, moreover, illuminate the excess of the body with reference to what Luce Irigaray refers to as the 'complicity of long standing between rationality and a mechanics of solids alone' (Irigaray 1985: 107). This fluid bodily excess, which exceeds doctrines regarding the necessity of individuation so integral to the formation of the Western rational subject, testifies to what Elizabeth Grosz terms 'the fraudulence or impossibility of the "clean" and the "proper"', in that abjected fluids:

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resist the determination that marks solids, for they are without any shape or form of their own. They are engulfing, difficult to be rid of; any separation from them is not a matter of certainty, as it may be in the case of solids. Body fluids flow, they seep, they infiltrate; their control is a matter of vigilance, never guaranteed. In this sense, they betray a certain irreducible materiality; they assert the priority of the body over subjectivity; they demonstrate the limits of subjectivity in the body, the irreducible specificity of particular bodies. They force megalomaniacal aspirations to earth, refusing consciousness its supremacy; they level differences while also specifying them. (Grosz 1994b: 104)

The power of fluids to ‘assert the priority of the body over subjectivity’, and thus to provide an affront to a profound somatophobia—which characterizes Western conceptions of the rational subject that rely on the objectification of the body as a passive or inert medium, instrument, or tool dictated by transcendental commands of subjectivity (those ‘megalomaniacal aspirations’ Grosz refers to)—works to assign these fluids an abject status necessary to the maintenance of subjective and, thus, social coherency, upholding the myth of a ‘pure’ and firmly sutured socius, in the face of a potential ‘leveling of differences’ which would destabilize hierarchical modes of sociality.

But what of the relation of the abject to the monstrous? Both notions gain their organizational locus through reference to the constitution of a ‘clean’ and ‘pure’ (social) body (or, more pointedly, through reference to a specifically *normativized* body), but this shared reference to processes of normativization is not enough to explain a certain transposition which occurs between abjection as considered on the level of bodily processes and an abjection which becomes constitutive of the organism as such. The transposition of the abject from process to ontology is integral to the positing of certain others (of interest to us here, specifically, the bodies of the intersexed and the bodies of the colonized) who fall, commencing with the Enlightenment, beneath the purview of Western scientific rationalism, as monstrous. This notion of the monstrous is a lynchpin in the transformation of abjected processes into both abjected objects (here, I take objects to include bodies, following the logic of a reductive Cartesian legacy which constructs the body *as* object, as simple materiality, mute facticity) and socially abjected groups. Given that monstrosity is a holistic condition, wherein certain ‘defects’, excesses, or ‘abnormalities’ become metonymically constitutive of the organism as such, the transposition between abject processes and the constitution of the monstrous involves a certain displacement, wherein what is ‘cast out’ in the interests of subjective and social purity is posited, oftentimes taxonomically, as constitutive of a certain marginal or liminal set of bodies. While one may make distinctions between abject states or processes, abject objects, and socially abjected groups, ‘these [distinctions] comprise interdependent but also distinct dimensions of abjection that ... emerge as

interrelated if contradictory elements of an immensely intricate process of social and psychic formation' (McClintock 1995: 72–3).

Against Super-Naturality and Opacity: The Biopolitical Birth of the Abnormal

Traditionally speaking, the figure of the monster is posited as preter- or super-natural, characterized by a certain excess or hybridity which exceeds the parameters of the 'human'. For Rosi Braidotti, such figures are specifically *abject beings*, evoking responses identical to those which shape abject processes—'both fascination and horror, both desire and loathing'—on account of their simultaneous marking and trespassing of the boundaries of subjective and social intelligibility (Braidotti 2002: 162). Foucault, in his lectures at the Collège de France in 1974–75 collected in *Abnormal* writes of the monster, and the concomitant trouble the monster makes in terms of taxonomic, classificatory practices so essential to social regulation:

What is the monster in both a juridical and scientific tradition? From the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century ... the monster is essentially a mixture. It is the mixture of two realms, the animal and the human. ... It is the blending, the mixture of two species. ... It is the mixture of two individuals. ... It is the mixture of two sexes. ... It is the mixture of life and death. ... Finally, it is a mixture of forms. ... Consequently, the monster is a transgression of natural limits, the transgression of classifications, of the table, of the law as a table. ... Monstrosity requires a transgression of the natural limit, of the law-table, to fall under, or at any rate challenge, an interdiction of civil and religious or divine law. (Foucault 2004: 163)

Foucault's description of the constitution of the 'monster' in early modern/Western discursive formations hinges on the notion of the extra-human or 'unnatural' character of the monster. The monster provides an affront not only to civil law, but to what were taken as cosmological laws, laws of nature regarding not only the 'proper' constitution of the human but, by implication, the taxonomic systems which effectively ordered the early modern world, reaching their apotheosis in the realm of eighteenth century 'natural history'. This history takes as one of its primary aims the mission both to classify and firmly delimit the 'natural realm' in such a way as to establish not only a certain anthropo-cum-phallogo-centrism, but to ensure the dominance of Western 'man' through establishing a firm, scientific undergirding which positions him, through differentiation, as life-form par excellence, the pinnacle of creation.

The monster, within this schema, constitutes the limit of intelligibility. As Foucault explicates,

the monster's power and its capacity to create anxiety are due to the fact that it violates the law [both civil and 'natural'] while leaving it with nothing to say. It traps the law while breaching it. When the monster violates the law by its very existence, it triggers the response of something quite different from the law itself. It provokes either violence, the will for pure and simple suppression, or medical care and pity. (Foucault 2004: 56)

The two extra-legal responses which Foucault outlines belong, however, to two distinct historical moments in the development of modern Western thought, highlighting a certain shift which he identifies as the development of 'biopolitics' or 'biopower'. The first response, pre-dating the rise of biopolitics, hinges on the simple eradication of the threat posed to subjective and social cohesion by the super-natural monster, utilizing a tactic predicated on the right to spectacular violence and outright annihilation which characterized punishment in eras of sovereignty. The second response both necessitates and attests to the existence and increasing authority wielded by expanding institutional apparatus in the nineteenth century—reform-centered penal establishments, hospitals, asylums, public schools—whose operations center on ever-expanding and increasingly fine-tuned tactics of 'normalization' in the interest of modulating control of the 'population'. Biopower, conceptualized as a power technic that 'tries to control the series of random events that can occur in a living mass ... which tries to predict the probability of those events (by modifying it if necessary), or at least to compensate for their effects' (Foucault 2003: 249), addresses itself to the massifying effects of capitalist development. It is a form of governance which effectively constructs a kind of universalism, establishing in concert with disciplinarity a normative subject intimately imbricated with State power, a 'proper' subject both representative of and essential to the formation of what Foucault terms a social 'homeostasis ... an overall equilibrium that protects the security of the whole from internal dangers' (Foucault 2003: 249).

