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Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives

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Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat, editors (for the Social Text Collective)



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Making Empire Respectable:
The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality
in Twentieth-Century Colonial Cultures
Ann Laura Stoler

The shift away from viewing colonial elites as homogeneous communities of common interest marks an important trajectory in the anthropology of empire, signaling a major rethinking of gender relations within it. More recent attention to the internal tensions of colonial enterprises has placed new emphasis on the quotidian assertion of European dominance in the colonies, on imperial interventions in domestic life, and thus on the cultural prescriptions by which European women and men lived (Callan and Ardener 1984: Knibiehler and Goutalier 1985; Reijs et al. 1986: Callaway 1987: Strobel 1987). Having focused on how colonizers have viewed the indigenous other, we are beginning to sort out how Europeans in the colonies imagined themselves and constructed communities built on asymmetries of race, class, and gender — entities significantly at odds with the European models on which they were drawn.

These feminist attempts to engage the gender politics of Dutch. French, and British imperial cultures converge on some strikingly similar observations: namely, that European women in these colonies experienced the cleavages of racial dominance and internal social distinctions very differently than men precisely because of their ambiguous positions, as both subordinates in colonial hierarchies and as active agents of imperial culture in their own right. Concomitantly, the majority of European women who left for the colonies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries confronted profoundly rigid restrictions on their domestic, economic, and political options, more limiting than those of metropolitan Europe at the time and sharply contrasting with the opportunities open to colonial men.

In one form or another these studies raise a basic question: In what ways were gender inequalities essential to the structure of colonial racism and imperial authority? Was the strident misogyny of imperial thinkers and colonial agents a byproduct of received metropolitan values ("they just brought it with them"), a reaction to contemporary feminist demands in Europe ("women need to be put back in their breeding place"), or a novel and pragmatic response to the conditions of conquest? Was the assertion of European supremacy in terms of patriotic manhood and racial virility an expression of imperial domination or a defining feature of it?

In this essay I examine some of the ways in which colonial authority and racial distinctions were fundamentally structured in gendered terms. I look specifically at

how the administrative and medical discourse and management of European sexual activity, reproduction, and marriage related to the racial politics of colonial rule. Focusing on French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies in the early twentieth century. but drawing on other contexts. I suggest that the very categories of "colonizer" and "colonized" were secured through forms of sexual control that defined the domestic arrangements of Europeans and the cultural investments by which they identified themselves.1 Gender-specific sexual sanctions demarcated positions of power by refashioning middle-class conventions of respectability, which, in turn, prescribed the personal and public boundaries of race.

Colonial authority was constructed on two powerful, but false, premises. The first was the notion that Europeans in the colonies made up an easily identifiable and discrete biological and social entity - a "natural" community of common class interests, racial attributes, political affinities, and superior culture. The second was the related notion that the boundaries separating colonizer from colonized were thus self-evident and easily drawn (Stoler 1989). Neither premise reflected colonial realities (see, e.g., Cooper 1980; Drooglever 1980; Ridley 1983; Prochaska 1989). Internal divisions developed out of conflicting economic and political agendas, frictions over appropriate methods for safeguarding European privilege and power, and competing criteria for reproducing a colonial elite and for restricting its membership.

The latter, the colonial politics of exclusion, was contingent on constructing caregories: legal and social classifications designating who was "white," who was "native," who could become a citizen rather than a subject, which children were legitimate progeny and which were not. What mattered were not only one's physical properties but who counted as "European" and by what measure.2 Skin shade was too ambiguous; bank accounts were mercurial: religious belief and education were crucial but never enough. Social and legal standing derived not only from color but from the silences, acknowledgments, and denials of the social circumstances in which one's parents had sex (Martínez-Alier 1974; Ming 1983; Taylor 1983). Sexual unions in the context of concubinage, domestic service, prostitution, or church marriage derived from the hierarchies of rule; but these were negotiated and contested arrangements, bearing on individual fates and the very structure of colonial society. Ultimately inclusion or exclusion required regulating the sexual, conjugal, and domestic life of both Europeans in the colonies and their colonized subjects.

Colonial observers and participants in the imperial enterprise appear to have had unlimited interest in the sexual interface of the colonial encounter (Malleret 1934:216; Pujarniscle 1931:106; Loutfi 1971:36). Probably no subject is discussed more than sex in colonial literature and no subject more frequently invoked to foster the racist stereotypes of European society. The tropics provided a site of European pornographic fantasies long before conquest was underway, but with a sustained European presence in colonized territories, sexual prescriptions by class, race, and gender became increasingly central to the politics of rule and subject to new forms of scrutiny by colonial states (Loutfi 1971; Gilman 1985:79).³

While anthropologists have attended to how European, and particularly Victorian. sexual mores affected indigenous gendered patterns of economic activity, political participation, and social knowledge, less attention has been paid to the ways in which sexual control affected the very nature of colonial relations themselves

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and racial cifically at (Tiffany and Adams 1985). In colonial scholarship more generally, sexual domination has figured as a social metaphor of European supremacy. Thus, in Edward Said's treatment of Orientalist discourse, the sexual submission and possession of Oriental women by European men "stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West" (1979:6). In this "male power-fantasy," the Orient is penetrated, silenced, and possessed (ibid.:207). Sexuality illustrates the iconography of rule, not its pragmatics; sexual asymmetries are tropes to depict other centers of power.

Such a treatment begs some basic questions. Was sexuality merely a graphic substantiation of who was, so to speak, on the top? Was the medium the message, or did sexual relations always "mean" something else, stand in for other relations, evoke the sense of *other* (pecuniary, political, or some possibly more subliminal) desires? This analytic slippage between the sexual symbols of power and the politics of sex runs throughout the colonial record and contemporary commentaries upon it. Certainly some of this is due to the polyvalent quality of sexuality, which is symbolically rich and socially salient at the same time. But sexual control was more than a "social enactment" — much less a convenient metaphor — for colonial domination (Jordan 1968:141); it was, as I argue here, a fundamental class and racial marker implicated in a wider set of relations of power (Ballhatchet 1980).

The relationship between gender prescriptions and racial boundaries still remains unevenly unexplored. While we know that European women of different classes experienced the colonial venture very differently from one another and from men, we still know relatively little about the distinct investments they had in a racism they shared (Van Helten and Williams 1983; Knibiehler and Goutalier 1985; Callaway 1987). New feminist scholarship has begun to sort out the unique colonial experience of European women as they were incorporated into and resisted and affected the politics of their men. But the emphasis has tended to be on the broader issue of gender subordination and colonial authority, not more specifically on how sexual control figured in the construction of racial boundaries per se.⁴

The linkage between sexual control and racial tensions is both obvious and elusive at the same time. While sexual fear may at base be a racial anxiety, we are still left to understand why such anxieties are expressed through sexuality (Takaki 19⁻¹). If, as Sander Gilman (1985) claims, sexuality is the most salient marker of otherness, organically representing racial difference, then we should not be surprised that colonial agents and colonized subjects expressed their contests — and vulnerabilities — in these terms.

An overlapping set of discourses has provided the psychological and economic underpinnings for colonial distinctions of difference, linking fears of sexual contamination, physical danger, climatic incompatibility, and moral breakdown to a European colonial identity with a racist and class-specific core. Colonial scientific reports and the popular press are laced with statements and queries varying on a common theme: "native women bear contagions": "white women become sterile in the tropics": "colonial men are susceptible to physical, mental and moral degeneration when they remain in their colonial posts too long." To what degree are these statements medically or politically grounded? We need to unpack what is metaphor, what is perceived as dangerous (is it disease, culture, climate, or sex?), and what is not.

In the sections that follow I look at the relationship between the domestic arrangements of colonial communities and their wider political structures. The first part examines the colonial debates over European family formation and over the relationship between subversion and sex in an effort to trace how evaluations of concubinage, morality, and white prestige more generally were altered by new tensions within colonial cultures and by new challenges to imperial rule.

The second part examines what I call the "cultural hygiene" of colonialism. Focusing on the early twentieth century as a break point. I take up the convergent metropolitan and colonial discourses on health hazards in the tropics, race-thinking, and social reform as they related to shifts in the rationalization of colonial management. In tracing how fears of "racial degeneracy" were grounded in class-specific sexual norms. I return to how and why biological and cultural distinctions were defined in gender terms.

The Domestic Politics of Colonialism: Concubinage and the Restricted Entry of European Women

The regulation of sexual relations was central to the development of particular kinds of colonial settlements and to the allocation of economic activity within them. Who bedded and wedded with whom in the colonies of France, England, Holland, and Iberia was never left to chance. Unions between Annamite women and French men. between Javanese women and Dutch men, between Spanish men and Inca women produced offspring with claims to privilege, whose rights and status had to be determined and prescribed. From the early seventeenth century through the twentieth century, the sexual sanctions and conjugal prohibitions of colonial agents were rigorously debated and carefully codified. In these debates over matrimony and morality, trading and plantation company officials, missionaries, investment bankers, military high commands, and agents of the colonial state confronted one another's visions of empire and the settlement patterns on which it would rest.

In 1622 the Dutch East Indies Company arranged for the transport of six poor but marriageable young Dutch women to Java, providing them with clothing, a dowry upon marriage, and a contract binding them to five years in the Indies (Tavfor 1983:12). Aside from this and one other short-lived experiment, immigration of European women to the East Indies was consciously restricted for the next two hundred years. Enforcing the restriction by selecting bachelors as their European recruits, the company legally and financially made concubinage the most attractive domestic option for its employees (Blussé 1986:173; Ming 1983:69; Taylor 1983:16).

It was not only the Dutch East Indies Company that had profited from such arrangements. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, salaries of European recruits to the colonial armies, bureaucracies, plantation companies, and trading enterprises were kept artificially low because local women provided domestic services for which new European recruits would otherwise have had to pay. In the mid-1800s, such arrangements were de rigueur for young civil servants intent on setting ^{up} households on their own (Ritter 1856:21). Despite some clerical opposition, at

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economic xual con-OWN to a scientific ving on a sterile in degeneraare these metaphor. and what the end of the century concubinage was the most prevalent living arrangement for European colonials in the Indies (Ming 1983:70, Taylor 1983:16: van Marle 1952:486).

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Referred to as *nyai* in Java and Sumatra, *congai* in Indochina, and *petite épouse* throughout the French empire, the colonized woman living as a concubine to a European man formed the dominant domestic arrangement in colonial cultures through the early twentieth century. Unlike prostitution, which could and often did result in a population of syphilitic and therefore nonproductive European men. concubinage was considered to have a stabilizing effect on political order and colonial health—a relationship that kept men in their barracks and bungalows, out of brothels and less inclined to perverse liaisons with one another.

In Asia and Africa, corporate and government decision makers invoked the social services that local women supplied as "useful guides to the language and other mysteries of the local societies" (Malleret 1934:216; Cohen 1971:122). Handbooks for incoming plantation employees bound for Tonkin, Sumatra, and Malaya urged men to find local "companions" as a prerequisite for quick acclimatization, as insulation from the ill-health that sexual abstention, isolation, and boredom were thought to bring (Butcher 1979:200, 202; Hesselink 1987:208; Braconier 1933:922; Dixon 1913:77). Although British and Dutch colonial governments officially banned concubinage in the early twentieth century, such measures were only selectively enforced. It remained tacitly condoned and practiced long after (Hyam 1986a; Callaway 1987:49). In Sumatra's plantation belt, newly opened in the late nineteenth century, for example, Javanese and Japanese *buishoudsters* (householders) remained the rule rather than the exception through the 1920s (Clerkx 1961:87–93; Stoler 1985a;31–34; Lucas 1986:84).

"Concubinage" was a contemporary term that referred to the cohabitation outside of marriage between European men and Asian women: in fact, it glossed a wide range of arrangements that included sexual access to a non-European woman as well as demands on her labor and legal rights to the children she bore (Pollmann 1986:100; Lucas 1986:86). Native women (like European women in a later period) were to keep men physically and psychologically fit for work and marginally content, not distracting or urging them out of line, imposing neither the time-consuming nor the financial responsibilities that European family life was thought to demand (Chivas-Baron 1929:103).

To say that concubinage reinforced the hierarchies on which colonial societies were based is not to say that it did not make those distinctions more problematic at the same time. Grossly uneven sex ratios on North Sumatran estates made for intense competition among male workers and their European supervisors, with *vrottwen perkara* (disputes over women) resulting in assaults on whites, new labor tensions, and dangerous incursions into the standards deemed essential for white prestige (Stoler 1985a:33: Lucas 1986:90–91). In the Netherlands Indies more generally, an unaccounted number of impoverished Indo-European women moving between prostitution and concubinage further disturbed the racial sensibilities of the Dutch-born elite (Hesselink 1987:216). Metropolitan critics were particularly disdainful of such domestic arrangements on moral grounds — all the more so when these unions were sustained and personally significant relationships, thereby contradicting the racial premise of concubinage as an emotionally unfettered convenience. But

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perhaps most important, the tension between concubinage as a confirmation and compromise of racial hierarchy was realized in the progeny that it produced: "mixedbloods," poor "indos," and abandoned métis children who straddled the divisions of ruler and ruled threatened to blur the colonial divide.

