

SEXUALITY

Read: Nagel, Joane. "Introduction: Sex matters: Racing sex and sexing race," "Ethnosexual frontiers: Cruising and crossing intimate intersections," "Constructing ethnicity and sexuality: Building boundaries and identities," "Sex and race: The color of sex in America," "Sex and nationalism: Sexually imagined communities." In *Race, Ethnicity and Sexuality: Intimate Intersections, Forbidden Frontiers*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003. ISBN: 9780195127478.

Sexuality and "the Other"

A widespread concern about boundaries

The "Other" can be both very different, at times perceived as barely human

And too close for comfort

Mixed race children in India, Dutch East Indies (Nagel)

Fag (maybe YOU)

Examples from Colonialism

Nagel cites Stoler¹

Concern with sexuality in the colonies was about

Sexual access and reproduction

Class distinctions and racial demarcations

Nationalism and European identity

Example: the policy in Dutch East Indies

Early on concubinage was encouraged

Married men could not work for the company

Cheaper for companies (less housing, etc.) and native women were slaves, laborers as well as concubines

¹ Material in this section from Ann Stoler: Carnal knowledge and imperial power: Gender, race and morality in Colonial Asia. Pp. 13-31 in Roger N. Lancaster & Micaela di Leonardo, eds. *The Gender Sexuality Reader: Culture, History, Political Economy*. Routledge.

Later on there were problems, especially after mixed-race children appeared (too close)

Such arrangements gave rise to anxiety about possible political agitation

Problems with maintaining white prestige

Feared disloyalty of offspring

Later on in century

Concubinage came to symbolize European fears about the security of European hegemony and white prestige

So, European women emigrated to colonies

European women seen as fragile psychologically, physically

So when they did emigrate to colonies, segregationist standards were what women deserved

Expanded racism, eugenics came into play;

Women were the solution to fears of “degeneration” as mothers and as maintainers

Of health, happy households (no prostitutes), good nutrition

A turnaround from notion that the native was stronger, more acclimated

So that mixed-race children represented fears of degeneracy from miscegenation

Europeans should NOT adapt to local food, language, and dress

The notion of superior women developed:

Men came to be considered more susceptible to moral turpitude than women

Women were thus held responsible for the immoral states of men

Women needed to insulate their men from cultural and sexual contamination

Remember Linda Gordon’s discussion of Victorian women being seen as morally superior? Cult of True Womanhood?

Native men seen as lustful, uncontrollable urges, aroused by the mere sight of white women

Such fears unified the often factionalized European community around a common threat from the outside

Remember lecture outlining possible functions of deviance classifications?

Stoler suggests that accusations often increased

Following heightened tensions within European communities during strikes and other kinds of unrest

Accusations stood in for a generally perceived need to secure white control, increase surveillance (of the women, too, of course)

Slavery and its legacy in the U.S.

Theme again of sexual slander

As Nagel says, seeing the other as “lustful” justified enslaving and otherwise mistreating slaves

This ideology camouflaged castration, rape, breeding programs, sexual servitude

After the Civil War, Nagel suggests—with ample evidence

That white men feared black men in part due to fears of retribution for mistreatment and abuse of black women under slavery (p. 111)

Men who were lynched: punishing the “uppity” Negro (coming too close)

But lynchings economically motivated as well

Ida B. Wells (p. 113), her friend murdered, economic competition

Movie “Rosewood” based on a true story in Florida: blacks’ houses burned, they were killed and had to flee for their lives

Accusations about sexuality between black men and white women inflamed white residents

As happened with lynching mobs elsewhere, economic competition from black-owned stores was a contributing factor

Sometimes the “insult to white women” was totally made up

Famous and transformative case of Emmett Till

14-year-old from Chicago visiting relatives in Mississippi

His mother’s decision to have an open casket galvanized the country

Early 20th century biological theories of race: black men said to be “hyperpotent”

Pascoe: in River High white boys are female to black boys

The male Other seen to be *either* effeminate or hypersexual

Nagel gives example of native in colonial India as weak, effeminate

“Hyperpotent” a symbol of native cheek, subversion (too close)