In this sense, biopower rewrites the discursive functions of war. While preceding historical discourse posited war as necessary for historical intelligibility, constructing history as integrally shaped by 'a twofold threat—a war without end as the basis of history and the relationship of domination as the explanatory element in history' (Foucault 2003: 215–16), the rise of biopolitical technics diffuses this notion of inter-state warfare as the basis of historical intelligibility and facilitates the formation of a discourse which posits war as external to, rather than constitutive of, history. What supplants the centrality of inter-state warfare in historical narrative is an emergent discourse on 'internal war' which 'defends society against threats born of and in its own body' (Foucault 2003: 216) posed

by the viral, the pathological, the degenerative and congenitally defective, which are subsequently framed as threats both to the 'health' of the body and the body politic, effectively troubling the efficient exploitation of the economic power/resource of the populace. This shift in the emphasis of governance ushers in a proliferation of technologies of surveillance and standardization, a micro-policing of the social body, an endless alarmism revolving around the mutable specter of 'internal enemies'. This discourse on 'internal enemies', arising with the advent of colonial expansionist policies and an increasing trade in bodies across the boundaries of colonial centers and peripheries, engenders a particularly elaborate mutation in historical discourse which aids the universalist tendencies of said colonial efforts, effecting a partial erasure of the opacity of colonized others through their inclusion in a biopolitical logic tending towards the incorporation of the colonized in a system of intelligibility which Enrique Dussel adequately terms 'Eurocentric sameness'—a point to which I'll return later.

The Scientific Intelligibility of 'Internal Enemies'

So, what of the constitution of these 'internal enemies'? Following Foucault, it has (at least in part) to do with both an expanding field of state control and the construction of the 'abnormal' or 'aberrant' individual. Notions of 'abnormality', finding their locus of enunciation within the aforementioned expansion of state apparatus, transmute figurations of monstrosity, bringing them back into the fold of the 'human', positing what had formerly been considered super-natural excess as belonging to the realm of the natural. This process is particularly evident with reference to the development of the medico-scientific field of teratology.

Teratology, the medico-scientific discipline founded by Isidore Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire in the mid-nineteenth century, explicitly concerns itself with birth defects, corporeal malformations, and congenital anomalies—all manner of 'monstrous' signifiers. Alice Dreger, in *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, provides an account of the explicit aim of teratology to eradicate the super- or extra-human capacities connoted by the 'monster':

Geoffrey and his cohorts laid out an ambitious goal for the discipline, namely, the exploration of all known and theoretical anatomical 'anomalies' and the explication of those anomalies within a single 'anatomical philosophy' which would at once describe, explain, and predict all normal and abnormal forms. "Nature is one whole," Geoffrey confidently declared, and all 'monsters,' including the hermaphrodite, were therefore part of nature. (Dreger 1998: 33–4)

Formerly, 'hermaphroditism' had been considered a supernatural phenomenon—one historically construed, at least in Western Europe, as an evil portent somehow beyond 'nature'. This conception of hermaphroditism oftentimes led to the public annihilation of those 'afflicted'. However, with the rise of teratology, hermaphroditism was positioned as 'natural', however aberrant. This positioning of the hermaphrodite within the realm of the 'natural' effectively paved the way for a medico-scientific aim of 'annihilation' of a different sort. Rather than simply offing hermaphrodites, the goal was now two-pronged: to 'fix' them, to re-order and re-classify them in accordance with a burgeoning notion of 'true sex'; and to investigate the causes of hermaphroditism in order to prevent future instances—a eugenicizing impulse governing much of the medico-scientific research into the development of hermaphroditism. This shift in conceptualization from 'supernatural' to 'natural' is indicative of the rise of medical authority beginning in the late eighteenth century. Rosemarie Garland Thomson writes, in *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability*, that by the nineteenth century, 'the monster's power to inspire terror, awe, wonder, and divination was being eroded by science, which sought to classify and master rather than revere the extraordinary body. The scientist's and philosopher's cabinets of curiosities were transformed into the medical man's dissection table' (Thomson 1997: 57).

The entrance of 'monstrosities' into medicine aided the consolidation of medical authority, especially in the realm of obstetrics and gynecology—fields concerning women's bodies, and specifically the occasion of childbirth—that had been formerly conceptualized as the realm of (mostly female) midwives. The affront to the authority of midwives offered by medical men was undoubtedly strengthened by the rise of the study of intersexuality. Medical men had the appropriate scientific 'tools' for the investigation and medically hoped-for prevention of 'hermaphroditism', whereas the only recourse for the midwife was to simply suggest the gender of rearing for the hermaphroditic child—a recourse pointedly unmediated by the State nor any of its normativizing apparatus.

The Advent of Sexual Dimorphism and the Death of the 'True Hermaphrodite'

Central to an understanding of the normativizing process of shifting discourses on hermaphroditism from the 'super-natural' to the 'natural' is a dually-pronged process wherein, first, the schema of sexed intelligibility need be reconfigured in strictly bio-logic, dimorphic terms and, consequently, the notion of the 'true hermaphrodite' necessarily discredited.