Nevertheless, colonial governments and private business tolerated concubinage and actively encouraged it - principally by restricting the emigration of European women to the colonies and by refusing employment to married male European recruits. Although many accounts suggest that European women chose to avoid early pioneering ventures, and this must have been true in some cases, the choice was more often not their own (see Fredrickson 1981:109). Nor were the restrictions on marriage and women's emigration lifted as each colony became politically stable. medically upgraded, and economically secure, as it is often claimed. Conjugal constraints lasted well into the twentieth century, long after rough living and a scarcity of amenities had become conditions of the past. In the Indies army, marriage was a privilege of the officer corps while barrack concubinage was instituted and regulated for the rank and file. In the twentieth century, formal and informal prohibitions set by banks, estates, and government services operating in Africa. India, and Southeast Asia restricted marriage during the first three to five years of service, while some prohibited it altogether (Moore-Gilbert 1986:48; Woodcock 1969:164; Tirefort 1979:134; Gann and Duignan 1978:240).

European demographics in the colonies were shaped by these economic and political exigencies and thus were sharply skewed by sex. Among the laboring immigrant and native populations as well as among Europeans, the number of men exceeded that of women by two to twenty-five times. While in the Netherlands Indies, the overall ratio of European women to men rose from forty-seven per one hundred to eighty-eight per one hundred between 1900 and 1930, on Sumatra's plantation belt in 1920 there were still only sixty-one European women per one hundred European men (Taylor 1983:128; Koloniale Verslag, quoted in Lucas 1986:82). In Tonkin, European men (totaling more than fourteen thousand) sharply outnumbered European women (just over three thousand) as late as 1931 (Gantes 1981:138). What is important here is that by controlling the availability of European women and the sorts of sexual access condoned, state and corporate authorities controlled the very social geography of the colonies, fixing the conditions under which European populations and privileges could be reproduced.

The marriage prohibition was both a political and an economic issue, defining the social contours of colonial communities and the standards of living within them. But, as significantly, it revealed how deeply the conduct of private life and the sexual proclivities that individuals expressed were tied to corporate profits and to the security of the colonial state. Nowhere were the incursions on domestic life more openly contested than in North Sumatra in the early 1900s. It was thought that unseemly domestic arrangements could encourage subversion as strongly as acceptable unions could avert it. Family stability and sexual "normalcy" were thus linked to political agitation or quiescence in very concrete ways.

Since the late nineteenth century, the major North Sumatran tobacco and rubber companies had neither accepted married applicants nor allowed them to take wives while in service (Schoevers 1913:38; Clerkx 1961:31-34). Company authorities argued that new employees with families in tow would be a financial burden, risking the emergence of a "European proletariat" and thus a major threat to white prestige (Kroniek 1917:50; *Sumatra Post* 1913). Low-ranking plantation employees protested against these company marriage restrictions, an issue that mobilized their ranks behind a broad set of demands (Stoler 1989:144). Under employee pressure, the prohibition was relaxed to a marriage ban for the first five years of service. This restriction, however, was never placed on everyone; it was pegged to salaries and dependent on the services of local women, which kept the living costs and wages of subordinate and incoming staff artificially low.

Domestic arrangements thus varied as government officials and private businesses weighed the economic versus political costs of one arrangement over another, but such calculations were invariably meshed. Europeans in high office saw white prestige and profits as inextricably linked, and attitudes toward concubinage reflected that concern (Brownfoot 1984:191). Thus in Malaya through the 1920s, concubinage was tolerated precisely because "poor whites" were not. Government and estate administrators argued that white prestige would be imperiled if European men became impoverished in attempting to maintain middle-class lifestyles and European wives (Butcher 1979:26). In late nineteenth-century Java, in contrast, concubinage itself was considered to be a major source of white pauperism; in the early 1900s it was vigorously condemned at precisely the same time that a new colonial morality passively condoned illegal brothels (Het Pauperisme Commissie 1901; Nieuwenhuys 1959:20–23; Hesselink 1987:208).

What explains such a difference? At least part of the answer must be sought in the effects concubinage was seen to have on European cultural identity and on the concerns for the community consensus on which it rests. Concubinage "worked" as long as the supremacy of Homo Europeaus was clear. When it was thought to be in jeopardy, vulnerable, or less than convincing, as in the 1920s in Sumatra, colonial elites responded by clarifying the cultural criteria of privilege and the moral premises of their unity. Concubinage was replaced by more restricted sexual access in the politically safe (but medically unsatisfactory) context of prostitution and, where possible, in the more desirable setting of marriage between "full-blooded" Europeans (Taylor 1977:29). As we shall see in other colonial contexts, such shifts in policy and practice often coincided with an affirmation of social hierarchies and racial divisions in less ambiguous terms.8 Thus, it was not only morality that vacillated but the very definition of white prestige - and what its defense should entail. What upheld that prestige was not a constant; concubinage was socially lauded at one time and seen as a political menace at another. Appeals to white prestige were a gloss for different intensities of racist practice, were gender-specific and culturally coded.

Thus far I have treated colonial communities as a generic category despite the sharp demographic, social, and political distinctions *among* them. North Sumatra's European-oriented, overwhelmingly male colonial population, for example, contrasted sharply with the more sexually balanced mestizo culture that emerged in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century colonial Java." Such demographic variation, however, was not the "bedrock" of social relations (Jordan 1968.141); sex ratios derived from specific strategies of social engineering and were thus political responses in themselves. While recognizing that these demographic differences and the social

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despite the h Sumatra's .mple, conemerged in c variation, ex ratios deil responses d the social configurations to which they gave rise still need to be explained. I have chosen here to trace some of the common politically gendered issues that a range of colonial societies shared — that is, some of the similar (and counterintuitive) ways in which the positioning of European women facilitated racial distinctions and new efforts to modernize colonial control.10

Racist but Moral Women: Innocent but Immoral Men

Perhaps nothing is as striking in the sociological accounts of colonial communities as the extraordinary changes that are said to accompany the entry of Europeanborn women. These adjustments shifted in one direction: toward European lifestyles accentuating the refinements of privilege and the etiquettes of racial difference. Most accounts agree that the presence of these women put new demands on the white communities to tighten their ranks, clarify their boundaries, and mark out their social space. The material culture of French settlements in Saigon, outposts in New Guinea, and estate complexes in Sumatra was retailored to accommodate the physical and moral requirements of a middle-class and respectable feminine contingent (Malleret 1934; Gordon and Meggitt 1985; Stoler 1989). Housing structures in Indochina were partitioned: residential compounds in the Solomon Islands were enclosed; servant relations in Hawaii were formalized; dress codes in Java were altered; food and social taboos in Rhodesia and the Ivory Coast became more strict. Taken together, the changes encouraged new kinds of consumption and new social services catering to these new demands (Boutilier 1984; Spear 1963; Woodcock 1969; Cohen 1971).

The arrival of large numbers of European women thus coincided with an embourgeoisement of colonial communities and with a significant sharpening of racial lines. European women supposedly required more metropolitan amenities than men and more spacious surroundings to allow it: their more delicate sensibilities required more servants and thus suitable quarters - discrete and enclosed. In short, white women needed to be maintained at elevated standards of living, in insulated social spaces cushioned with the cultural artifacts of "being European." Whether women or men set these new standards is left unclear. Who exhibited "overconcern" and a "need for" segregation (Beidelman 1982:13)? Male doctors advised French women in Indochina to have their homes built with separate domestic and kitchen quarters (Grall 1908:74). Segregationist standards were what women "deserved" and more importantly were what white male prestige required that they maintain.

Colonial rhetoric on white women was riddled with contradictions. At the same time that new female immigrants were chided for not respecting the racial distance of local convention, an equal number of colonial observers accused these women of being more avid racists in their own right (Spear 1963; Nora 1961). Allegedly insecure and jealous of the sexual liaisons of European men with native women. bound to their provincial visions and cultural norms. European women in Algeria, the Indies, Madagascar. India, and West Africa were uniformly charged with constructing the major cleavages on which colonial stratification rested (Spear 1963:140: Nora 1961:174; Mannoni 1964:115: Gunn and Duignan 1978:242: Kennedy 1947:164: Nandy 1983:9).

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What is most startling here is that women, otherwise marginal actors on the colonial stage, are charged with dramatically reshaping the face of colonial society, imposing their racial will on African and Asian colonies where "an iron curtain of ignorance" replaced "relatively unrestrained social intermingling" in earlier years (Vere Allen 1970:169; Cohen 1971:122). European women were not only the bearers of racist beliefs but hard-line operatives who put them into practice, encouraging class distinctions among whites while fostering new racial antagonisms, no longer muted by sexual access (Vere Allen 1970:168). Are we to believe that sexual intimacy with European men yielded social mobility and political rights for colonized women? Or, even less likely, that because British civil servants bedded with Indian women, somehow Indian men had more "in common" with British men and enjoyed more parity? Colonized women could sometimes parlay their positions into personal profit and small rewards, but these were *individual* negotiations with no social, legal, or cumulative claims.

Male colonizers positioned European women as the bearers of a redefined colonial morality. But to suggest that women fashioned this racism out of whole cloth is to miss the political chronology in which new intensities of racist practice arose. In the African and Asian contexts already mentioned, the arrival of large numbers of European wives, and particularly the fear for their protection, followed from new terms and tensions in the colonial encounter. The presence and protection of European women were repeatedly invoked to clarify racial lines. Their presence coincided with perceived threats to European prestige (Brownfoot 1984:191), increased racial conflict (Strobel 1987:378), covert challenges to the colonial order, outright expressions of nationalist resistance, and internal dissension among whites themselves (Stoler 1989:147).

If white women were the primary force behind the decline of concubinage, as is often claimed, then they played this role as participants in a broader racial realignment and political plan (Knibiehler and Goutalier 1985;76). This is not to suggest that European women were passive in this process, as the dominant themes in their novels attest (Taylor 1977;27). Many European women did oppose concubinage not because of their inherent jealousy of native women but, as they argued, because of the double standard it condoned for European men (Clerkx 1961, Lucas 1986;94–95). The voices of European women, however, had little resonance until their objections coincided with a realignment in racial and class politics.

Dealing with Transgressions: Policing the Peril

The gender-specific requirements for colonial living, referred to above, were constructed on heavily racist evaluations that pivoted on the heightened sexuality of colonized men (Tiffany and Adams 1985). Although European women were absent from men's sexual reveries in colonial literature, men of color were considered to see them as desired and seductive figures. European women needed protection because men of color had "primitive" sexual urges and uncontrollable lust, aroused by the sight of white women (Strobel 1987:379; Schmidt 1987:411). In some colonies, that sexual threat was latent; in others, it was given a specific name.

In southern Rhodesia and Kenya in the 1920s and 1930s, preoccupations with the

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"black peril" (referring to the professed dangers of sexual assault on white women by black men) gave rise to the creation of citizens' militias, ladies' riflery clubs, and investigations as to whether African female domestic servants would not be safer to employ than men (Kirkwood 1984:158; Schmidt 1987:412; D. Kennedy 1987:128-147). In New Guinea, the White Women's Protection Ordinance of 1926 provided "the death penalty for any person convicted for the crime of rape or attempted rape upon a European woman or girl" (Inglis 1975:vi). And as late as 1934, Solomon Islands authorities introduced public flogging as punishment for "criminal assaults on [white] females" (Boutilier 1984:197).

What do these cases have in common? First, the rhetoric of sexual assault and the measures used to prevent it had virtually no correlation with the incidence of rape of European women by men of color. Just the contrary: there was often no evidence, ex post facto or at the time, that rapes were committed or that rape attempts were made (Schmidt 1987; Inglis 1975, Kirkwood 1984; D. Kennedy 1987; Boutilier 1984). This is not to suggest that sexual assaults never occurred, but that their incidence had little to do with the fluctuations in anxiety about them. Second, the rape laws were racespecific; sexual abuse of black women was not classified as rape and therefore was not legally actionable, nor did rapes committed by white men lead to prosecution (Mason 1958:246-47). If these accusations of sexual threat were not prompted by the fact of rape, what did they signal and to what were they tied?

Allusions to political and sexual subversion of the colonial system went hand in hand. Concern over protection of white women intensified during real and perceived crises of control - provoked by threats to the internal cohesion of the European communities or by infringements on their borders. While the chronologies differ, we can identify a patterned sequence of events in which Papuan, Algerian, and South African men heightened their demands for civil rights and refused the constraints imposed upon their education, movements, or dress (Inglis 1975:8, 11: Sivan 1983:178). Rape charges were thus based on perceived transgressions of political and social space. "Attempted rapes" turned out to be "incidents" of a Papuan man "discovered" in the vicinity of a white residence, a Fijian man who entered a European patient's room, a male servant poised at the bedroom door of a European woman asleep or in half-dress (Boutilier 1984:197; Inglis 1975:11: Schmidt 1987:413). With such a broad definition of danger, all colonized men of color were potential aggressors.

Accusations of sexual assault frequently followed upon heightened tensions within European communities - and renewed efforts to find consensus within them. In South Africa and Rhodesia, the relationship between reports of sexual assault and strikes among white miners and railway workers is well documented (van Onselen 1982:51; D. Kennedy 1987:138). Similarly, in the late 1920s, when labor protests by Indonesian workers and European employees were most intense. Sumatra's corporate elite expanded their vigilante organizations, intelligence networks, and demands for police protection to ensure their women were safe and their workers "in hand" (Stoler 1985b). In this particular context where the European community had been blatantly divided between low-ranking estate employees and the company elite, common interests were emphasized and domestic situations were rearranged.

In Sumatra's plantation belt, subsidized sponsorship of married couples replaced the recruitment of single Indonesian workers and European staff, with new incentives provided for family formation in both groups. This recomposed labor force of family men in "stable households" explicitly weeded out the politically malcontent. With the marriage restriction finally lifted for European staff in the 1920s, young men sought marriages with Dutch women. Higher salaries, upgraded housing, elevated bonuses, and a more mediated chain of command between colonized fieldworker and colonial managers clarified economic and political interests. With this shift, the vocal opposition to corporate and government directives, sustained by an independent union of European subordinates for nearly two decades, was effectively dissolved (Stoler 1989:152–153).