Lynchings seldom were the result of actual incidences of rape, but arose in part out of anxieties about “Black peril”

Also, lynchings seen as a deterrent: to “keep them in their place” (too close)

Durkheim’s analysis of the functions of crime fits here

Fantasies about black women

“Of course” they were most attracted to white men

And, like the men, “hypersexual”

Nagel’s discussion of early Africa explorers; this theme goes back to Herodotus and before

Even after emancipation black women still weren’t seen as capable of being raped

Also projection was probably operating in some cases—unacceptable impulses

Perhaps helps explain some of the thousands of lynchings after emancipation:

If we desire their women, then our women desire them

Unacceptable, so need to maintain tight boundaries and project all agency onto black males

Classic answer to any arguments for equality between the races is sexualized:

Would you want your daughter to marry one? (too close)

The infamous Tuskegee study, which “othered” 400 rural black male tenant sharecroppers in Macon County, Alabama

In the 1920s became subjects in a US Public Health Service study

Not informed they had been switched from status as patient to experimental subject

But continued to be told they were being treated for “bad blood”

Yearly check-ups, given placebos (dummy pills)

If they tried to get treatment they were hunted down and sent back to Macon County

Exempted from the draft (where they would be treated) during WWII

Their syphilis left untreated 1932-1970s

Even though treatment options were available, especially after penicillin appeared

The study was not hidden—over 30 articles about “untreated syphilis in the Negro male”

Presented to US Congress

Justifications

The disease originally thought to be different among African Americans

Wanted to see if this was true

In this sense, researchers were liberal: wanted to demonstrate that it wasn't

Their loose morals created a danger to white population (“germs make no distinction between skin colors”)

Doing this they can help the black community

Woman as the Sexualized Other

Woman as sexual temptress, powerful, general theme

Theme of rape as woman's responsibility...so powerful as to overwhelm the strongest man...white men's vulnerability

Pascoe: black women hypersexualized

Theme of Beauty concealing danger (actually an ugly wicked witch)

The dangerous "other" woman gets too close

Between and between is worrisome, divided loyalties, betrayer

La Malinche legend in Mexico

Movie: "How Tasty Was My Frenchman"² and other "Wild Woman" themes

"Sleeping with the enemy" a frequent theme

Infamous Mata Hari (1876-1917): exotic dancer and alleged spy

Margaretha Geertruida Zelle, Dutch

Took a Malay name, allegedly spied for the Germans, and was executed by the French

Stage name means sun, literally "eye of the day," from Malay mata (eye) + hari (day, dawn)

Nagel mentions punishments like that doled out to the shorn women in WWII France

Reminds everyone in the nation, not just those labeled "deviant," about the presence and power of national boundaries

"Our women" becoming the sexualized "other":

Miscegenation laws during slavery "manifested an intense concern with controlling the sexual behavior of white women..."³

E.g. if a freeborn Englishwoman intermarried with a Negro slave

² Pereira dos Santos, Nelson, 1971. "Como era gostoso o meu francês" ("How Tasty Was My Frenchman").

³ Nagel, p. 106 citing Peter Bardaglio.

She was to serve her husband's master until the slave died

She was reclassified as black

Actually this is a very general process

Wife always takes on husband's status

The New World as female is a familiar image

William Blake's famous etching of "Europe Supported by Africa and America"

A dusky, seductive, beautiful young woman ready for the taking (often in a languorous pose)

Theodore Galle's "Vespucci 'Discovering' America"

Where America is depicted as a naked indigenous woman in a hammock (illustrated in Nagel)

Also texts like Sir Walter Raleigh's famous characterization of Guyana as "a Countrey that hath yet her Maydenhead"⁴

Clothing, work, children or native men are nowhere to be seen

Amazonian women also represent the mysterious jungle and Nature herself

The native woman in "How Tasty Was My Frenchman"

Amazons

Symbolize the Amazon forest, unknown terra incognita, challenging, powerful, dangerous, wild

Strong and independent women warriors of myth and explorer accounts

Independence from men

Additional attributes that also signal power and authority

Such as physical height, and, occasionally, relative whiteness of skin⁵

⁴ Slater, Candace, 2002. *Entangled Edens: Visions of the Amazon*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 34.