Sexual dimorphism posits an understanding of sexual difference grounded in biological understandings of an incontrovertible, materially encoded absolute separability and distinctness between ‘the sexes’. Pointedly, the concept of sexual dimorphism is what undergirds and lends conceptual intelligibility to ‘the sexes’. Prior to Enlightenment-era formulations of this concept of incommensurability, sexual difference was understood by degree rather than radical differentiation, ‘man’ and ‘woman’ understood as variations on a single (male) typology:

In 1803, for example, Jacques-Louis Moreau, one of the founders of ‘moral anthropology,’ argued passionately against the nonsense written by Aristotle, Galen, and their modern followers on the subject of women in relation to men. Not only are the two sexes different, but they are different in every conceivable aspect of body and soul, in every physical and moral aspect. To the physician or the naturalist, the relation of woman to man is ‘a series of oppositions and contrasts.’ In place of what, in certain situations, strikes the modern imagination as an almost perverse insistence on understanding sexual difference as a matter of degree, gradations of one basic male type, there arose a shrill call to articulate sharp corporeal distinctions. (Lacqueur 1990: 5)

Galenic understandings of ‘sex’, best understood as homological, figure ‘female’ constitution as a simple inversion of the ‘male’, a notion densely related to a concept of a ‘vital heat’ which results in either introverted or extroverted genitalia. Men, perhaps not surprisingly, are posited within this schema as acquiring a greater degree of bodily ‘perfection’ given their greater possession of the aforementioned ‘heat’. While the literature on this understanding of sexual difference is richly textured, I focus here on the historical transmutation from this homological model to a model of sexual incommensurability wherein sexual difference is transformed into the provident foundation on which complexly contrived systems of political, scientific and cultural scaffolding are built. This transmuted understanding of sexual difference did not function in an epistemological or disciplinary vacuum, despite the pretenses of certain sciences to function in a hermetically sealed disciplinary field with its own internal logic of progressive supersession and cyclical refutation.

This new, dimorphic model, stemming from biological research into reproduction, came to function as a structuring methodological framework for further research—microscopically and, today, genetically, creating a situation wherein the assumption of dimorphism results in, by the end of the nineteenth century, a conceptualization of incommensurable sexual difference which is encoded internally, demonstrated ‘not just in visible bodies but in its microscopic building blocks’ (Lacqueur 1990: 6). Despite the obvious historical contingency of this understanding of sexual difference, its justificatory grasp of a certain scientificity (and, further, only visible to specialists) marks it in accordance with

an objective ahistoricism. Isabelle Stengers, responding to Thomas Kuhn's periodization of 'scientific revolutions', writes:

there is the theme of the 'great division,' the difference between the 'four European centuries,' during which time modern science was created, and all other civilizations, which lost the event-like character conferred on them by Kuhn and the group of 'internalist' historians. According to Kuhn, it was here, and nowhere else, that the condition of possibility for science was realized—namely, in the existence of societies that gave scientific communities the means of existing and working without intervening in their debates. (Stengers 2000: 9)

Two pivotal notions, with deep material and psychic consequences, are alluded to in this passage—first, the demarcation between Western Europe and 'all other civilizations'; second, the ways in which this demarcation solidified around a notion of 'scientific progress' enabled and secured by the firm establishment of science as a realm unto itself—as I alluded to earlier, a hermetically sealed epistemic formation laying claim to the production of purely objective knowledge. However, as Stengers queries, 'do not industry, the state, the army, and commerce all enter into the history of scientific communities on two fronts, both as sources of financing and as beneficiaries of the useful results?' (Stengers 2000: 9). It is this interrelation of statist interests and imperatives with scientific development that interests me. For, despite the claims of rationalist knowledge-production to ahistoricism and objectivity, these 'four European centuries' which witnessed the rise of modern science were, ultimately, an effort to unseat and displace prior cosmologies which gave an alternate shape and sense to sociality within the space of European metropolises. Lacqueur references pre-Enlightenment gender organization as a situation where the discussions of sex and gender seemed to operate by an inversion of 'modern' colonial logic:

sex, or the body, must be understood as the epiphenomenon, while gender, what we take to be a cultural category, was primary or 'real'. Gender—man and woman—mattered a great deal and was part of the order of things; sex was conventional, though modern terminology makes such a reordering nonsensical. At the very least, what we call sex and gender were in the 'one-sex model' explicitly bound up in a circle of meanings from which escape to a supposed biological substrate—the strategy of the Enlightenment—was impossible ... to be a man or a woman was to hold a social rank, a place in society, to assume a cultural role, not to *be* organically one or the other of two incommensurable sexes. (Lacqueur 1990: 8)

This 'circle of meanings' with no discrete foundation, so dissimilar from the 'ontological granite' provided by Enlightenment bio-logic, elicits a specifically

practical basis for understanding sex difference: constituted not so much as what one is, but by what one does. This mode of sex intelligibility slowly subsided, however, with the imposition of rationalist, biologically determinist explications which prompted a gradual disappearance, mutation, eradication, or reformulation of those facetious, linked modes of social organization which comprised the rest of the 'circle of meanings' densely interwoven with sexed understandings and harnessed them, instead, to the taxonomic, categorical project of scientific rationalism.

This new mode of sex intelligibility necessitated the eradication of the 'true hermaphrodite'—that is, a conception of the hermaphrodite as possessing 'both' sexes, in a manner of corporeal simultaneity. This conception of hermaphroditism is reliant on what Anne Fausto-Sterling terms, citing early modern English jurist Sir Edward Coke, the doctrine of the 'sex which prevaieth' (Fausto-Sterling 2000: 36), a notion which, while testifying to the legal and juridical fixity of a two-gender system, nevertheless acknowledged a certain sexed co-presence in cases concerning hermaphrodites. It is precisely this conception of sexed co-presence which is erased with the rise of the 'pseudo-hermaphrodite', which relegated hermaphroditic hybridity to the realm of the chimerical, claiming that behind the apparently mixed sexual attributes of hermaphrodites lay a 'true' sex, rather than a 'prevailing' or dominant one.