The remedies intended to alleviate sexual danger embraced a common set of prescriptions for securing white control: increased surveillance of native men, new laws stipulating severe corporal punishment for the transgression of sexual and social boundaries, and the creation of areas made racially off limits. This moral rearmament of the European community and reassertion of its cultural identity charged European women with guarding new norms. While instrumental in promoting white solidarity, it was partly at their own expense. As we shall see, they were nearly as closely surveilled as colonized men (Strobel 1987).

While native men were legally punished for alleged sexual assaults, European women were frequently blamed for provoking those desires. New arrivals from Europe were accused of being too familiar with their servants, lax in their commands, indecorous in speech and dress (Vellut 1982:100: D. Kennedy 1987:141: Schmidt 1987:413). The Rhodesian Immorality Act of 1916 "made it an offence for a white woman to make an indecent suggestion to a male native" (Mason 1958:247). In Papua New Guinea, "everyone" in the Australian community agreed that rape assaults were caused by a "younger generation of white women" who simply did not know how to treat servants (Inglis 1975:80). In Rhodesia as in Uganda, women were restricted to activities within the European enclaves and dissuaded from taking up farming on their own (Gartrell 1984:169: D. Kennedy 1987:141). As in the American South, "etiquettes of chivalry controlled white women's behavior even as [it] guarded caste lines" (Dowd Hall 1984:64). A defense of community, morality, and white male power affirmed the vulnerability of white women and the sexual threat posed by native men and created new sanctions to limit the liberties of both.

Although European colonial communities in the early twentieth century assiduously monitored the movements of European women, some European women did work. French women in the settler communities of Algeria and Senegal ran farms, rooming houses, and shops along with their men (Baroli 1967:159; O'Brien 1972). Elsewhere, married European women "supplemented" their husbands' incomes, helping to maintain the "white standard" (Tirefort 1979; Mercier 1965:292). Women were posted throughout the colonial empires as missionaries, nurses, and teachers; while some women openly questioned the sexist policies of their male superiors, by and large their tasks buttressed rather than contested the established cultural order (Knibiehler and Goutalier 1985; Callaway 1987:111).

French feminists urged women with skills (and a desire for marriage) to settle in Indochina at the turn of the century, but colonial administrators were adamantly

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against their immigration. Not only was there a surfeit of widows without resources, but European seamstresses, florists, and children's outfitters could not compete with the cheap and skilled labor provided by well-established Chinese firms (Corneau 1900:10, 12). In Tonkin in the 1930s there was still "little room for single women. be they unmarried, widowed or divorced"; most were shipped out of the colony at the government's charge (Gantes 1981:45).13 Firmly rejecting expansion based on "poor white" (petit blanc) settlement as in Algeria, French officials in Indochina dissuaded colons with insufficient capital from entry and promptly repatriated those who tried to remain. 14 Single women were seen as the quintessential petit blanc. with limited resources and shopkeeper aspirations. Moreover, they presented the dangerous possibility that straitened circumstances would lead them to prostitution. thereby degrading European prestige at large.

In the Dutch East Indies, state officials identified European widows; as one of the most economically vulnerable and impoverished segments of the European community (Het Pauperisme Commissie 1901:28). Professional competence did not leave European women immune from marginalization. Single professional women were held in contempt as were European prostitutes, with surprisingly similar objections. 15 The important point is that numerous categories of women fell outside the social space to which European colonial women were assigned - namely, as custodians of family welfare and respectability and as dedicated and willing subordinates to. and supporters of, colonial men. The rigor with which these norms were applied becomes more comprehensible when we see how a European family life and bourgeois respectability became increasingly tied to notions of racial survival, imperial patriotism, and the political strategies of the colonial state.

White Degeneracy. Motherhood, and the Eugenics of Empire

de-gen-er-ate adj. [L. degeneratus. pp. of degenerare, to become unlike one's race, degenerate < degener, not genuine, base < de-, from + genus, race, kind; see genus]. 1. baving sunk below a former or normal condition, character, etc.; deteriorated 2 morally corrupt, depraved — n. a degenerate person, esp. one who is morally depraced or sexually percerted — vi -at' ed. -at' ing... 2. to decline or become debased morally, culturally, etc....3. Biol. to undergo degeneration: deteriorate

Webster's New World Dictionary

European women were essential to the colonial enterprise and the solidification of racial boundaries in ways that repeatedly tied their supportive and subordinate posture to community cohesion and colonial peace. These features of their positioning within imperial politics were powerfully reinforced at the turn of the century by a metropolitan bourgeois discourse (and an eminently anthropological one) intensely concerned with notions of "degeneracy" (Le Bras 1981:77). Middle-class morality, manliness, and motherhood were seen as endangered by the intimately linked fears of "degeneration" and miscegenation in scientifically construed racist beliefs (Mosse 1978:82).16 Due to environmental and/or inherited factors, degeneracy could be averted positively by eugenic selection or negatively by eliminating the "unfit" (Mosse 1978:87: Kevles 1985:70-84). Eugenic arguments used to explain the social malaise of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization in the early twentieth century derived from the notion that acquired characteristics were inheritable and thus that poverty, vagrancy, and promiscuity were class-linked biological traits, tied to genetic material as directly as night blindness and blond hair.

Appealing to a broad political and scientific constituency at the turn of the century, eugenic societies included advocates of infant welfare programs, liberal intellectuals, conservative businessmen. Fabians, and physicians with social concerns. By the 1920s, however, these societies contained an increasingly vocal number of those who called for and put into law, if not practice, the sterilization of significant numbers in the British. German, and American working-class populations (Mosse 1978:87; 1985:122). Negative eugenics never gained the same currency in Holland as it did elsewhere; nevertheless, it seems clear from the Dutch and Dutch Indies scientific and popular press that concerns with hereditary endowment and with "Indo degeneracy" were grounded in a cultural racism that rivaled its French variant, if in a somewhat more muted form. Is

Feminists attempted to appropriate this rhetoric for their own birth control programs, but eugenics was essentially elitist, racist, and misogynist in principle and practice (Gordon 1976:395: Davin 1978: Hammerton 1979), its proponents advocated a pronatalist policy toward the white middle and upper classes, a rejection of work roles for women that might compete with motherhood, and "an assumption that reproduction was not just a function but the purpose... of a woman's life" (Gordon 1976:134). In France, England, Germany, and the United States, positive eugenics placed European women of "good stock" as "the fountainhead of racial strength" (Ridley 1983:91), exalting the cult of motherhood while subjecting it to more thorough scientific scrutiny (Davin 1978:12).

As part of metropolitan class politics, eugenics reverberated in the colonies in predictable as well as unexpected forms. The moral, biological, and sexual referents of the notion of degeneracy (distinct in the dictionary citation above) came together in how the concept was actually deployed. The "colonial branch" of eugenics embraced a theory and practice concerned with the vulnerabilities of white rule and new measures to safeguard European superiority. Designed to control the procreation of the "unfit" lower orders, eugenics targeted "the poor, the colonized, or unpopular strangers" (Hobsbawm 1987:253). It was, however, also used by metropolitan observers against colonials and by colonial elites against "degenerare" members among themselves (Koks 1931:179-89). While studies in Europe and the United States focused on the inherent propensity of the poor for criminality, in the Indies delinquency among poor Indo-European children was biologically linked to the amount of "*native blood*" they had (Braconier 1918:11). Eugenics provided not so much a new vocabulary as a medical and moral basis for anxiety over white prestige, an anxiety that reopened debates over segregated residence and education, new standards of morality, sexual vigilance, and the rights of certain Europeans

Eugenic influence manifested itself, not in the direct importation of metropolitan practices such as sterilization, but in a translation of the political *principles* and the social values that eugenics implied. In defining what was unacceptable, eugenics also identified what constituted a "valuable life": "a gender-specific work and

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productivity, described in social, medical and psychiatric terms" (Bock 1984:274). Applied to European colonials, eugenic statements pronounced what kind of people should represent Dutch or French rule, how they should bring up their children. and with whom they should socialize. Those concerned with issues of racial survival and racial purity invoked moral arguments about the national duty of French, Dutch. British, and Belgian colonial women to stay at home.

If in Britain racial deterioration was conceived to be a result of the moral turpitude and the ignorance of working-class mothers, in the colonies, the dangers were more pervasive, the possibilities of contamination worse. Formulations to secure European rule pushed in two directions: on the one hand, away from ambiguous racial genres and open domestic arrangements, and, on the other hand, toward an upgrading. homogenization, and a clearer delineation of European standards; away from miscegenation toward white endogamy; away from concubinage toward family formation and legal marriage; away from, as in the case of the Indies, mestizo customs and toward metropolitan norms (Taylor 1983; van Doorn 1985). As stated in the bulletin of the Netherlands Indies' Eugenic Society, "[Elugenics is nothing other than belief in the possibility of preventing degenerative symptoms in the body of our beloved moedervolken, or in cases where they may already be present, of counteracting them" (Rodenwalt 1928:1).

Like the modernization of colonialism itself, with its scientific management and educated technocrats with limited local knowledge, colonial communities of the early twentieth century were rethinking the ways in which their authority should be expressed. This rethinking took the form of asserting a distinct colonial morality. explicit in its reorientation toward the racial and class markers of "Europeanness." emphasizing transnational racial commonalities despite national differences — distilling a Homo Europeaus of superior health, wealth, and intelligence us a white man's norm. As one celebrated commentator on France's colonial venture wrote: *lOlne might be surprised that my pen always returns to the words blanc (white) or 'European' and never to 'Français.' . . . [I]n effect colonial solidarity and the obligations that it entails ally all the peoples of the white races" (Pujarniscle 1931:72; also see Delavignette 1946.41).

Such sensibilities colored imperial policy in nearly all domains, with fears of physical contamination merging with those of political vulnerability. To guard their ranks, whites had to increase their numbers and to ensure that their members blurred neither the biological nor the political boundaries on which their power rested. 19 In the metropole, the socially and physically "unfit," the poor, the indigent, and the insane were to be either sterilized or prevented from marriage. In the British and Belgian colonies, among others, it was these very groups among Europeans who were either excluded from entry or institutionalized while they were there and when possible sent home (Arnold 1979; see also Vellut 1987:97).

Thus, whites in the colonies adhered to a politics of exclusion that policed their members as well as the colonized. Such concerns were not new to the 1920s (Taylor 1983; Sutherland 1982). As early as the mid-eighteenth century, the Dutch East Indies Company had already taken "draconian measures" to control pauperism among "Dutchmen of mixed blood" (Encyclopedie van Nederland-Indie 1919:367). In the same period, the British East Indies Company legally and administratively dissuaded lower-class European migration and settlement, with the argument that they might destroy Indian respect for "the superiority of the European character" (quoted in Arnold 1983:139). Patriotic calls to populate Java in the mid-1800s with poor Dutch farmers were also condemned, but it was with new urgency that these possibilities were rejected in the following century as challenges to European rule were more profoundly felt.

Measures were taken both to avoid the migration of poor whites and to produce a colonial profile that highlighted the vitality, colonial patriotism, and racial superiority of European men (Louth 1971:112–13; Ridley 1983:104). Thus, British colonial administrators were retired by the age of fifty-five, ensuring that "no Oriental was ever allowed to see a Westerner as he aged and degenerated, just as no Westerner needed ever to see himself... as anything but a vigorous, rational, everalent young Raj" (Said 1979:42). In the twentieth century, these "men of class" and "men of character" embodied a modernized and renovated colonial rule; they were to safeguard the colonies against physical weakness, moral decay, and the inevitable degeneration that long residence in the colonies encouraged and the temptations that interracial domestic situations had allowed.

Given this ideal, it is not surprising that colonial communities strongly discouraged the presence of nonproductive men. Dutch and French colonial administrators expressed a constant concern with the dangers of unemployed or impoverished Europeans. During the succession of economic crises in the early twentieth Century, relief agencies in Sumatra, for example, organized fund-raisers, hill-station retreats, and small-scale agricultural schemes to keep "unfit" Europeans "from roaming around" (Kroniek 1917:49). The colonies were neither open for retirement nor tolerant of the public presence of poor whites. During the 1930s depression, when tens of thousands of Europeans in the Indies found themselves without jobs, government and private resources were quickly mobilized to ensure that they were not "reduced" to native living standards (Veerde 1931; Kantoor van Arbeid 1935). Subsidized health care, housing, and education complemented a rigorous affirmation of European cultural standards in which European womanhood played a central role in keeping men *civilisé*.

On Cultural Hygiene: The Dynamics of Degeneration

The shift in imperial thinking that we can identify in the early twentieth century focuses not only on the otherness of the colonized but on the otherness of colonials themselves. In metropolitan France, a profusion of medical and sociological tracts pinpointed the colonial as a distinct and degenerate social type, with specific psychological and even physical characteristics (Maunier 1932; Pujarniscle 1931).²¹ Some of that difference was attributed to the debilitating effects of climate and social milieu, "such that after a centain time, he [the colonial] has become both physically and morally a completely different man" (Maunier 1932:169).

Medical manuals warned that people who stayed "too long" were in grave danger of overfatigue, of individual and racial degeneration, of physical breakdown (not just illness), of cultural contamination, and of neglect of the conventions of

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grave dunreakdown entions of supremacy and agreement about what they were (Dupuy 1955:184-85). What were identified as the degraded and unique characteristics of French colonials -- "ostentation," "speculation," "inaction," and a general "demoralization" - were "faults" contracted from native culture, which now marked them as décivilisé (Maunjer 1932:174; Jaurequiberry 1924:25).

