

Start of Section Three: Historical Ideologies of Sexuality, Race, and Madness

Recap of Class (Important concepts covered in previous lectures)

- **Foucault** – the process through which medicine developed as a field in relation to the state (in Europe)
- The body came to be seen as a body with rights through conceptualization as an **autonomous ‘individual’**
- The various ways different countries handled the **concept of population**
 - Populations and individuals categorized according to their potential as ‘security risks’ to the state
 - Those deemed ‘threats’ to the well-being of the state were categorized as ‘aliens’ and separated away from the rest of society. Such ‘aliens’ included the mentally ill, those with communicable disease, or classified as ‘inferior’ and capable of causing moral/social decline
 - Over time, government shifted away from separating persons with disease away from healthy people to actively exerting control over bodies directly to limit security ‘threat’
- New focus on body as a site of government control created new system of **biopolitics** and **biopower** in which government can control and regulate the bodies of its citizens
- The rise in importance of **the body as a site of control** meant that stereotypes of certain populations’ bodies’ and minds gained new importance as justification for policies
- **Governmentality**: the notion that individuals within a society will eventually self-govern themselves after gradually internalizing codes of ‘proper’ behavior and disciplinary measures are made invisible.
- Major concern of government to control the population to **maximize economic productivity**
- Categories are created and reproduced throughout society as justification for policies and exertion of power. ‘Laziness’ linked to madness, a ‘medicalized’ category that pathologizes a state of being that is not economically productive, hence justifying government action to control the body
- How it is that ideas of the body are articulated at different levels (individual, community, family) ideas of embodiment – culturally and socially, technologies of state and science, esp. medical technology

We will now focus on tracing the development and application of these themes outside Europe:

- The idea of the **Fetish** is important in understanding the particular ways in which the Europeans related to Africans (and other ‘primitive’ peoples)
 - Discussion of the fetish in European discourse of Africa was directly a reflection of Europeans’ conception of the ‘African’ mentality.

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- According to European accounts, the worship of the fetish was a reflection on the innate mental ‘capacity’ the ‘Africans.’
- Europeans considered the fetish to be an object ‘worshipped’ by the Africans as an object with ‘magical’ powers. Europeans concluded that the ‘African’ was unable to universalize, rationalize, objectify – aspects Europeans considered necessary to be considered ‘rational,’ a requirement to be ‘autonomous’
- Europeans concluded that this ‘inability’ on the part of the Africans meant they could not self-govern (convenient to support colonial intent).

Notion of fetish led to widespread stereotypes of ‘Africans’ that influenced European colonial polities

These stereotypes still exist and persistently influence policies directed towards African or ‘black’ nations

- For example:
 - Haiti – internal violence and social/political chaos still persistently linked to stereotypes of mental capacity of Blacks
- The social and political situation linked to questions capacity of Blacks for self-governance.

Reading

Johannes Fabian:

- Analyzes the accounts of explorers in central Africa.
- Concerned with analyzing the processes of literary production and the creation of knowledge, particularly ‘medical’ knowledge – how all these play in creating notions of bodies, nations, etc.

Movie: Sara Baartman (Hottentot Venus)

Second half of course will be concerned with how it is that different cultures critique Western points of view, such as separation of mind/body. The lack of accounts from the perspective of Africans makes this difficult to do. Interested in exploring the effects of cultural exchange – how cultures were changed by contact and how they adapted.

Topics to discuss:

- Polygenism: How to rationalize African descent
- Conflations of health and disease among various groups of people

Presentation:

Sander Gilman: notions of normalcy, pathology and ‘difference’

- What is a stereotype/Is this a valid way to accommodate difference?

Stereotype: Fear, anxiety, psychological response to control the world

- Perceived loss of control of the world leads to desire to enforce a type of control

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- Individual control
- No analysis of social control, social aspects of creating control structure
- Us vs. Them. We vs. Other. Pathological vs. Normal
- Stereotypes as symbols, literary, psychological
- Stereotypes are a symbol for institutional control, individual control
- Bourdieu: habitus
 - How it was that societies reproduce the culture into which they are born
 - Wherever you are born, there is a set of ideas about embodiment, people, set stereotypes

Are stereotypes real? Are they really mental illusions?

- Categories of stereotypes: gender, sexuality, race

Using texts: Structured systems of representation

Myths

Bad moral qualities

Skin color has mythic qualities

Why and for whom are these mythic representations made?

Hottentot Venus: icon for deviant sexuality

Pseudo-scientific context to create illusions of sexual biopower. Still had to 'show' or 'prove' scientific validity.

Why the obsession with female genitalia? Genitalia "essentializes" the black woman.

Could be used to determine that black women, and black people in general were 'lower' as a race.

How pervasive were these ideas? How common was this vocabulary? Widespread?

Iconographic – creating knowledge of different types of person through the mythical 'nature' of female prostitutes.

The Story of Sara Baartman

Symbol of sexuality and bestiality

- Born in South Africa
- 1790 European colonialism (Dutch)
- Near extermination of the Bushmen, through commando raids
 - "Could do whatever you want, because they weren't quite human"
 - After near extermination, tribesmen had no choice but to work for white farmers

Europeans had a fascination with Khoi Khoi (Hottentot), especially the women, due to their reputed unusual physical characteristics in female genitalia.

Question for Europeans of whether these people were even human

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She probably was not enslaved, carried to Europe in chains, but her economic conditions and ill-informed condition probably enabled the Europeans who were interested in her to make her sign a contract with promises of fame and wealth.

- Arrived in London, 1810.
- What were her prospects in Europe?
 - Most blacks in slave/servant status in London
 - A few black individuals managed to move through society, but mostly remained in lower classes

Sara was an affirmation of the 'freakish' stereotype of Europeans toward Africans

Hendric Cezar

- Sara was treated with the "utmost, kindness" etc. Willing participant in her situation

Court case to release Saartje:

- To determine if she should be released from her contract
- Questions asked of her assumed that she had full knowledge and concepts of individual, and full understanding that she had a choice
- Could have been coerced by Cezar to give 'appropriate' responses to questions by the court seeking to ascertain whether she was an unwilling participant, thereby making her situation equivalent to slavery
- 18th century, obsession with sexual organs. Differences in sexual organs made people "monsters," something "less than humans."
- Obsession with Hottentot's genitalia stems from question: "Are the Khoisan people part of the human species?"
- 1816 – Saartje dies.
- Her body was dissected and examined
- Cuvier's autopsy report an example of scientific racism, the power of preconceived notions affecting observations

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