What ensued was the development of a variety of methodologies and experiments which aimed to find one *absolute* material determinant of sex and, thus, to discredit 'true hermaphroditism' (that is, an absolute, irreducible entwinement of 'male' and 'female' attributes in a subject) in order to reify and further congeal dominant cultural conceptions regarding the 'truth' of univocal sex. The pinnacle of this search for the one absolute material determinant of sex is, arguably, the distinction made in the late nineteenth century by German physician Theodor Albrecht Edwin Klebs between 'true' and 'false' hermaphrodites. The criteria Klebs set up revolved around the kind of tissue found in the gonads of hermaphrodites—if ovarian tissue, the hermaphrodite would be reclassified as a 'female pseudohermaphrodite' and have his/her gender reassigned accordingly; if testicular tissue, then the adverse. Klebs's taxonomy effectively abolished the 'true hermaphrodite', rendering the criteria for that categorization so narrow that very, very few ever fit.

Klebs's taxonomy was both accepted and elaborated upon in the medical realm around the turn of the twentieth century. Two British physicians, George F. Blacker and Thomas William Pelham Lawrence, published an article in the 1896 volume entitled *Transactions of the Obstetrical Society of London* which aimed to 'tighten the definition of true hermaphroditism and to clean the historical record of any alleged cases of true hermaphroditism that did not fit their refined, stricter definition' (Dreger 1998: 146). This new, tightened criterion insisted upon the necessity of a 'microscopical examination' (147) of

the gonads to determine incontrovertibly the type of tissue present—ovarian, testicular, or, in extremely rare instances, a combination thereof. The paper was primarily dedicated to a close scrutiny of prior cases of ‘true hermaphroditism’, reviewing 27 of these cases and refuting all but 3. Published alongside the paper is a photograph of histologic (microscopic) sections of a gonad which contained both ovarian and testicular tissue—a microscopic representation of a now increasingly rare (due to narrowed criteria) ‘true hermaphrodite’. Here, we see microscopic technology paired with photographic technology in an effort to locate the ostensibly irrefutable ‘truth’ of gender on a deeply internal level—one only able to be accessed by physicians and scientists, thus further consolidating the legislative authority of scientific and medical men regarding matters of ‘ambiguous’ gender. This photograph, while depicting an instance of ‘true hermaphroditism’, functions as an exception which proves the ‘rule’ of univocal sex. It does this through presenting the histologically examined ‘ovotestis’, only present in a very small number of those considered ‘ambiguously sexed’, and in so doing essentially renders it impossible for another physician or group of physicians to provide contrary constitutive criteria for ‘true hermaphroditism’. Through photographically depicting this rare ‘exception’, Blacker and Lawrence set the bar regarding what constitutes ‘true hermaphroditism’, upholding the notion that there is an unequivocal material determinant of ‘true’ sex while simultaneously acknowledging the (now exceptionally rare) instance of confoundment.

Additionally, this medical location of ‘sex’ in the gonads supports the Victorian notion that the fundamental difference between men and women lay in their reproductive capabilities—the gonads, after all, are responsible for producing ova and testes. In this manner, photographic evidence is provided to refute all gender ambiguity and to reify the reductive view of essential gender difference used to uphold notions of gendered separate spheres—the relegation of women to the domestic, the fixing of men’s position in the public—at a time when gender roles were being hotly contested (a historical moment in Western Europe and North America now referred to as ‘first-wave feminism’). This contestation was precipitated by increased industrial development and the concomitant entrance of women into the work force, agitation for suffrage, increasing numbers of women receiving secondary and post-secondary education and entering into historically male fields, and the advent of inexpensive, accessible contraception. The positing of ‘sex’ as located incontrovertibly in one’s gonads is, in essence, a reactive response to this unrest, reifying the heterosexist, reproductively oriented, essentializing discourse of separate gendered spheres, illustrating Dreger’s assertion that ‘interest in hermaphroditism seems almost always to wax with public challenges to sex roles’ (Dreger 1998: 13).

The strictly gonadal definition of true sex was ‘cheered’ (Dreger 1998: 158) by medical and scientific men until 1915, when William Blair Bell ‘dared openly

to question' (158) this strict definition, suggesting that such a practice made little sense, citing two particular cases in which the strict gonadal definition of sex resulted in the prescription of absolutely counterintuitive sex reassignment. One of these cases regarded an individual with Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome who, while possessing non-functioning gonads with testicular tissue, was entirely feminine in outward appearance. Bell's conclusion, when faced with this case and others like it, was that it made no sense 'to privilege some non-functional testes or ovaries as markers of true sex' given that 'so many [other] glands could contribute to the development of special sex-characteristics' (Dreger 1998: 165). Thus, Bell's work effectively paved the way for a psycho-social approach to sex and gender (one which resulted in the loosening of ties between these two terms) rather than the prevailing biomedical-materialist paradigm which heralded the gonadal definition of 'true sex'. However, Bell's approach to sex designation was still undeniably conservative, as it was motivated both 'in theory and practice by an interest in maintaining clear, medically sanctioned divisions between the two sexes in each individual case and in society as a whole' (Dreger 1998: 165) and insisted on maintaining the idea that 'every body did indeed have a true sex, even if the sex-gland nor the genital ducts necessarily influence or give any indication of the true sex of the individual, as shown by secondary characteristics' (166). Although Bell expanded the medico-scientific criteria by which sex was determined, he still clung tightly to a sharply dimorphic conception of univocal sex, contending that while in some cases 'true' sex may be difficult to discern, it is always already present, and it is the role of medical doctors 'not only to diagnose a single sex for anomalous bodies ... but [to] help it along, by eliminating any sexually 'anomalous' characteristics and accenting those that matched the so-diagnosed sex' (Dreger 1998: 166). Rather than opening a cultural space for liminally gendered subjects, Bell's intervention in the 'diagnosis' and gender reassignment of hermaphrodites instead increased the authority of medical men, legitimating their right to assign sex, and elaborating upon this by also dictating that not only can they legitimately assign sex, but they additionally must hormonally and surgically intervene into the bodies of the intersexed in order to 'correct' and further 'fix' sex.