Colonial medicine reflected and affirmed this slippage between physical, moral, and cultural degeneracy in numerous ways. The climatic, social, and work conditions of colonial life gave rise to a specific set of psychotic disorders affecting Fequilibre cerebral, predisposing Europeans in the tropics to mental breakdown (Hartenberg 1910: Abatucci 1910). Neurasthenia was a major problem in the French empire and supposedly accounted for more than half the Dutch repatriations from the Indies to Holland (Winckel 1938:352). In Europe and America, it was "the phantom disease,...the classic illness of the late 19th century," intimately linked to sexual deviation and to the destruction of the social order itself (Gilman 1985: 199, 202).

While in Europe neurasthenia was considered to signal a decadent overload of "modern civilization" and its high-pitched pace, in the colonies its etiology took the reverse form. Colonial neurasthenia was allegedly caused by a distance from civilization and European community and by proximity to the colonized. The susceptibility of a colonial male was increased by an existence "outside of the social framework to which he was adapted in France, isolation in outposts, physical and moral fatigue, and modified food regimes" (Joyeux 1937:335).22

The proliferation of hill stations in the twentieth century reflected these political and physical concerns. Invented in the early nineteenth century as sites for military posts and sanitariums, hill stations provided "European-like environments" in which colonials could recoup their physical and mental well-being by simulating the conditions "at home" (King 1976:165). Isolated at relatively high altitudes, they took on new importance with the arrival of increasing numbers of European women and children, considered particularly susceptible to anemia, depression, and ill-health.²³ Vacation bungalows and schools built in these "naturally" segregated surroundings provided cultural refuge and regeneration (Price 1939).

Some doctors considered the only treatment to be "le retour en Europe" (return to Europe) (Joyeux 1937:335; Pujarniscle 1931:28). Others encouraged a local set of remedies, prescribing a bourgeois ethic of morality and work. This included sexual moderation, a "regularity and regimentation" of work, abstemious diet, physical exercise, and European camaraderie, buttressed by a solid family life with European children, raised and nurtured by a European wife (Grall 1908:51; Price 1939: also see D. Kennedy 1987:123). Guides to colonial living in the 1920s and 1930s reveal this marked shift in outlook; Dutch, French, and British doctors now denounced the unhealthy, indolent lifestyles of "old colonials," extolling the active, engaged, and ever-busy activities of the new breed of colonial husband and wife (Raptschinsky 1941:46). Women were exhoned to actively participate in household management and child-care and otherwise to divert themselves with botanical collections and "good works" (Chivas-Baron 1929; Favre 1938).

Cultural Contamination, Children, and the Dangers of Métissage

[Young colonial men] are often driven to seek a temporary companion among women of color; this is the path by which, as I shall presently show, contagion travels back and forth, contagion in all senses of the word.

Maunier 1932:171

Racial degeneracy was thought to have social causes and political consequences, both tied to the domestic arrangements of colonialism in specific ways. *Métissage* (interracial unions) generally, and concubinage in particular, represented the paramount danger to racial purity and cultural identity in all its forms. It was through sexual contact with women of color that French men "contracted" not only disease but debased sentiments, immoral proclivities, and extreme susceptibility to decivilized states (Dupuy 1955:198).

By the early twentieth century, concubinage was denounced for undermining precisely those things that it was charged with fortifying decades earlier. Local women, who had been considered protectors of men's well-being, were now seen as the bearers of ill-health and sinister influences; adaptation to local food, language, and dress, once prescribed as healthy signs of acclimatization, were now sources of contagion and loss of the (white) self. The benefits of local knowledge and sexual release gave way to the more pressing demands of respectability, the community's solidarity, and its mental health. Increasingly, French men in Indochina who kept native women were viewed as passing into "the enemy camp" (Pujarniscle 1931:107). Concubinage became not only the source of individual breakdown and ill-health but the biological and social root of racial degeneration and political unrest. Children born of these unions were "the fruits of a regrettable weakness" (Mazet 1932:8), physically marked and morally marred with "the defaults and mediocre qualities of their [native] mothers" (Douchet 1928:10).

Concubinage was not as economically tidy and politically near as colonial policy-makers had hoped. It concerned more than sexual exploitation and unpaid domestic work; it was about children — many more than official statistics often revealed — and who was to be acknowledged as a European and who was not. Concubines' children posed a classificatory problem, impinging on political security and white prestige. The majority of such children were not recognized by their fathers, nor were they reabsorbed into local communities as authorities often claimed. Although some European men legally acknowledged their progeny, many repatriated to Holland, Britain, or France and cut off ties and support to mother and children (Brou 1907; Ming 1983:75). Native women had responsibility for, but attenuated rights over, their own offspring. They could neither prevent their children from being taken from them nor contest paternal suitability for custody. While the legal system favored a European upbringing, it made no demands on European men to provide it; many children became wards of the state, subject to the scrutiny and imposed charity of the European-born community at large.

Concubines' children were invariably counted among the ranks of the European colonial poor, but European paupers in the Netherlands Indies in the late nineteenth century came from a far wider strata of colonial society than that of concubines

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he European te nineteenth of concubines alone (Het Pauperisme Commissie 1903). Many Indo-Europeans had become increasingly marginalized from strategic political and economic positions in the early twentieth century, despite new educational opportunities encouraged at the turn of the century. In the 1920s and 1930s, youths born and educated in the Indies were uncomfortably squeezed between an influx of new colonial recruits from Holland and the educated inlander (native) population with whom they were in direct competition for jobs (Mansvelt 1932:295).24 At the turn of the century, volumes of official reports were devoted to documenting and alleviating the proliferation on Java of a "rough" and "dangerous pauper element" among Indo-European clerks, low-level officials, and vagrants (Encyclopedie van Nederland-Indie 1919:367).

European pauperism in the Indies reflected broad inequalities in colonial society. underscoring the social heterogeneity of the category "European" itself. Nonetheless, as late as 1917, concubinage was still seen by some as its major cause and as the principal source of blanken-haters (white-haters) (Braconier 1917:298). Concubinage became equated with a progeny of "malcontents," of "parasitic" whites, idle and therefore dangerous. The fear of concubinage was carried yet a step further and tied to the political fear that such Eurasians would demand economic access and political rights and would express their own interests through alliance with (and leadership of) organized opposition to Dutch rule (Mansvelt 1932: Blumberger 1939).25

Racial prejudice against métis was often, as in the Belgian Congo, "camouflaged under protestations of 'pity' for their fate, as if they were 'malbeureux' [unhappy] beings by definition" (Vellut 1982:103). They were objects of charity, and their protection in Indochina was a cause célèbre of European women - feminists and staunch colonial supporters — at home and abroad (Knibiehler and Goutalier 1985:37). European colonial women were urged to oversee their "moral protection," to develop their "natural" inclination toward French society, to turn them into "partisans of French ideas and influence" instead of revolutionaries (Chenet 1936:8: Sambue 1931:261). The gender breakdown is clear: moral instruction reflected fears of sexual promiscuity in métisse girls and the political threat of métis boys turned militant men.

Orphanages for abandoned European and Indo-European children were not new features of twentieth-century colonial cultures: however, their importance increased vastly as an ever larger number of illegitimate children of mixed parentage populated gray zones along colonial divides. In the Netherlands Indies by the mid-eighteenth century, state orphanages for Europeans were established to prevent "neglect and degeneracy of the many free-roaming poor bastards and orphans of Europeans" (quoted in Braconier 1917:293). By the nineteenth century, church, state, and private organizations had become zealous backers of orphanages, providing some education but stronger doses of moral instruction. In India, civil asylums and charity schools cared for European and Anglo-Indian children in "almost every town. cantonment and hill-station" (Arnold 1979:108). In French Indochina in the 1930s. virtually every colonial city had a home and society for the protection of abandoned métis youth (Chenet 1936: Sambuc 1931:256-72: Malleret 1934:220).

Whether these children were in fact "abandoned" by their Asian mothers is difficult to establish; the fact that métis children living in native homes were often sought out by state and private organizations and placed in these institutions to protect them against the "demoralised and sinister" influences of native *kampong* life suggests another interpretation (Taylor 1985). Public assistance in India. Indochina, and the Netherlands Indies was designed not only to keep fair-skinned children from running barefoot in native villages but to ensure that the proliferation of European pauper settlements was curtailed and controlled. The preoccupation with creating a patriotic loyalty to French and Dutch culture among children was symptomatic of a more general fear — namely, that there were *already* patricides of the colonial fatherland in the making; that the girls would grow up to fall into prostitution: that the boys — with emotional ties to native women and indigenous society — would grow up to join the *verbasterd* (degenerate) and *décivilisé* enemies of the state (Braconier 1917:293; Pouvourville 1926; Sambuc 1931:261; Malleret 1934).

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European Motherbood and Middle-Class Morality

A man remains a man as long as he is under the watch of a woman of his race.

George Hardy, quoted in Chivas-Baron 1929:103

Rationalization of imperial rule and safeguards against racial degeneracy in European colonies merged in the emphasis on particular moral themes. Both entailed a reassertion of European conventions, middle-class respectability, more frequent ties with the metropole, and a restatement of what was culturally distinct and superior about how colonials ruled and lived. For those women who came to join their spouses or to find husbands, the prescriptions were clear. Just as new plantation employees were taught to manage the natives, women were schooled in colonial propriety and domestic management. French manuals, such as those on colonial hygiene in Indochina, outlined the duties of colonial wives in no uncertain terms. As rauxiliary forces" in the imperial effort they were to "conserve the fitness and sometimes the life of all around them" by ensuring that "the home be happy and gay and that all take pleasure in clustering there" (Grall 1908:66; Chailley-Bert 1897). Practical guides to life in the Belgian Congo instructed (and indeed warned) la femme blanche that she was to keep "order, peace, hygiene, and economy" (Favre 1938:217) and to "perpetuate a vigorous race" while preventing any "laxity in our administrative mores" (Favre 1938:256; Travaux du Groupe d'Études Coloniales 1910:10).

This "division of labor" contained obvious asymmetries. Men were considered more susceptible to moral turpitude than women, who were thus held responsible for the immoral states of men. European women were to create and protect colonial prestige, insulating their men from cultural and sexual contact with the colonized (Travaux du Groupe d'Études Coloniales 1910:7). Racial degeneracy would be curtailed by European women, who were charged with regenerating the physical health, the metropolitan affinities, and the imperial purpose of their men (Hardy, 1929:78).

At the heart of these attitudes was a reassertion of racial difference that harnessed nationalistic rhetoric and markers of middle-class morality to its cause (Delavignette 1946:47; Louth 1971:112; Mosse 1978:86). George Mosse describes European racism in the early twentieth century as a "scavenger ideology," annexing nationalism and

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bourgeois respectability such that control over sexuality was central to all three (1985:10, 133-52). If the European middle class sought respectability to maintain their status and self-respect against the lower-classes, and the aristocracy," then in the colonies, respectability was a defense against the colonized and a way for the colonizers to more clearly define themselves (Mosse 1985:5). Good colonial living now meant hard work, no sloth, and physical exercise rather than sexual release. which had been one rationale for condoning concubinage and prostitution in an earlier period. The debilitating influences of climate could be surmounted by regular diet and meticulous personal hygiene, over which European women were to take full charge. Manuals on how to run a European household in the tropics provided detailed instructions in domestic science, moral upbringing, and employer-servant relations. Adherence to strict conventions of cleanliness and cooking occupied an inordinate amount of women's time (Hermans 1925; Ridley 1983:77). Both activities entailed a constant surveillance of native nursemaids, laundrymen, and live-in servants, while reinforcing the domestication of European women themselves (Brink 1920:43).

Leisure, good spirit, and creature comforts became the obligation of women to provide, the racial duty of women to maintain. Sexual temptations with women of color would be curtailed by a happy family life, much as fextremist agitation" on Sumatra's estates was to be averted by selecting married recruits and by providing family housing to permanent workers (Stoler 1985a). Moral laxity would be eliminated through the example and vigilance of women whose status was defined by their sexual restraint and dedication to their homes and to their men.

The perceptions and practice that bound women's domesticity to national welfare and racial purity were not applied to colonial women alone. Child-rearing in late nineteenth-century Britain was hailed as a national, imperial, and racial duty. as it was in Holland, the United States, and Germany at the same time (Davin 1978:13; Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 1973:35; Bock 1984:274; Stuurman 1985). In France, where declining birthrates were of grave concern, popular colonial authors such as Pierre Mille pushed mothering as women's "essential contribution to the imperial mission of France" (Ridley 1983:90). With motherhood at the center of empire-building, pronatalist policies in Europe forced some improvement in colonial medical facilities, the addition of maternity wards, and increased information about and control over the reproductive conditions of European and colonized women alike. Maternal and infant health programs instructed European women in the use of milk substitutes, wet nurses, and breast-feeding practices in an effort to encourage more women to stay in the colonies and in response to the many more that came (Hunt 1988). But the belief that the colonies were medically hazardous for white women meant that motherhood in the tropics was not only a precarious but a conflicted endeavor. French women bound for Indochina were warned that they would only be able to fulfill their maternal duty "with great hardship and damage to [their] health" (Grall 1908:65).

Real and imagined concern over individual reproduction and racial survival contained and compromised white colonial women in a number of ways. Tropical climates were said to cause low fertility, prolonged amenorrhea, and permanent sterility (Rodenwalt 1928:3; Hermans 1925:123). Belgian doctors confirmed that "the

woman who goes to live in a tropical climate is often lost for the reproduction of the race" (Knibiehler and Goutalier 1985:92: Vellut 1982:100). The climatic and medical conditions of colonial life were associated with high infant mortality, such that "the life of a European child was nearly condemned in advance" (Grall 1908:65; Price 1939:204).