⁵ Slater 2002, p. 89.

Sexualized

Warriors, cut off one breast to be better archers

Reject heteronormativity, reject femininity

Use men only for conception

Or, if not renunciation, they indulge in a variety of sexual perversions

That invariably challenge European notions of patriarchal authority

Sexualized nationalism

Man as Nation

DISCUSS: virile, fertile; nationalism is masculine

Sexualized Woman as nation

Repository of nationhood **DISCUSS**

Women represent “us,” our traditions

Algerian resistance, many women fought, afterwards had to return to the kitchen, veil

Franz Fanon, Algerian revolution, authored *Wretched of the Earth*

French colonialism represented ripping the veil off (symbolic rape)

Independence required its restoration

Rape theme a frequent tool of nationalism

Nagel: threat of, by Jews, blacks

And of war

Notion of mother/wife/woman as at the heart of the nation

National, imperial and racial duty to produce and rear children

Teach the next generation to be “us”

Nazi doctrine

We find this theme in many places

1960s and 1970s Black Panther movement

Women should stay home and raise the next generation of warriors

Sexual orientation and “othering,” heteronormativity

Parallels with colonialism, slavery

“Othering” the “other” via sexuality

Fag discourse:

One way to respond to “fag” being hurled at you is to answer, as Josh did (p. 61)

“I have a bigger dick than all you motherfuckers”

Assert a commensality between masculine body and masculine identity

This suggests possibilities that they may be uncoupled

As Pascoe indicates, “fag discourse” is a fluid identity

Pascoe: Rebecca says she’s a pimp, not a ho (p. 128)

Heteronormative male loathing of homosexuality is absent for lesbianism

Eroticizing women’s bodies: no matter if they’re lesbians and unavailable, still available for consumption, fantasies

Pascoe’s interviewee said “girls are pretty, their skin is soft,” not so for hairy, stinky men

Pascoe (and Adrienne Rich) says eroticizing them makes them non-threatening, harmless to the sex/gender order

Also, lesbians are correctly imitating the powerful (even though they’re not supposed to), and homosexual men are seen as rejecting it

Lesbians are outside of heterosexuality and its games, rituals, anxieties—they can’t be “got at,” can’t be used in boys’ masculinizing projects

Gendered/Sexualized Criminal Bodies

Excerpts from Cesare Lombroso (and William Ferrero): *The Female Offender*. 1897. New York: D. Appleton and Co.

Very differently from how Lombroso classified men

In part because women commit different kinds of crimes to some degree: prostitutes vs. “normal” women, “infanticides”

He discovered more “virile physiognomy” (p. 80) “The French women...are infinitely more typical and uglier, and here I would remark that the more refined a nation is, the further do its criminals differ from the average (Russia...less striking [the depraved type])...masculine aspect” (p. 95) “exaggerated frontal angle, such as one notes in savages and monkeys” (p. 95) “masculine physiognomy (p. 96) “hips and breasts so rudimentary...she consequently looked so masculine (p. 96) “virile physiognomy...thus softening the masculine and savage features” (p. 97) “virility of aspect” (p. 99)

Women prostitutes had the “*beauté du diable*...[which] disguises and conceals the betraying anomalies.” (p. 101) “but even the handsomest female offenders have invariably strong jaws and cheek-bones and a masculine aspect” (p. 102)

“...sexual selection. Man not only refused to marry a deformed female, but he ate her...” (p. 109)

“The primitive woman was rarely a murderess; but she was always a prostitute...” (p. 111)

“...and in order to understand the significance and the atavistic origin of this anomaly, we have only to remember that virility was one of the special features of the savage women [*sic*]” (p. 112)

“Examples of this masculine strength may still be found among women in country districts of Italy, and especially in the islands” (p. 113)

Her normal sister “is kept in the paths of virtue by...maternity, piety, weakness” (p. 152)

“want of maternal affection” (p. 152) “exaggerated sexuality so opposed to maternity...In the ordinary run of mothers the sexual instinct is in abeyance...” (p. 153)

“...atavistic diminution of secondary sexual characters...excessively erotic, weak in maternal feeling...virile characteristics...” (p. 187)

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