The Ethnographic 'Primitive' and the 'Covering-Over' of Colonial Others

Roughly concomitant with the rise of teratology and, relatedly, bio-medical discourses on 'pseudo-hermaphroditism' in the space of the Western European metropole, was the rise of another set of practices which, in no small way, cast a scientific veneer over processes which sought both to negate the opacity of the radically Other (a negation certainly in operation with reference to

the erasure of the 'true hermaphrodite' from the historical record). This was the development of ethnographic practice, which came to function as both the cornerstone and 'essence' of anthropological study. While seemingly unrelated developments, both the rise of teratology and the development of ethnographic practice can be considered beneath the Foucauldian rubric of the 'biopolitical', which, conceptualized as a specifically normativizing set of practices, necessitated an ostensibly 'objective', scientific discourse bent on the 'rehabilitation' and 'taming' of bodies figured as 'abnormal' and 'monstrous', in order to firmly entrench a hegemonic narrative regarding social cohesion and propriety. While teratology provided legitimation for a scientific and juridical debunking of 'true hermaphroditism', and simultaneously solidified doctrines of strictly dimorphic, univocal sex, ethnographic practice established a set of discourses which constructed the bodies and cultures of those living in colonized milieus as 'primitive' or 'savage'—a label which, I argue, both entails and serves to justify, in the colonial imaginary, a brutal reordering and transmutation of disparate indigenous cosmologies, in no small way radically reorganizing modes of communal organization and sense-making. As part and parcel of these mutations, we witness the instantiation of distinctly Euro-/Westo-centric systems of sexed intelligibility, at least in terms of normative judgments regarding the constitution of the 'human', systems of measurement in which indigenous and colonized bodies came to be read as 'primitive' or 'savage' on account of maintaining radically different modes of social organization which weren't undergirded by a dimorphic structuration of *séx* and, relatedly, didn't gain their principle of intelligibility through the abjection of bodies and sex acts which exceeded or 'disobeyed' this structuration.

The taxonomic label of 'primitive' or 'savage' serves, arguably, (at least) two purposes. While engaging in a method of what Johannes Fabian refers to as 'allochronic' distancing which hinges on what he terms a 'denial of coevalness', or a temporal-spatial scheme whereby cultures undergoing processual colonization are posited as temporally 'prior', teleologically speaking, to the Western metropole, this taxonomic yoking of the colonized to a narrative of civilized development both constructed and instantiated by the West effectively (and intentionally) subsumes the radical alterity and opacity of colonial sites and, instead, posits them as 'infant' civilizations in terms of their relation to Western 'developmental' narratives.

Fabian writes that, through this process of allochronic distancing,

the other is constructed as a system of coordinates (emanating of course also from a real center—the Western metropolis) in which given societies of all times and places may be plotted in terms of relative distance from the present ... evolutionary sequences may *look* incorporative; after all, they create a universal frame of reference able to accommodate all societies. But being based on the

episteme of natural history, they are founded on distancing and separation. There would be no *raison d'être* for the comparative method if it was not the classification of entities or traits which first have to be separated and distinct before their similarities can be used to establish taxonomies and developmental sequences. To put this more concretely: What makes the savage significant to the evolutionist's Time is that he lives in another time. (Fabian 1983: 26–7)

The evolutionary-cum-ethnographic developmental sequence thus involves an interesting double-speak: In order to instantiate processes of incorporation or subsumption of the colonial Other into the logic of Eurocentric 'sameness', it is necessary to produce a taxonomy which positions these sites anachronistically, as temporally prior to the 'present'—primitive, atavistic, 'underdeveloped'.

Enrique Dussel, in *The Invention of the Americas*, carefully details the relationship between Europe and Latin America in terms of their mutual constitution of modernity, cogently arguing that modernity 'originates in a dialectical relationship with non-Europe' (Dussel 1995: 9) wherein Europe 'places itself at the center of world history over against a periphery equally constitutive of modernity' (Dussel 1995: 9–10). Central to his argument is the refutation of colonial discourses regarding the ostensible 'discovery' (*descubierto*) of the colonial Other. Rather, he posits the arrival of Europeans in the supposed 'new world' as initiating a long, thoroughgoing, and, indeed, ongoing project which takes as its mission the 'covering-over' (*encubierto*) of this Other, or, alternately a process which erases the alterity which Europe was confronted with upon arrival in the Americas—one which, utilizing diffuse and disparate tactics, subsumes the colonial Other into the logic of Eurocentric sameness. Dussel writes that 'for the modern *ego* the inhabitants of the discovered lands never appeared as Other, but as the possessions of the Same to be conquered, colonized, modernized, civilized, as if they were the modern *ego's* *material*' (Dussel 1995: 35). I will return, later, to the apparent mind/body split alluded to here; for now, I'd like to explore more deeply the notion of 'sameness' outlaid by Dussel.

The notion of Eurocentric 'sameness' operative in Dussel's text finds its meaning in the formation of a universalist ideology—one constitutive of modernity—propagated by Europe during the period of the advent of various colonial missions. This universality was key in the movement of Europe from 'being a particularity placed in brackets by the Muslim world' (Dussel 1995: 34) to a unified territory which construed itself as the apotheosis of civilization through a discourse of 'discovery' of supposed 'primitive' civilizations. This 'discovery', which 'demanded that Europeans comprehend history more expansively, as a world/planetary happening' (Dussel 1995: 35), prompted the construction of an understanding of this 'new world' which took as its main referent a distinctly European understanding of both temporality and subjectivity,

and which defined these alterior cultures solely in relation to Eurocentric modes of understanding. This positioning of Eurocentric epistemology as the sole referent for the cognition of disparate indigenous epistemes constitutes the subsumption of the colonial Other into the logic of the 'same' of which Dussel writes.