These perceived medical perils called into question whether white women and thus "white races" could actually reproduce if they remained in the tropics for extended periods of time. An international colonial medical community cross-referenced one another in citing evidence of racial sterility by the second or third generation (Harwood 1938:132; Cranworth, quoted in D. Kennedy 1987:115). While such a dark view of climate was not prevalent in the Indies, psychological and physical adaptation was never a given. Dutch doctors repeatedly quoted German physicians, if not to affirm the inevitable infertility among whites in the tropics, at least to support their contention that European-born women and men (totoks) should never stay in the colonies too long (Hermans 1925:123). Medical studies in the 1930s, such as that supported by the Netherlands Indies Eugenic Society, were designed to test whether fertility rates differed by "racial type" between Indo-European and European-born women and whether children of certain Europeans born in the Indies displayed different "racial markers" than their parents (Rodenwalt 1928:4).

Like the discourse on degeneracy, the fear of sterility was less about the biological survival of whites than about their political viability and cultural reproduction. These concerns were evident in the early 1900s, coming to a crescendo in the 1930s when white unemployment hit the colonies and the metropole at the same time. The depression made repatriation of impoverished French and Dutch colonial agents unrealistic, prompting speculation as to whether European working classes could be relocated in the tropics without causing further racial degeneration (Winckel 1938: Price 1939). Although white migration to the tropics was reconsidered, poor white settlements were rejected on economic, medical, and psychological grounds (Feuilletau de Bruyn 1938:27). Whatever the solution, such issues hinged on the reproductive potential of European women, invasive questionnaires (which many women refused to answer) concerning their "acclimatization," and detailed descriptions of their sexual lives.

Imperial perceptions and policies fixed European women in the colonies as "instruments of race-culture" in what proved to be personally difficult and contradictory ways (Hammerton 1979). Child-rearing manuals faithfully followed the sorts of racist principles that constrained the activities of women charged with child-care (Grimshaw 1983:507). Medical experts and women's organizations recommended strict surveillance of children's activities (Mackinnon 1920:944) and careful attention to those with whom they played. Virtually every medical and household handbook in the Dutch, French, and British colonies in the early twentieth century warned against leaving small children in the unsupervised care of local servants. In the Netherlands Indies, it was the "duty" of the *bedendaagsche blanke moeder* (modern white mother) to take the physical and spiritual upbringing of her offspring away from the *babit* (native nursemaid) and into her own hands (Wanderken 1943:173). Precautions had to be taken against "sexual danger." against unclean habits of do-

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mestics, and against a "stupid negress" who might leave a child exposed to the sun (Bauduin 1941; Bérenger-Féraud 1875:491). Even in colonies where the climate was not considered unhealthy, European children supposedly thrived well "only up to the age of six" when native cultural influences came into stronger play (Price 1939:204; Grimshaw 1983:507). In the Dutch East Indies, where educational facilities for European children were considered excellent, some still deemed it imperative to send them back to Holland to avoid the "precocity" associated with the tropics and the "danger" of contact with indiscne youths not from "full-blooded European elements" (Bauduin 1941:63):

We Dutch in the Indies live in a country which is not our own....[W]e feel instinctively that our blonde, white children belong to the blonde, white dunes, the forests, the moors, the lakes, the snow....A Dutch child should grow up in Holland. There they will acquire the characteristics of their race, not only from mother's milk but also from the influence of the light, sun and water, of playmates, of life, in a word, in the sphere of the fatherland. This is not racism. (Bauduin 1941:63-64)

But even in the absence of such firm convictions, how to assure the "moral upbringing" of European children in the colonies remained a primary focus of women's organizations in the Indies and elsewhere right through decolonization. In many colonial communities, school-age children were packed off to Europe for education and socialization. In those cases European women were confronted with a difficult set of choices that entailed separation from either their children or their husbands. Frequent trips between colony and metropole not only separated families but also broke up marriages and homes (Malleret 1934:164: Grimshaw 1983:507: Callaway 1987:183-84). The important point is that the imperial duty of women to closely surveil husbands, servants, and children profoundly affected the social space they occupied and the economic activities in which they could feasibly engage.

Shifting Strategies of Rule and Sexual Morality

Though sex cannot of itself enable men to transcend racial barriers, it generates some admiration and affection across them, which is healthy, and which cannot always be dismissed as merely self-interested and prudential. On the whole, sexual interaction between Europeans and non-Europeans probably did more good than barm to race relations; at any rate, I cannot accept the feminist contention that it was fundamentally undesirable.

Hyam 1986b:75

The political etymology of colonizer and colonized was gender- and class-specific. The exclusionary politics of colonialism demarcated not just external boundaries but interior frontiers, specifying internal conformity and order among Europeans themselves. I have tried to show that the categories of colonizer and colonized were secured through notions of racial difference constructed in gender terms. Redefinitions of sexual protocol and morality emerged during crises of colonial control precisely because they called into question the tenuous artifices of rule within European communities and what marked their borders. Even from the limited cases we have reviewed, several patterns emerge. First and most obviously, colonial sexual prohibitions were racially asymmetric and gender-specific. Thus racial attributes were rarely discussed in nongendered terms; one was always a black *man*, an Asian *woman*. Second, interdictions against interracial unions were rarely a primary impulse in the strategies of rule. Interracial unions (as opposed to marriage) between European men and colonized women aided the long-term settlement of European men in the colonies while ensuring that colonial patrimony stayed in limited and selective hands. In India, Indochina, and South Africa in the early centuries — colonial contexts usually associated with sharp social sanctions against interracial unions — "mixing" was systematically tolerated and even condoned.²⁶

Changes in sexual access and domestic arrangements have invariably accompanied major efforts to reassert the internal coherence of European communities and to redefine the boundaries of privilege between the colonizer and the colonized. Sexual union in itself, however, did not automatically produce a larger population legally classified as "European." On the contrary, miscegenation signaled neither the absence nor the presence of racial prejudice in itself; hierarchies of privilege and power were written into the *condoning* of interracial unions, as well as into their condemnation.

While the chronologies vary from one colonial context to another, we can identify some parallel shifts in the strategies of rule and in sexual morality. Concubinage fell into moral disfavor at the same time that new emphasis was placed on the standardization of European administration. While this occurred in some colonies by the early twentieth century and in others later on, the correspondence between rationalized rule, bourgeois respectability, and the custodial power of European women to protect their men seems strongest during the interwar years when Western scientific and technological achievements were then in question and native nationalist and labor movements were energetically pressing their demands.²⁹ Debates concerning the need to systematize colonial management and dissolve the provincial and personalized satraps of "the old-time colon" in the French empire invariably targeted and condemned the unseemly domestic arrangements in which they lived. British high colonial officials in Africa imposed new "character" requirements on their subordinates, designating specific class attributes and conjugal ties that such a selection implied (Kuklick 1979). Critical to this restructuring was a new disdain for colonials too adapted to local custom, too removed from the local European community, and too encumbered with intimate native ties. As in Sumatra, this hands-off policy distanced Europeans in more than one sense: it forbade European staff both from personal confrontations with their Asian fieldhands and from the limited local knowledge they gained through sexual ties.

At the same time, medical expertise confirmed the salubrious benefits of European camaraderie and frequent home leaves, of a cordon sanitaire, not only around European enclaves but around each home. White prestige became defined by this rationalized management and by the moral respectability and physical well-being of its agents, with which European women were charged. Colonial politics locked European men and women into a routinized protection of their physical health and social space in ways that bound gender prescriptions to class conventions, thereby fixing the racial cleavages between "us" and "them."

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I have focused here on the multiple levels at which sexual control figured in the substance, as well as the iconography, of racial policy and imperial rule. But colonial politics was obviously not just about sex: nor did sexual relations reduce to colonial politics. On the contrary, sex in the colonies was about sexual access and reproduction, class distinctions and racial privileges, nationalism and European identity in different measure and not all at the same time. These major shifts in the positioning of women were signaled not by the penetration of capitalism per se but by more subtle changes in class politics and imperial morality and were responses to the vulnerabilities of colonial control. As we attempt broader ethnographies of empire, we may begin to capture how European culture and class politics resonated in colonial settings, how class and gender discriminations not only were translated into racial attitudes but themselves reverberated in the metropole as they were fortified on colonial ground. Such investigations should help show that sexual control was both an instrumental image for the body politic, a salient part standing for the whole, and itself fundamental to how racial policies were secured and how colonial projects were carried out.

NOTES

- 1. Here I focus primarily on the dominant male discourse (and less on women's perceptions of social and legal constraints) since it was the structural positioning of European women in colonial society and how their needs were defined for not by, them that most directly accounted for specific policies.
- 2. See Verena Martinez-Alier (1974) on the subtle and changing criteria by which color was assigned in nineteenth-century Cuba. Also see A. van Marle (1952) on shifting cultural markers of European membership in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Netherlands Indies.
- 3. See Malleret (1934:216-41). See also Tiffany and Adams, who argue that "the Romance of the Wild Woman" expressed critical distinctions between civilization and the primitive, culture and nature, and the class differences between the repressed middle-class woman and ther regressively primitive antithesis, the working-class girl* (Tiffany and Adams 1985:13).
- 4. Many of these studies focus on South Africa and tend to provide more insight into the composition of the black labor force than into the restrictions on European women themselves (Cock 1980: Gaitskell 1983: Hansen 1986). Important exceptions are those that have traced historical changes in colonial prostitution and domestic service where restrictions were explicitly class-specific and directly tied racial policy to sexual control (Ming 1983; Van Heyningen 1984; Hesselink 1987; Schmidt 1987).
- 5. As Tessel Pollman suggests, the term mai glossed several functions; household manager, servant, housewife, wife, and prostitute. Which of these was most prominent depended on the character of both partners and on the prosperity of the European man (1986:100). Most colonized women, however, combining sexual and domestic service within the abjectly subordinate contexts of slave or recoile." lived in separate quarters and exercised very few legal rights; they could be dismissed without reason or notice, were exchanged among European employers, and, most significantly, as stipulated in the Indies Civil Code of 1848, "had no rights over children recognized by a white man" (Taylor 1977:30). On Java, however, some mvai achieved some degree of limited authority, managing the businesses as well as the servants and household affairs of better-off European men (Nieuwenhuys 1959:17; Lucas 1986:86; Taylor 1983).
- 6. While prostitution served some of the colonies for some of the time, it was economically costly, medically unwieldy, and socially problematic. Venereal disease was difficult to check even with the elaborate system of lock-hospitals and contagious disease acts of the British empire and was of little interest to those administrations bent on promoting permanent settlement (Ballhatchet 1980; Ming 1983). When concubinage was condemned in the 1920s in India, Malaya, and Indonesia, venereal disease spread rapidly, giving rise to new efforts to reorder the domestic arrangements of European men (Butcher 1979:217; Ming 1983; Braconier 1933; Ballhatchet 1980).
 - 7. See Ritter, who describes these arrangements in the mid-nineteenth century as a mecessary

evil" with no emotional attachments, because for the native woman, "the meaning of our word 'love' is entirely unknown" (1856,21).

- 8. In the case of the Indies, interracial marriages increased at the same time that concubinage fell into sharp decline (van Marle 1952). This rise was undoubtedly restricted to *Indisch* Europeans (those born in the Indies), who may have been eager to legalize preexisting unions in response to the moral shifts accompanying a more European cultural climate of the 1920s (van Doorn 1985). It undoubtedly should not be taken as an indication of less closure among the highly endogamous European-born population of that period (I owe this distinction in conjugal patterns to Wim Hendrik).
- 9. On the differences between Java's European community, which was sharply divided between the *totoks* (full-blooded Dutch born in Holland) and the *Indisch* majority (Europeans of mixed parentage and/or those Dutch born in the Indies), and Sumatra's European-oriented and non-*Indisch* colonial community, see Muller (1912), Wertheim (1959), van Doorn (1985), and Stoler (1985b).
- 10. Similarly, one might draw the conventional contrast between the different racial policies in French. British, and Dutch colonies. However, despite French assimilationist rhetoric. Dutch tolerance of intermarriage, and Britain's overly segregationist stance, the similarities in the actual maintenance of racial distinctions through sexual control in these varied contexts are perhaps more striking than the differences. For the moment, it is these similarities with which I am concerned. See, for example. Simon (1981:46–48), who argues that although French colonial rule was generally thought to be more racially tolerant than that of Britain, racial distinctions in French Indochina were *in practice* vigorously maintained.
- 11. Cf. Degler, who also attributes the tenor of race relations to the attitudes of European women not, however, because they were inherently more most but because in some colonial contexts they were able to exert more influence over the extramarital affair of their men (1971:238).
- 12. Although some Dutch women in fact championed the cause of the wronged *nyai*, urging improved protection for nonprovisioned women and children, they rarely went so far as to advocate for the legitimation of these unions in legal marriage (Taylor 19⁻¹:31–32; Lucas 1986:95).
- 13. Archive d'Outre Mer. "Emigration des femmes aux colonies." GG9903. 1897–1904: GG7663. 1893–94.
- 14 See Archive d'Outre Mer, series S.65, "Free Passage accorded to Europeans." including dossiers on "free pussage for impoverished Europeans." for example, GG9925, 1897; GG2209, 1899–1903.
- 15. See Van Onselen (1982:103–162), who argues that the presence of European prostitutes and domestics-turned-prostitutes in South Africa was secured by a large, white working-class population and a highly unstable labor market for white working-class women (1982:103–162). See also Van Heyningen, who ties changes in the history of prostitution among continental women in the Cape Colony to new notions of racial purity and the large-scale urbanization of blacks after the turn of the century (1984:192–95).
- 16. As George Mosse notes, the concept of racial degeneration had been tied to miscegenation by Gobineau and others in the early 1800s but gained common currency in the decades that followed, entering European medical and popular vocabulary at the turn of the century (1978:82–88).
- 17. British eugenicists petitioned to refuse marriage licenses to the mentally ill, vagrants, and the chronically unemployed (Davin 1978:16; Stepan 1982:123). In the United States, a model eugenic sterilization law from 1922 targeted, among others, "orphans, homeless and paupers," while in Germany during the same period, "sterilization was widely and passionately recommended as a solution to shift-lessness... illegatimate birth,...poverty, and the rising costs of social services" (Bajema 1976:138; Bock 1984:274).
- 18. The active interest of French anthropologists in the relationship between eugenics and immigration (and therefore in the U.S. sterilization laws, in particular) was not shared in the Netherlands (see Schneider [1982] on the particularities of eugenics in France). For some examples of eugenically informed race studies in the Dutch colonial context, see *Ons Nageslacht*, the *Geneeskundig Tijdschrift toor Nederlandsch-Indie*, as well as the numerous articles relating to "the Indo problem" that appeared in the Indies popular and scientific press during the 1920s and 1950s.
- 19. The topics covered in the bulletin of the Netherlands Indies Eugenics Society give some sense of the range of themes included in these concerns: articles appearing in the 1920s and 1930s discussed, among other things, "biogenealogical" investigations, the complementarity between Christian thought and eugenic principles, ethnographic studies of mestizo populations, and, not least importantly, the role of Indo-Europeans in the anti-Dutch rebellions (Ons Nageslacht 1928–32).

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- 20. See Mosse (1985) for an examination of the relationship between manliness, racism, and nationalism in the European context.
- 21. The relationship between physical appearance and moral depravity was not confined to evaluations of European colonials. Eugenic studies abounded in speculations on the specific physical traits signaling immorality in the European lower orders, while detailed descriptions of African and Asian indigenous populations paired their physical attributes with immoral and debased tendencies
- 22. Adherence to the idea that "tropical neurasthenia" was a specific mulady was not shared by all medical practitioners. Among those who suggested that the use of the term be discontinued, some did so in the belief that neurasthenia in the tropics was a pyschopathology caused by social, not physiological, maladjustment (Culpin [1936], cited in Price 1939/211).
- 23. On the social geography of hill-stations in British India and on the predominance of women and children in them, see King 1976:156-79.
- 24. European pauperism in the Indies at the turn of the century referred primarily to a class of Indo-Europeans marginalized from the educated and "developed" elements in European society (Blumberger 1939:19). However, pauperism was by no means synonymous with Eurasian status since nearly 80 percent of the "Dutch" community were of mixed descent, some with powerful political and economic standing (Braconier 1917:291). As Jacques van Doorn notes, '[I]t was not the Eurasian as such, but the 'Kleine Indo' [poor Indo] who was the object of ridicule and scorn in European circles' (1983:8). One could argue that it was as much Eurasian power as pauperism that had to be checked.
- 25. French government investigations, accordingly, exhibited a concern for "the metis problem" that was out of proportion with the numbers of those who fell in that category. While the number of "Indos" in the Indies was far greater, there was never any indication that this social group would constitute the vanguard of an anticolonial movement.
- 26. In colonial India, "orphanages were the starting-point for a lifetime's cycle of institutions" in which "unseemly whites" were secluded from Asian sight and placed under European control (Arnold 1979:113). In Indonesia, Pro Juventate branches supported and housed together "neglected and criminal youth with special centers for Eurasian children.
- 27. See, for example, the contents of women's magazines such as the Huistronia in Deli, for which the question of education in Holland or the Indies was a central issue. The rise of specific programs (such as the Clerkx-methode voor Huisonderwijs) designed to guide European mothers in the home instruction of their children may have been a response to this new push for women to oversee directly the moral uphringing of their children.
- 28. I have focused on late colonialism in Asia, but the colonial elites' intervention in the sexual life of their agents and subjects was by no means confined to this place or period. See Nash (1980:141) on changes in mixed marriage restrictions in sixteenth-century Mexico and Martinez-Alier on interracial marriage prohibitions in relationship to slave labor supplies in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Cuba (1974:39).
 - 29. See Adas (1989) for a discussion of major shifts in colonial thinking during this period

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elf-definition in we define k and white, in new paths Chapter 20 Gender Is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion Judith Butler

We all have friends who, when they knock on the door and we ask, through the door, the question, "Who's there?," answer (since "it's obvious") "It's me." And we recognize that "it is him." or "her."

Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," emphasis added

The purpose of "law" is absolutely the last thing to employ in the history of the origin of law: on the contrary....the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart, whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected.

Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals

In Louis Althusser's notion of interpellation, it is the police who initiate the call or address by which a subject becomes socially constituted. There is the policeman, the one not only who represents the law but whose address "Fiey you!" has the effect of binding the law to the one who is hailed. This "one" who appears not to be in a condition of trespass prior to the call (for whom the call establishes a given practice as a trespass) is not fully a social subject, is not fully subjectivated, for he or she is not yet reprimanded. The reprimand does not merely repress or control the subject but forms a crucial part of the juridical and social formation of the subject. The call is formative, if not performative, precisely because it initiates the individual into the subjected status of the subject.

Althusser conjectures this "hailing" or "interpellation" as a unilateral act, as the power and force of the law to compel fear at the same time that it offers recognition at an expense. In the reprimand the subject not only receives recognition but attains as well a certain order of social existence, in being transferred from an outer region of indifferent, questionable, or impossible being to the discursive or social domain of the subject. But does this subjectivation take place as a direct effect of the reprimanding utterance, or must the utterance wield the power to compel the fear of punishment and, from that compulsion, to produce a compliance and obedience to the law? Are there other ways of being addressed and constituted by the law, ways of being occupied and occupying the law, that disarticulate the power of punishment from the power of recognition?

Althusser underscores the Lacanian contribution to a structural analysis of this

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kind and argues that a relation of misrecognition persists between the law and the subject it compels. Although he refers to the possibility of "bad subjects," he does not consider the range of *disobedience* that such an interpellating law might produce. The law not only might be refused but might also be ruptured, forced into a rearticulation that calls into question the monotheistic force of its own unilateral operation. Where the uniformity of the subject is expected, where the behavioral conformity of the subject is commanded, the refusal of the law might be produced in the form of the parodic inhabiting of conformity that subtly calls into question the legitimacy of the command, a repetition of the law into hyperbole, a rearticulation of the law against the authority of the one who delivers it. Here the performative, the call by the law that seeks to produce a lawful subject, produces a set of consequences that exceed and confound what appears to be the disciplining intention motivating the law. Interpellation thus loses its status as a simple performative, an act of discourse with the power to create that to which it refers, and creates more than it ever meant to, signifying in excess of any intended referent.

It is this constitutive failure of the performative, this slippage between discursive command and its appropriated effect, that provides the linguistic occasion and index for a consequential disobedience.

Consider that the use of language is itself enabled by first having been *called a natme*; the occupation of the name is that by which one is, quite without choice, situated within discourse. This "I," which is produced through the accumulation and convergence of such "calls," cannot extract itself from the historicity of that chain or raise itself up and confront that chain as if it were an object opposed to me, which is not me, but only what others have made of me: for that estrangement or division produced by the mesh of interpellating calls and the "I" who is its site is not only violating but enabling as well, what Gayatri Spivak refers to as "an enabling violation." The "I" who would oppose its construction is always in some sense drawing from that construction to articulate its opposition, further, the "I" draws what is called its "agency" in part through being implicated in the very relations of power that it seeks to oppose. To be *implicated* in the relations of power, indeed, enabled by the relations of power that the "I" opposes, is not, as a consequence, to be reducible to their existing forms.

You will note that in the making of this formulation, I bracket this "I" in quotation marks, but I am still here. And I should add that this is an "I" that I produce here for you in response to a certain suspicion that this theoretical project has lost the person, the author, the life; over and against this claim, or rather, in response to having been called the site of such an evacuation. I write that this kind of bracketing of the "I" may well be crucial to the thinking through of the constitutive ambivalence of being socially constituted, where "constitution" carries both the enabling and the violating sense of "subjection." If one comes into discursive life through being called or hailed in injurious terms, how might one occupy the interpellation by which one is already occupied to direct the possibilities of resignification against the aims of violation?

This is not the same as censoring or prohibiting the use of the "I" or of the autobiographical as such: on the contrary, it is the inquiry into the ambivalent relations of power that make that use possible. What does it mean to have such uses repeated in one's very being, "messages implied in one's being," as Patricia Williams claims, only

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in quotation ace here for the person. taving been ig of the "f" ice of being he violating ed or hailed ie is already riolation? the autobirelations of repeated in claims, only to repeat those uses such that subversion might be derived from the very conditions of violation? In this sense, the argument that the category of "sex" is the instrument or effect of "sexism" or its interpellating moment, that "race" is the instrument and effect of "racism" or its interpellating moment, that "gender" only exists in the service of heterosexism, does not entail that we ought never to make use of such terms, as if such terms could only and always reconsolidate the oppressive regimes of power by which they are spawned. On the contrary, precisely because such terms have been produced and constrained within such regimes, they ought to be repeated in directions that reverse and displace their originating aims. One does not stand at an instrumental distance from the terms by which one experiences violation. Occupied by such terms and yet occupying them oneself risks a complicity, a repetition, a relapse into injury, but it is also the occasion to work the mobilizing power of injury, of an interpellation one never chose. Where one might understand violation as a trauma that can only induce a destructive repetition compulsion (and surely this is a powerful consequence of violation), it seems equally possible to acknowledge the force of repetition as the very condition of an affirmative response to violation. The compulsion to repeat an injury is not necessarily the compulsion to repeat the injury in the same way or to stay fully within the traumatic orbit of that injury. The force of repetition in language may be the paradoxical condition by which a certain agency — not linked to a fiction of the ego as master of circumstance — is derived from the *impossibility* of choice.

It is in this sense that Luce Irigaray's critical mime of Plato, the fiction of the lesbian phallus, and the rearticulation of kinship in the film Paris Is Burning (1991) might be understood as repetitions of hegemonic forms of power that fail to repeat loyally and, in that failure, open possibilities for resignifying the terms of violation against their violating aims. Willa Cather's occupation of the paternal name, Nella Larsen's inquiry into the painful and fatal mime that is passing for white, and the reworking of "queer" from abjection to politicized affiliation will interrogate similar sites of ambivalence produced at the limits of discursive legitimacy.

The temporal structure of such a subject is chiasmatic in this sense: in the place of a substantial or self-determining "subject," this juncture of discursive demands is something like a "crossroads," to use Gloria Anzaldúa's phrase, a crossroads of cultural and political discursive forces, which she herself claims cannot be understood through the notion of the "subject." There is no subject prior to its constructions. and neither is the subject determined by those constructions; it is always the nexus. the nonspace of cultural collision, in which the demand to resignify or repeat the very terms that constitute the "we" cannot be summarily refused, but neither can they be followed in strict obedience. It is the space of this ambivalence that opens up the possibility of a reworking of the very terms by which subjectivation proceeds and fails to proceed.

Ambivalent Drag

From this formulation, then, I would like to move to a consideration of the film Paris Is Burning, to what it suggests about the simultaneous production and subjugation

of subjects in a culture that appears to arrange always and in every way for the annihilation of queers but that nevertheless produces occasional spaces in which those annihilating norms, those killing ideals of gender and race, are mimed, reworked, resignified. As much as there is defiance and affirmation, the creation of kinship and of glory in that film, there is also the kind of reiteration of norms that cannot be called subversive and that leads to the death of Venus Xtravaganza, a Latina preoperative transsexual, cross-dresser, prostitute, and member of the "House of Xtravaganza." To what set of interpellating calls does Venus respond, and how is the reiteration of the law to be read in the manner of her response?

Venus, and *Paris Is Burning* more generally, call into question whether parodying the dominant norms is enough to displace them — indeed, whether the denaturalization of gender cannot be the very vehicle for a reconsolidation of hegemonic norms. Although many readers understood my book *Gender Trouble* to be arguing for the proliferation of drag performances as a way of subverting dominant gender norms.³ I want to underscore that there is no necessary relation between drag and subversion and that drag may well be used in the service of both the denaturalization and the reidealization of hyperbolic heterosexual gender norms. At best, it seems, drag is a site of a certain ambivalence, one that reflects the more general situation of being implicated in the regimes of power by which one is constituted and, hence, of being implicated in the very regimes of power that one opposes.

To claim that all gender is like drag, or is drag, is to suggest that "imitation" is at the heart of the *heterosexual* project and its gender binarisms, that drag is not a secondary imitation that presupposes a prior and original gender, but that hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations. That it must repeat this imitation, that it sets up pathologizing practices and normalizing sciences in order to produce and consecrate its own claim on originality and propriety, suggests that heterosexual performativity is beset by an anxiety that it can never fully overcome, that its effort to become its own idealizations can never be finally or fully achieved, and that it is consistently haunted by that domain of sexual possibility that must be excluded for heterosexualized gender to produce itself. In this sense, then, drag is subversive to the extent that it reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is itself produced and disputes heterosexuality's claim on naturalness and originality.