One axis of Eurocentric epistemology which becomes operative in colonial conquest is what Dussel terms the 'developmentalist fallacy', a temporally linear concept with its roots in Enlightenment-era thought which posits a universal scale for the measure of civilization. Dussel outlines the operation of this fallacy throughout the work of Kant (where its poles manifest termed 'immature' and 'mature', and where, moreover, the European Enlightenment is taken as the apotheosis or mark of exit from historical epochs characterized 'immature') and Hegel (where we see it in the guise of a dialectical historical movement from primitive to civilized and, not coincidentally, as also moving from 'East to West', and exempting the 'new world' wholesale from this historical movement on account of 'evident inferiority'. Hegel writes that European civilization is 'the end of universal history', or world history, laying the groundwork for the expansion of European particularism into a new universality, both 'the beginning and end of history'(Dussel 1995: 23)—a groundwork with obvious attendant effects for colonial efforts, as it functions to render European expansionism *legitimate* and, moreover, a harbinger of ostensible 'good'.

This 'developmentalist fallacy', or, more specifically, its positing of indigenous America as 'primitive', functions according to its imbrication with another primary Eurocentric epistemic axis: the secularization, clarified in the work of Descartes, of the mind/body split. While the colonial ramifications of this split—that is, the ascription of the modern ego to Europeans, and the concomitant assignation of indigenous Americans as the modern ego's *material*—is cursorily mentioned within the work of Enrique Dussel, we find a more thorough discussion of this split and differential assignation in Anibal Quijano's *Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America*. Documenting this 'mutation of the ancient dualist approach to the body and the nonbody', Quijano writes that with the radical rending apart of the mind and body in Cartesian thought,

The body was and could be nothing but an object of knowledge. From this point of view the human being is, par excellence, a being gifted with reason, and this gift was conceived as localized exclusively in the soul. Thus the body, by definition incapable of reason, does not have anything that meets reason/subject. The radical separation produced between reason/subject and body and their relations should be seen only as relations between the human subject/reason and the human body/nature, or between spirit and nature. In this way, in

Eurocentric rationality the body was fixed as an object of knowledge, outside of the environment of subject/reason. (Quijano 2000: 555)

This reading apart, as Quijano states, is key to understanding scientific development within the modern era. With the diffusion of Cartesian thought, the erasure of all psychosomatic relations, the introduction of the concept of the body as thing, as instrument—and thus, as material that can be maximized, trained, made more efficient, normalized, whose capacities could be routinized—became par for the course, both within Europe and within the increasingly colonized portions of the Americas, although quite differently with respect to each spatiality.

It becomes necessary to think the entwinement of the developmentalist fallacy with the secularized mind/body rift in order to think the materiality of processes of conquest and colonization, to understand the figuration of the body of the colonial Other within the colonial imaginary, and to understand the mitigating role which gender plays in these operations.

Quijano succinctly states that, had it not been for the ‘objectification of the body as nature, its [concomitant] expulsion from the sphere of the spirit, the ‘scientific’ theorization of the problem of race ... would have hardly been possible’ (Quijano 2000: 556). Qualifying this statement, I find it necessary to add that it is, of course, not only ‘the objectification of the body as nature’ that sets out the contextual ground for the scientific theorization of race, but the positing of indigenous American civilizations as, alternately, ‘immature’ or ‘primitive’. This primitivity can be read, through the enmeshing of these two epistemic axes, as relating to a lack of subjective elaboration, a lack of ‘reason’, and as such, it is a European reading of indigenous cultures as governed by a dyad composed of both irrationality and its relationship to the body. It is this reading that makes possible the violent reduction of the Other into the Same. If indigenous America is read as composed of irrational cultures, cultures that are seen as, in effect, ‘just bodies’, then it becomes possible to deny the alterity of the Other, and instead posit them as necessarily ‘obliged, subsumed, alienated, and incorporated into the dominating totality’—that is, the new Eurocentric ‘universality’—‘like a thing or an instrument’ (Dussel 1995: 39). This instrumentality of the body, and its concomitant assignation to those Others (partially) subsumed, through a logic of abjection, by colonial processes, is integral to the formation of those aforementioned ‘internal enemies’ of the State. Those territories which, through colonization, are positioned taxonomically with reference to the European metropole and, subsequently, gradually incorporated by Western (political, intellectual and monetary) economies, provide a vivid tableau of the centrality of State-sanctioned racism with reference to the biopolitical.

Scientific Racism/Sexed Aberrance

In Foucault's view, racist discourse appears along with biopower, and appears as 'a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control' (Foucault 2003: 255) as a way of transmuting the notion of war and making it function on the level of the species rather than the level of the state. Essentially, racism functions through the construction of racial typologies—that is, the separation of the 'human race' into distinct 'races', the establishment of value-laden criteria which serves to constitute each of these 'races', and the subsequent hierarchical ordering of races according to a scale which takes as its main axes 'inferiority' and 'superiority', thus 'fragmenting the field of the biological that power controls' and establishing a discourse on 'what must live and what must die' (255). Racism functions according to a logic which Foucault paraphrases as such:

The more inferior species die out, the more abnormal individuals are eliminated, the fewer degenerates there will be in the species as a whole, and the more I—as species rather than individual—can live, the stronger I will be, the more vigorous I will be. I will be able to proliferate. (Foucault 2003: 255)

Inferiority, degeneration, abnormality—what becomes evident through Foucault's sketch of racist logic is the possibility of the extension of racist logic to other realms of the social. That is, this logic is not content to stop at race alone, but will extend to the ostensibly more nebulous realm of 'abnormality' and 'degeneracy', although always through a reliance on a distinct biologism which attempts to 'scientifically' typologize said 'abnormality'. This is, of course, why we see the proliferation of gendered and sexualized typologies of deviance concomitant with those typologies which take 'race' as their locus of organization. Moreover, the formation of doctrines of racial degeneracy and sexed and sexual abnormality which appear (hueristically, perhaps) separate, are co-constitutive—we thus witness both the sexualization of racialized 'inferiority' as well as the racialization of sexual 'aberrance' and 'degeneracy' in this particular set of discursive formations.

Also evident in Foucault's sketch is the fact of the mutual constitution of 'normality' and 'abnormality'. This mutual constitution, simultaneously, renders the positing of an 'internal enemy' necessary for the formation of a 'proper' *universal* subject—a metonymic subject representative of the species as a whole—and calls our attention to the endless cannibalization this process entails. Differences will always proliferate, the attainment of social homogeneity will always be, can never *fail* to be, a perpetually unfinished process, yet as long as the phantasm of a perfectible social exists, so will a differential discourse on

normality and abnormality as well as its attendant attempts at extermination, whether material, psychic, or both.