Put here it seems that I am obliged to add an important qualification: heterosexual privilege operates in many ways, and two ways in which it operates include naturalizing itself and rendering itself as the original and the norm. But these are not the only ways in which it works, for it is clear that there are domains in which heterosexuality can concede its lack of originality and naturalness but still hold on to its power. Thus, there are forms of drag that heterosexual culture produces for itself—we might think of Julie Andrews in *Victor. Victoria* or Dustin Hoffman in *Tootsie* or Jack Lemmon in *Some Like It Hot*, where the anxiety over a possible homosexual consequence is both produced and deflected within the narrative trajectory of the films. These are films that produce and contain the homosexual excess of any given drag performance, the fear that an apparently heterosexual contact might be made before the discovery of a nonapparent homosexuality. This is drag as high het entertainment, and though these films are surely important to read as cultural texts in

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which homophobia and homosexual panic are negotiated,* I would be reticent to call them subversive. Indeed, one might argue that such films are functional in providing a ritualistic release for a heterosexual economy that must constantly police its own boundaries against the invasion of queerness and that this displaced production and resolution of homosexual panic actually fortifies the heterosexual regime. in its self-perpetuating task.

In her provocative review of Paris Is Burning, bell hooks criticized some productions of gay-male drag as misogynist, and here she allied herself in part with feminist theorists such as Marilyn Frye and Janice Raymond.5 This tradition within feminist thought has argued that drag is offensive to women and that it is an imitation based in ridicule and degradation. Raymond, in particular, places drag on a continuum with cross-dressing and transsexualism, ignoring the important differences between them. maintaining that in each practice women are the object of hatred and appropriation and that there is nothing in the identification that is respectful or elevating. As a rejoinder, one might consider that identification is always an ambivalent process. Identifying with a gender under contemporary regimes of power involves identifying with a set of norms that are and are not realizable and whose power and status precede the identifications by which they are insistently approximated. This "being a man" and this "being a woman" are internally unstable affairs. They are always beset by ambivalence precisely because there is a cost in every identification, the loss of some other set of identifications, the forcible approximation of a norm one never chooses, a norm that chooses us, but that we occupy, reverse, resignify to the extent that the norm fails to determine us completely.

The problem with the analysis of drag as only misogyny is, of course, that it figures male-to-female transsexuality, cross-dressing, and drag as male homosexual activities - which they are not always - and it further diagnoses male homosexuality as rooted in misogyny. The feminist analysis thus makes male homosexuality about women, and one might argue that at its extreme, this kind of analysis is in fact a colonization in reverse, a way for feminist women to make themselves into the center' of male homosexual activity (and thus to reinscribe the heterosexual matrix, paradoxically, at the heart of the radical feminist position). Such an accusation follows the same kind of logic as those homophobic remarks that often follow upon the discovery that one is a lesbian: 'a lesbian' is one who must have had a bad experience with men or who has not yet found the right one. These diagnoses presume that lesbianism is acquired by virtue of some failure in the heterosexual machinery, thereby continuing to install heterosexuality as the "cause" of lesbian desire; lesbian desire is figured as the fatal effect of a derailed heterosexual causality. In this framework, heterosexual desire is always true, and lesbian desire is always and only a mask and forever false. In the radical feminist argument against drag, the displacement of women is figured as the aim and effect of male-to-female drag; in the homophobic dismissal of lesbian desire, the disappointment with and displacement of men is understood as the cause and final truth of lesbian desire. According to these views, drag is nothing but the displacement and appropriation of "women" and hence fundamentally based in a misogyny, a hatred of women; and lesbianism is nothing but the displacement and appropriation of men, and so fundamentally a matter of hating men - misandry.

These explanations of displacement can only proceed by accomplishing yet another set of displacements: of desire, of phantasmatic pleasures, and of forms of love that are not reducible to a heterosexual matrix and the logic of repudiation. Indeed, the only place love is to be found is *for* the ostensibly repudiated object, where love is understood to be strictly produced through a logic of repudiation; hence, drag is nothing but the effect of a love embittered by disappointment or rejection, the incorporation of the other whom one originally desired, but now hates. And lesbianism is nothing other than the effect of a love embittered by disappointment or rejection and of a recoil from that love, a defense against it, or, in the case of butchness, the appropriation of the masculine position that one originally loved.

This logic of repudiation installs heterosexual love as the origin and truth of both drag and lesbianism, and it interprets both practices as symptoms of thwarted love. But what is displaced in this explanation of displacement is the notion that there might be pleasure, desire, and love that are not solely determined by what they repudiate.6 Now it may seem at first that the way to oppose these reductions and degradations of queer practices is to assert their radical specificity, to claim that there is a lesbian desire radically different from a heterosexual one, with no relation to it, that is neither the repudiation nor the appropriation of heterosexuality and that has radically other origins than those that sustain heterosexuality. Or one might be tempted to argue that drag is not related to the ridicule or degradation or appropriation of women: when it is men in drag as women, what we have is the destabilization of gender itself, a destabilization that is denaturalizing and that calls into question the claims of normativity and originality by which gender and sexual oppression sometimes operate. But what if the situation is neither exclusively one nor the other: certainly, some lesbians have wanted to retain the notion that their sexual practice is rooted in part in a repudiation of heterosexuality, but also to claim that this repudiation does not account for lesbian desire and cannot therefore be identified as the hidden or original "truth" of lesbian desire. And the case of drag is difficult in yet another way, for it seems clear to me that there is both a sense of defeat and a sense of insurrection to be had from the drag pageantry in Paris Is Burning, that the drag we see, the drag that is after all framed for us, filmed for us, is one that both appropriates and subverts racist, misogynist, and homophobic norms of oppression. How are we to account for this ambivalence? This is not first an appropriation and then a subversion. Sometimes it is both at once; sometimes it remains caught in an irresolvable tension, and sometimes a fatally unsubversive appropriation takes place.

Paris Is Burning is a film produced and directed by Jennie Livingston about drag balls in New York City, in Harlem, attended by and performed by "men" who are a either African-American or Latino. The balls are contests in which the contestants compete under a variety of categories. The categories include a variety of social norms, many of which are established in white culture as signs of class, like that of the "executive" and the Ivy League student: some of which are marked as feminine, ranging from high drag to butch queen; and some of which, like that of the "bangie," are taken from straight black masculine street culture. Not all of the categories, then, are taken from white culture; some of them are replications of a straightness that is not white: and some of them are focused on class, especially those that almost is not white: and some of them are focused on class, especially those that almost is

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n about drag en" who are contestants ety of social , like that of as feminine, he "bangie," gories, then, ightness that; that almost require that expensive women's clothing be "mopped" or stolen for the occasion. The competition in military garb shifts to yet another register of legitimacy, which enacts the performative and gestural conformity to a masculinity that parallels the performative or reiterative production of femininity in other categories. "Realness" is not exactly a category in which one competes; it is a standard that is used to judge any given performance within the established categories. And yet what determines the effect of realness is the ability to compel belief, to produce the naturalized effect. This effect is itself the result of an embodiment of norms, a reiteration of norms, an impersonation of a racial and class norm, a norm that is at once a figure, a figure of a body, which is no particular body, but a morphological ideal that remains the standard that regulates the performance, but that no performance fully approximates.

Significantly, this is a performance that works, that effects realness, to the extent that it *cannot* be read. For "reading" means taking someone down, exposing what fails to work at the level of appearance, insulting or deriding someone. For a performance to work, then, means that a reading is no longer possible or that a reading, an interpretation, appears to be a kind of transparent seeing, where what appears and what it means coincide. On the contrary, when what appears and how it is "read" diverge, the artifice of the performance can be read as artifice; the ideal splits off from its appropriation. But the impossibility of reading means that the artifice works; the approximation of realness appears to be achieved; the body performing and the ideal performed appear indistinguishable.

But what is the status of this ideal? Of what is it composed? What reading does the film encourage, and what does the film conceal? Does the denaturalization of the norm succeed in subverting the norm, or is this a denaturalization in the service of a perpetual reidealization, one that can only oppress, even as, or precisely when, it is embodied most effectively? Consider, on the one hand, the different fates of Venus Xtravaganza. She "passes" as a light-skinned woman but is — by virtue of a certain failure to pass completely — clearly vulnerable to homophobic violence; ultimately, her life is taken presumably by a client who, upon the discovery of what she calls her "little secret," mutilates her for having seduced him. On the other hand, Willi Ninja can pass as straight: his voguing becomes foregrounded in het video productions with Madonna et al., and he achieves postlegendary status on an international scale. There is passing and then there is passing, and it is — as we used to say — "no accident" that Willi Ninja ascends and Venus Xtravaganza dies.

Now Venus, Venus Xtravaganza, seeks a certain transubstantiation of gender in order to find an imaginary man who will designate a class and race privilege that promises a permanent shelter from racism, homophobia, and poverty. And it would not be enough to claim that for Venus gender is *marked by* race and class, for gender is not the substance or primary substrate and race and class the qualifying attributes. In this instance, gender is the vehicle for the phantasmatic transformation of that nexus of race and class, the site of its articulation. Indeed, in *Paris Is Burning*, becoming real, becoming a real woman, although not everyone's desire (some children want merely to "do" realness, and that, only within the confines of the ball), constitutes the site of the phantasmatic promise of a rescue from poverty, homophobia, and racist delegitimation.

The context (which we might read as a "contesting of realness") involves the phantasmatic attempt to approximate realness, but it also exposes the norms that regulate realness as themselves phantasmatically instituted and sustained. The rules that regulate and legitimate realness (shall we call them symbolic?) constitute the mechanism by which certain sanctioned fantasies, sanctioned imaginaries, are insidiously elevated as the parameters of realness. We could, within conventional Lacanian parlance, call this the ruling of the symbolic, except that the symbolic assumes the primacy of sexual difference in the constitution of the subject. What Paris Is Burning's suggests, however, is that the order of sexual difference is not prior to that of race or class in the constitution of the subject; indeed, that the symbolic is also and at once a racializing set of norms; and that norms of realness by which the subject is produced are racially informed conceptions of "sex" (this underscores the importance of subjecting the entire psychoanalytic paradigm to this insight).

This double movement of approximating and exposing the phantasmatic status of the realness norm, the symbolic norm, is reinforced by the diagenetic movement of the film in which clips of so-called real people moving in and out of expensive stores are juxtaposed against the ballroom drag scenes.

In the drag-ball productions of realness, we witness and produce the phantasmatic constitution of a subject, a subject who repeats and mimes the legitimating norms by which it itself has been degraded, a subject founded in the project of mastery that compels and disrupts its own repetitions. This is not a subject who stands back from its identifications and decides instrumentally how or whether to work each of them today: on the contrary, the subject is the incoherent and mobilized imbrication of identifications: it is constituted in and through the iterability of its performance, a repetition that works at once to legitimate and delegitimate the realness norms by which it is produced.

In the pursuit of realness this subject is produced, a phantasmatic pursuit that mobilizes identifications, underscoring the phantasmatic promise that constitutes any identificatory move - a promise that, taken too seriously, can culminate only in disappointment and disidentification. A fantasy that for Venus — because she dies, killed apparently by one of her clients, perhaps after the discovery of those remaining organs — cannot be translated into the symbolic. This is a killing that is performed by a symbolic that would eradicate those phenomena that require an opening up of the possibilities for the resignification of sex. If Venus wants to become a woman and cannot overcome being a Latina, then Venus is treated by the symbolic in precisely the ways in which women of color are treated. Her death thus testifies to a tragic misreading of the social map of power, a misreading orchestrated by that very map according to which the sites for a phantasmatic self-overcoming are constantly resolved into disappointment. If the signifiers of whiteness and femaleness — as well as some forms of hegemonic maleness constructed through class privilege — are sites of phantasmatic promise, then it is clear that women of color and lesbians not only are everywhere excluded from this scene but constitute a site of identification that is consistently refused and abjected in the collective phantasmatic pursuit of a transubstantiation into various forms of drag, transsexualism, and uncritical miming of the hegemonic. That this fantasy involves becoming in part like women and, for some of the children, becoming like black women, falsely constiwolves the norms that . The rules astitute the . are insidial Lacanian ssumes the Is Burning it of race or ind at once ject is proimportance

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The performance is thus a kind of talking back, one that remains largely constrained by the terms of the original assailment: if a white, homophobic hegemony considers the black drag-ball queen to be a woman, that woman, constituted already by that hegemony, will become the occasion for the rearticulation of its terms; embodying the excess of that production, the queen will out-woman women and in the process confuse and seduce an audience whose gaze must to some degree be structured through those hegemonies, an audience who, through the hyperbolic staging of the scene, will be drawn into the abjection it wants both to resist and to overcome. The phantasmatic excess of this production constitutes the site of women not only as marketable goods within an erotic economy of exchange8 but as goods that. as it were, are also privileged consumers with access to wealth and social privilege and protection. This is a full-scale phantasmatic transfiguration not only of the plight of poor black and Latino gay men but of poor black women and Latinas, who are the figures for the abjection that the drag-ball scene elevates as a site of idealized identification. It would, I think, be too simple to reduce this identificatory move to black male misogyny, as if that were a discrete typology, for the feminization of the poor black man and, most trenchantly, of the poor black gay man is a strategy of abjection that is already underway, originating in the complex of racist, homophobic, misogynist, and classist constructions that belong to larger hegemonies of oppression.

These hegemonies operate, as Antonio Gramsci insisted, through rearticulation, but here is where the accumulated force of a historically entrenched and entrenching rearticulation overwhelms the more fragile effort to build an alternative cultural configuration from or against that more powerful regime. Importantly, however, that prior hegemony also works through and as its "resistance" so that the relation between the marginalized community and the dominative is not, strictly speaking, oppositional. The citing of the dominant norm does not, in this instance, displace that norm; rather, it becomes the means by which that dominant norm is most painfully reiterated as the very desire and the performance of those it subjects.

Clearly, the denaturalization of sex, in its multiple senses, does not imply a liberation from hegemonic constraint: when Venus speaks her desire to become a whole woman, to find a man and have a house in the suburbs with a washing machine. we may well question whether the denaturalization of gender and sexuality that she performs, and performs well, culminates in a reworking of the normative framework, of heterosexuality. The painfulness of her death at the end of the film suggests as well that there are cruel and fatal social constraints on denaturalization. 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's body and cross out that prior crossing, an erasure that is her death. Of course, the film brings Venus back, as it were, into visibility, although not to life, and thus constitutes a kind of cinematic performativity. Paradoxically, the film brings fame and recognition not only to Venus but also to the other drag-ball children who are depicted in the film as able only to attain local legendary status while longing for wider recognition.

The camera, of course, plays precisely to this desire and so is implicitly installed in the film as the promise of legendary status. And yet, is there a filmic effort to take stock of the place of the camera in the trajectory of desire that it not only records but also incites? In her critical review of the film, bell hooks raises not only the question of the place of the camera but also that of the filmmaker, Jennie Livingston, a white lesbian (in other contexts called "a white Jewish lesbian from Yale," an interpellation that also implicates this author in its sweep), in relation to the drag-ball community that she entered and filmed. In the review, hooks remarks that

Jennie Livingston approaches her subject matter as an outsider looking in. Since her presence as white woman, lesbian filmmaker is "absent" from *Parts Is Burning*, it is easy for viewers to imagine that they are watching an ethnographic film documenting the life of black gay "natives" and not recognize that they are watching a work shaped and formed from a perspective and standpoint specific to Livingston. By cinematically masking this reality (we hear her ask questions but never see her) Livingston does not oppose the way hegemonic whiteness "represents" blackness, but rather assumes an imperial overseeing position that is in no way progressive or counterhegemonic."

Later in the same essay, hooks raises the question of not merely whether or not the cultural location of the filmmaker is absent from the film but whether this absence operates to form tacitly the focus and effect of the film, exploiting the colonialist trope of an "innocent" ethnographic gaze: "Too many critics and interviewers," hooks argues, "... act as though she somehow did this marginalized black gay subculture a favor by bringing their experience to a wider public. Such a stance obscures the substantial rewards she has received for this work. Since so many of the black gay men in the film express the desire to be big stars, it is easy to place Livingston in the role of benefactor, offering these 'poor black souls' a way to realize their dreams." ¹⁰

Although hooks restricts her remarks to black men in the film, most of the members of the House of Xtravaganza are Latino, some of whom are light-skinned, some of whom engage in crossing and passing, some of whom only do the ball, some of whom are engaged in life projects to effect a full transubstantiation into femininity and/or into whiteness. The "houses" are organized in part along ethnic lines. This seems crucial to underscore precisely because neither Livingston nor hooks considers the place and force of ethnicity in the articulation of kinship relations.

To the extent that a transubstantiation into legendary status, into an idealized domain of gender and race, structures the phantasmatic trajectory of the drag-ball culture. Livingston's camera enters this world as the promise of phantasmatic fulfillment: a wider audience, national and international fame. If Livingston is the white

girl with the camera, she is both the object and the vehicle of desire; and yet, as a lesbian, she apparently maintains some kind of identificatory bond with the gay men in the film and also, it seems, with the kinship system, replete with "houses," "mothers," and "children," that sustains the drag-ball scene and is itself organized by it. The one instance where Livingston's body might be said to appear allegorically on camera is when Octavia St. Laurent is posing for the camera, as a moving model would for a photographer. We hear a voice tell her that she's terrific, and it is unclear whether it is a man shooting the film as a proxy for Livingston or Livingston herself. What is suggested by this sudden intrusion of the camera into the film is something of the camera's desire, the desire that motivates the camera, in which a white lesbian phallically organized by the use of the camera (elevated to the status of disembodied gaze, holding out the promise of erotic recognition) eroticizes a black male-to-female transsexual — presumably preoperative — who "works" perceptually

What would it mean to say that Octavia is Jennie Livingston's kind of girl? Is the category or, indeed, "the position" of white lesbian disrupted by such a claim? If this is the production of the black transsexual for an exoticizing white gaze, is it not also the transsexualization of lesbian desire? Livingston incites Octavia to become a woman for Livingston's own camera, and Livingston thereby assumes the power of "having the phallus," that is, the ability to confer that femininity, to anoint Octavia as model woman. But to the extent that Octavia receives and is produced by that recognition, the camera itself is empowered as phallic instrument. Moreover, the camera acts as surgical instrument and operation, the vehicle through which the transubstantiation occurs. Livingston thus becomes the one with the power to turn men into women who, then, depend on the power of her gaze to become and remain women. Having asked about the transsexualization of lesbian desire, then, it follows that we might ask more particularly: What is the status of the desire to feminize black and Latino men that the film enacts? Does this not serve the purpose, among others, of a visual pacification of subjects by whom white women are imagined to be socially endangered?

Does the camera promise a transubstantiation of sorts? Is it the token of that promise to deliver economic privilege and the transcendence of social abjection? What does it mean to eroticize the holding out of that promise, as hooks asks, when the film will do well, but the lives that they record will remain substantially unaltered? And if the camera is the vehicle for that transubstantiation, what is the power assumed by the one who wields the camera, drawing on that desire and exploiting it? Is this not its own fantasy, one in which the filmmaker wields the power to transform what she records? And is this fantasy of the camera's power not directly counter to the ethnographic conceit that structures the film?

hooks is right to argue that within this culture the ethnographic conceit of a neutral gaze will always be a white gaze, an unmarked white gaze, one that passes its own perspective off as the omniscient, one that presumes upon and enacts its own perspective as if it were no perspective at all. But what does it mean to think about this camera as an instrument and effect of lesbian desire? I would have liked to have seen the question of Livingston's cinematic desire reflexively thematized in the film itself, her intrusions into the frame as "intrusions." the camera *implicated*

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But is this cinematic gaze only white and phallic, or is there in this film a decentered place for the camera as well? hooks points to two competing narrative trajectories in the film, one that focuses on the pageantry of the balls and another that focuses on the lives of the participants. She argues that the spectacle of the pageantry arrives to quell the portraits of suffering that these men relate about their lives outside the ball. And in her rendition, the pageantry represents a life of pleasurable fantasy, and the lives outside the drag ball are the painful "reality" that the pageantry seeks phantasmatically to overcome, hooks claims that "at no point in Livingston's film are the men asked to speak about their connections to a world of family and community beyond the drag ball. The cinematic narrative makes the ball the center of their lives. And yet who determines this? Is this the way the black men view their reality or is this the reality that Livingston constructs?"

Clearly, this is the way that Livingston constructs their "reality," and the insights into their lives that we do get are still tied in to the ball. We hear about the ways in which the various houses prepare for the ball; we see "mopping"; and we see the differences among those who walk in the ball as men, those who do drag inside the parameters of the ball, those who cross-dress all the time in the ball and on the street, and, among the cross-dressers, those who resist transsexuality and those who are transsexual in varying degrees. What becomes clear in the enumeration of the kinship system that surrounds the ball is not only that the "houses" and the "mothers" and the "children" sustain the ball but that the ball is itself an occasion for the building of a set of kinship relations that manage and sustain those who belong to the houses in the face of dislocation, poverty, homelessness. These men "mother" one another, "house" one another, "rear" one another, and the resignification of the family through these terms is not a vain or useless imitation but the social and discursive building of community, a community that binds, cares, and teaches, that shelters and enables. This is doubtless a cultural reelaboration of kinship that anyone outside of the privilege of heterosexual family (and those within those "privileges" who suffer there) needs to see, to know, and to learn from, a task that makes none of us who are outside of heterosexual "family" into absolute outsiders to this film. Significantly, it is in the elaboration of kinship forged through a resignification of the very terms that effect our exclusion and abjection that such a resignification creates the discursive and social space for community, that we see an appropriation of the terms of domination that turns them toward a more enabling future.

In these senses, then, *Paris Is Burning* documents neither an efficacious insurrection nor a painful resubordination, but an unstable coexistence of both. The film attests to the painful pleasures of eroticizing and miming the very norms that wield their power by foreclosing the very reverse-occupations that the children nevertheless perform.

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a making over that is itself a kind of agency, a power in and as discourse, in and as performance, which repeats in order to remake—and sometimes succeeds. But this is a film that cannot achieve this effect without implicating its spectators in the act; to watch this film means to enter into a logic of fetishization that installs the ambivalence of that "performance" as related to our own. If the ethnographic conceit allows the performance to become an exotic fetish, one from which the audience absents itself, the commodification of heterosexual gender ideals will be, in that instance, complete. But if the film establishes the ambivalence of embodying—and failing to embody—that which one sees, then a distance will be opened up between that hegemonic call to normativizing gender and its critical appropriation.

Symbolic Reiterations

The resignification of the symbolic terms of kinship in Paris Is Burning and in the cultures of sexual minorities represented and occluded by the film raises the question of how precisely the apparently static workings of the symbolic order become vulnerable to subversive repetition and resignification. To understand how this resignification works in the fiction of Willa Cather, a recapitulation of the psychoanalytic account of the formation of sexed bodies is needed. The turn to Cather's fiction involves bringing the question of the bodily ego in Freud and the status of sexual differentiation in Lacan to bear on the question of naming and, particularly, the force of the name in fiction. Freud's contention that the ego is always a bodily ego is elaborated with the further insight that this bodily ego is projected in a field of visual alterity. Lacan insists that the body as a visual projection or imaginary formation cannot be sustained except through submitting to the name, where the "name" stands for the Name of the Father, the law of sexual differentiation. In "The Mirror Stage," Lacan remarks that the ego is produced "in a fictional direction." that its contouring and projection are psychic works of fiction; this fictional directionality is arrested and immobilized through the emergence of a symbolic order that legitimates sexually differentiated fictions as "positions." As a visual fiction, the ego is inevitably a site of méconnaissance; the sexing of the ego by the symbolic seeks to subdue this instability of the ego, understood as an imaginary formation.

Here it seems crucial to ask where and how language emerges to effect this stabilizing function, particularly for the fixing of sexed positions. The capacity of language to fix such positions, that is, to enact its symbolic effects, depends upon the permanence and fixity of the symbolic domain itself, the domain of signifiability or intelligibility. If, for Lacan, the name secures the bodily ego in time, renders it identical through time, and this "conferring" power of the name is derived from the conferring power of the symbolic more generally, then it follows that a crisis in the symbolic will entail a crisis in this identity-conferring function of the name and in the stabilizing of bodily contours according to sex allegedly performed by the symbolic. The crisis in the symbolic, understood as a crisis over what constitutes the limits of intelligibility, will register as a crisis in the name and in the morphological stability that the name is said to confer.

The phallus functions as a synecdoche, for insofar as it is a figure of the penis, it

constitutes an idealization and isolation of a body part and, further, the investment of that part with the force of symbolic law. If bodies are differentiated according to the symbolic positions that they occupy, and those symbolic positions consist in either having or being the phallus, bodies are thus differentiated and sustained in their differentiation by being subjected to the Law of the Father that dictates the "being" and "having" positions: men become men by approximating the "having of the phallus," which is to say they are compelled to approximate a "position" that is itself the result of a synecdochal collapse of masculinity into its "part" and a corollary idealization of that synecdoche as the governing symbol of the symbolic order. According to the symbolic, then, the assumption of sex takes place through an approximation of this synecdochal reduction. This is the means by which a body assumes sexed integrity as masculine or feminine: the sexed integrity of the body is paradoxically achieved through an identification with its reduction into idealized synecdoche ("having" or "being" the phallus). The body that fails to submit to the law or occupies that law in a mode contrary to its dictate thus loses its sure footing — its cultural gravity — in the symbolic and reappears in its imaginary tenuousness, its fictional direction. Such bodies contest the norms that govern the intelligibility of sex.

Is the distinction between the symbolic and the imaginary a stable distinction? And what of the distinction between the name and the bodily ego? Does the name, understood as the linguistic token that designates sex, only work to cover over its fictiveness, or are there occasions in which the fictive and unstable status of that bodily ego trouble the name, expose the name as a crisis in referentiality? Further, if body parts do not reduce to their phallic idealizations, that is, if they become vectors for other sorts of phantasmatic investments, then to what extent does the synecdochal logic through which the phallus operates lose its differentiating capacity? In other words, the phallus itself presupposes the regulation and reduction of phantasmatic investment such that the penis is either idealized as the phallus or mourned as the scene of castration and desired in the mode of an impossible compensation. If these investments are deregulated or, indeed, diminished, to what extent can having being the phallus still function as that which secures the differentiation of the sexes?

In Cather's fiction, the name not only designates a gender uncertainty but produces a crisis in the figuration of sexed morphology as well. In this sense, Cather's fiction can be read as the foundering and unraveling of the symbolic on its own impossible demands. What happens when the name and the part produce divergent and conflicting sets of sexual expectations? To what extent do the unstable descriptions of gendered bodies and body parts produce a crisis in the referentiality of the name, the name itself as the very fiction it seeks to cover? If the heterosexism of the Lacanian symbolic depends on a set of rigid and prescribed identifications, and if those identifications are precisely what Cather's fiction works through and against the symbolically invested name, then the contingency of the symbolic— and the heterosexist parameters of what qualifies as "sex"—undergoes a rearticulation that works the fictive grounding of what only appears as the fixed limits of intelligibility.

Cather cites the paternal law, but in places and ways that mobilize a subversion under the guise of loyalty. Names fail fully to gender the characters whose femininity and masculinity they are expected to secure. The name fails to sustain the identity of the body within the terms of cultural intelligibility; body parts disengage