Thus, inherent in what Dussel terms the 'mutual constitution of modernity' is this mutual constitution of the 'normal' subject, where the bounds, functions, and figurations that shape the European subject are defined in relationship to those set for the colonial Other. The 'proper' universal subject constructed by the biopolitical, thus, only exists in relation to 'scientific' typologies regarding race, gender, and sexuality. Given this, it becomes necessary to rethink Quijano's assertion that

In America, the idea of race was a way of granting legitimacy to the relations of domination imposed by the conquest. . . . Historically, this meant a new way of legitimizing the already old ideas and practices of relations of superiority/inferiority between dominant and dominated. From the sixteenth century on, this principle has proven to be the most effective and long-lasting instrument of universal social domination, since the much older principle—gender or intersexual domination—was encroached upon by the inferior/superior racial classification. In this way, race became the fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population into ranks, places, and roles in the new society's structure of power. (Quijano 2000: 534–5)

Here, Quijano posits gender domination, or some notion of patriarchy, as a still-operative social archaism, a 'much older principle' for organizing oppressive relations. Viewed in light of Foucault's theorization of the biopolitical, it becomes evident that discourses on 'normality' and 'abnormality' ranged much wider than race, although racial typologies may have been most effective in universalizing these discourses on 'normality'. It was not simply a matter of 'encroachment' upon older oppressive systematizations (i.e., a curiously ahistorical 'patriarchy'), but the formulation of thoroughly enmeshed discourses regarding the constitution of the 'proper' universal subject. We must be attentive, then, to the reworking of indigenous understandings of anatomic sex and their relation to the social, as well as the mutations they undergo through colonial contact.

With colonialism, we see certain facets of what Maria Lugones terms the 'light' side of the colonial/modern gender system—biologically legitimated sexual dimorphism and heterosexual patriarchy—reworked in the newly 'found' (or, more appropriately, 'covered-over') territories. One must be careful not to set up a theoretic which simply looks for the imposition of these frameworks in the colonies, as this reworking does not function in an equivalent manner. Lugones writes that while 'sexual dimorphism has been an important characteristic of what I call "the light side" of the colonial/modern gender system those in the "dark side" were not necessarily understood dimorphically' (Lugones 2007: 188). While the light and dark sides of this gender system exist in relation

to one another, oftentimes those in the 'dark side' were figured as aberrant, as monstrous—sexually voracious, animalistic, or fantastically hermaphroditic. This monstrosity ensures, in line with Cartesian thought, the barricade of those colonized from the realm of the rational. Their reduction to the level of the body and, moreover, a body constructed as deviant, as monstrous, aids the legitimation of the use of colonial bodies instrumentally, at the same time as it inscribes and concretizes the ostensible 'normality' and legitimacy of bourgeois European sexual and gender arrangements and ideologies.

Tellingly, it is this nexus of sexual/physiognomic deviancy and European processes of racialization that Sander L. Gilman references when attempting to parse out the conflict between polygeneticists and monogeneticists throughout the nineteenth century over the placement of colonized subjects in the 'Great Chain of Being'. The polygeneticist argument hinges on a concept of inherent and absolute racial difference, given credence through the spectacular display and medical theorization of Saartje Baartman, or the 'Hottentot Venus'. Gilman elaborates:

The antithesis of European sexual mores and beauty is the black, and the essential black, the lowest exemplum of mankind on the great chain of being, is the Hottentot. It is indeed in the physical appearance of the Hottentot that the central icon for sexual difference between the European and the black was found, a deep physiological difference urged so plausibly on the basis of physical contrast that it gave pause even to early monogenetic theoreticians. (Gilman 1985: 83)

The 'deep physiological difference' established through medico-scientific constructions of 'essentialized blackness' which find their exemplar in the 'exaggerated' genitalia and secondary sex characteristics of the 'Hottentot Venus' was utilized to further shore up claims regarding the allochronic distance (nay, even separate speciation) of the colonial Other. The argument for this absolute, irreparable difference finds its most persuasive evidence in the 'abberant' sexual physiology of the Hottentot. Moreover, the (distinctly sexual) atavism of the Hottentot was then ushered in to explain the pathological degeneracy of prostitutes within the space of the European metropole who, upon medical examination, were often declared physiologically malformed in a manner similar to that of the Hottentot. As Gilman writes following a review of both A.J.B Parent-Duchatelet's 1836 study physiognomically-focused anthropological study of the Parisian prostitute, as well as Pauline Tarnowsky's 1889 'public health' study of Russian prostitution, 'all of the signs point to the "primitive" nature of the prostitute's physiognomy' (Gilman 1985: 95).

It is through Lugones' theorization of the co-constitutivity of the 'light' and 'dark' sides of the colonial/modern gender system that the specific relation

of European metropolitan discourses on 'pseudo-hermaphroditism', medico-scientific practices of 'rehabilitating' and 'correcting' ostensibly 'aberrantly sexed' bodies, and the abject and monstrous figuration of colonized bodies can be understood as mutually implicated. Teratology and ethnographic practice are part and parcel of a biopolitical effort which sought, in a very material sense, to yoke the opacity and alterity of those bodies and ways of being which, through exceeding or existing outside the colonial/modern category of the human—a category which came to be decisively undergirded by a strictly dimorphic understanding of sexed intelligibility—instantiated the threat of undoing European/Western pretenses to the imposition of a scientifically legitimated monocultural hegemony. Teratology and ethnographic practice, in particular, came to function, within colonial/modern logic, as 'necessary' interventions which sought to reduce the threat of the alterior, the 'extra'-human through a tactic of incorporation which, to paraphrase Dussel, engaged in a process of 'covering-over' alternative ontological and cosmological modes of being in order to eradicate the possibility of an 'outside' of colonial modernity, to transform the particularity of Western/European cultural formations and logics into a legitimately universal system. In order for this to function, the ostensible 'center' of these cultural formations had to be 'cleaned up', purified—hence the eradication of the threat posed by the 'true hermaphrodite' and the simultaneous instantiation of biological sexual dimorphism, in order for this sexed monstrosity to be abjected from the Western metropolitan interior to the colonial periphery. This move further shores up and defends Western/European strategies of imposition and intervention (under the onus of instituting cultural 'progress' or 'civilized development') in colonial sites. The taxonomic inclusion of these communities, cultures and bodies with reference to a scale of 'humanity' ranging from 'primitive' to 'civilized', and the concomitant imposition of proper 'human' constitution, seeks to force a modern/colonial system of intelligibility on these alternate and opaque cosmologies, socialities, and modes of being, to incorporate the colonial periphery in the logic of Eurocentric sameness.

Judith Butler, in *Undoing Gender*, writes of the constitution of the human (which now finds a problematic site of articulation in discourses on 'human rights'):

Sometimes the very terms that confer "humanness" on some individuals are those that deprive certain other individuals of the possibility of achieving that status, producing a differential between the human and the 'less-than-human.' These norms have far-reaching consequences for how we understand the model of the human entitled to rights or included in the participatory sphere of political deliberation. The human is understood differently depending on its race, the legibility of that race, its morphology, the recognizability of that morphology, its sex, the perceptual verifiability of that sex, its ethnicity, the

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categorical understanding of that ethnicity. Certain humans are recognized as less than human, and that form of qualified recognition does not lead to a viable life. Certain humans are not recognized as human at all, and that leads to yet another order of unlivable life. (Butler 2004: 2)

Central to the constitution of the 'human', then, are the logics of intelligibility which work in concert with the morphological and categorical formulation of differentially and hierarchically marked subsets on a scale of non-human to human—that is, a taxonomic logic with its roots in scientific rationalism, a taxonomic logic which takes as its axes of differentiation sex, race, and ethnicity, and imposes criterion regarding visible 'verifiability' as central to partial or full inclusion in the realm of the 'human'.

Much feminist theory, historically and contemporaneously, refuses the interrogation of the bio-logical roots of this taxonomic system. Claiming as its epistemological focus the category of 'gender', conceptualized as differential and contingent cultural elaborations of biological 'sex', serves to reinscribe, rather than de-naturalize, this bio-logic, instead operating to prop up the hermetic mythicization of modern science. And as Stengers writes, lamenting the dearth of scholarship which troubles the construction of science as a realm unto itself,

to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's is also to claim for oneself everything that does not belong to him. The generalizable triumph of objectivity, recognized in principle, depends on the possibility of setting oneself up as the representative of subjectivity as such, which is then recognized as the *other pole*, indestructible and inalienable, of the human mode of existence. (Stengers 2000: 36)

The endlessly circular debates regarding essentialism and constructivism work in this vein of analysis. By leaving the contingent, thoroughly situated construction of categorical 'humanness', with all of its attendant interests and exclusions, unquestioned, and taking as the realm of feminist analysis the gendered 'subject', the biologic-ontologic 'granite' initially provided by Enlightenment-era scientific-taxonomic projects remains intact. I agree with Elizabeth Grosz, who writes in a footnote to 'Refiguring Lesbian Desire' that:

a mistaken bifurcation or division is created between so-called essentialists and constructionists insofar as constructionism is inherently bound up with notions of essence. To be consistent, constructionism must explain what the 'raw materials' of the construction consist in; these raw materials must, by definition, be essential insofar as they precondition and make possible the processes of social construction. (Grosz 1994a: 81)

Thus, to the extent that these preconditions are left out of the critical frame, feminist theory-praxis reinscribes the aforementioned bio-logic. Beginning from a site wherein dimorphic difference is taken as a precondition for the analysis of differing cultural constructions leaves such formulations in an ill-equipped position to address the continuing legacy and maintenance of the boundaries of modernity and atavism, in a position bereft of possibility to make sense of this co-constitutive 'outside', save through claims to essentialized human 'sameness', globalized gendered oppression, or more complex arguments regarding the necessity of conscientiously expanding the boundaries of the 'human' so those left 'outside' can come 'in'.

Consequently, it is important to refute Butler's relegation of those who co-constitute, on account of their exclusion, the colonial-modern formation of a categorical 'humanness' to the leading of 'unlivable' lives. This formulation, intent as it is on a political praxis which unites disparate struggles (namely, decolonial and queer, trans, and intersex movements) cannot deal with this 'outside', save by a reliance on the logic which constructs it as such—a construction which, moreover, serves to incorporate this ostensible 'outside'. The 'outside' of modernity, the 'outside' of colonial-modern constructions of the human, thus becomes an empty space, a negated space, rather than a productive site for resistant and alternative life-practices and social modalities which persist despite the epistemic and material death-sentence issued by and through colonial-scientific practices. I'm thinking, here, both of folks who have undergone and are currently suffering the abuses of (neo)colonialism as well as those relegated to a position bereft of a legitimate intelligible claim to (institutional) subjectivity, on account of living lives in excess of or incommensurable with the always already dimorphically sexed structuration of the subject: intersex folk, trans-folk, queer- and genderqueer folk.

Given the roots and ongoing reliance of legitimate claims to subjectivity—particularly within human rights discourse—to materially and psychically violent, modern/colonial taxonomies of the 'human', I no longer think a thought of the 'subject', even a non-unitary, fragmented one, is an appropriate node of organization with reference to radical political praxis. What I am interested in, instead, are methods of *connection* and *becoming* outside identitarian logic, predicated as it is on the aforementioned bio-logic. This involves a refusal of the negative logic of the 'outside', a refusal to understand specific lives as 'unlivable', and instead an assumption of the persistence of efforts to sustain life even in conditions of extreme brutality—whether that brutality comes in the form of multivalent violences enacted on sexually 'unintelligible' bodies or at the behest of the neo-colonial protocols of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Coalitional resistance to Statist logics of identity begins here.

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