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# Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body

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ONE OF THE MOST important insights developed in the fields of lesbian and gay history and the history of sexuality has been the notion that homosexuality and, by extension, heterosexuality are relatively recent inventions in Western culture, rather than transhistorical or “natural” categories of human beings. As Michel Foucault and other historians of sexuality have argued, although sexual acts between two people of the same sex had been punishable through legal and religious sanctions well before the late nineteenth century, they did not necessarily define individuals as homosexual *per se*.<sup>1</sup> Only recently, in the late nineteenth century, did a new understanding of sexuality emerge, in which sexual acts

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<sup>1</sup>See, e.g., Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (New York, 1980); George Chauncey, “From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and the Changing Conceptualization of Female Deviance,” *Salmagundi*, nos. 58–59 (Fall 1982–Winter 1983), pp. 114–46; Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (New York, 1981); David Halperin, “Is There a History of Sexuality?” in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York, 1993), pp. 416–31; and Robert Padgug, “Sexual Matters: Rethinking Sexuality in History,” *Radical History Review* 20 (Spring/Summer 1979): 3–23. On the invention of the classification of heterosexuality, see Jonathan Katz, “The Invention of Heterosexuality,” *Socialist Review* 20 (1990): 17–34. For a related and intriguing argument that locates the earlier emergence of hierarchies of reproductive over nonreproductive sexual activity, see Henry Abelove, “Some Speculations on the History of ‘Sexual Intercourse’ during the ‘Long Eighteenth Century’ in England,” *Genders* 6 (1989): 125–30.

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and desires became constitutive of identity. Homosexuality as the condition, and therefore identity, of particular bodies is thus a production of that historical moment.

Medical literature, broadly defined to include the writings of physicians, sexologists, and psychiatrists, has been integral to this historical argument. Although medical discourse was by no means the only—nor necessarily the most powerful—site of the emergence of new sexual identities, it does nevertheless offer rich sources for at least partially understanding the complex development of these categories in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Medical and sexological literature not only became one of the few sites of explicit engagement with questions of sexuality during this period but also held substantial definitional power within a culture that sanctioned science to discover and tell the truth about bodies.

As historians and theorists of sexuality have refined a notion of the late nineteenth-century “invention” of the homosexual, their discussions have drawn primarily upon theories and histories of gender. George Chauncey, in particular, has provided an invaluable discussion of the ways in which paradigms of sexuality shifted according to changing ideologies of gender during this period.<sup>2</sup> He notes a gradual change in medical models of sexual deviance, from a notion of sexual inversion, understood as a reversal of one’s sex role, to a model of homosexuality, defined as deviant sexual object choice. These categories and their transformations, argues Chauncey, reflected concurrent shifts in the cultural organization of sex/gender roles and participated in prescribing acceptable behavior, especially within a context of white middle-class gender ideologies.

While gender insubordination offers a powerful explanatory model for the “invention” of homosexuality, ideologies of gender also, of course, shaped and were shaped by dominant constructions of race. Indeed, although it has received little acknowledgment, it is striking that the “invention” of the homosexual occurred at roughly the same time that racial questions were being reformulated, particularly in the United States. This was the moment, for instance, of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that insisted that “black” and “white” races were “separate but equal.” Both a product of and a stimulus to a nationwide and brutal era of racial segregation, this ruling had profound and lasting effects in legitimating an apartheid structure that remained legally sanctioned for over half of the twentieth century. The *Plessy* case distilled in legal form many widespread contemporary fears about race and racial difference at the time. A deluge of “Jim Crow” and antimiscegenation

<sup>2</sup>Chauncey.

laws, combined with unprecedented levels of racial violence, most visibly manifested in widespread lynching, reflected an aggressive attempt to classify and separate bodies as either “black” or “white.”

Is it merely a historical coincidence that the classification of bodies as either “homosexual” or “heterosexual” emerged at the same time that the United States was aggressively policing the imaginary boundary between “black” and “white” bodies? Although some historians of sexuality have included brief acknowledgment of nineteenth-century discourses of racial difference, the particular relationship and potentially mutual effects of discourses of homosexuality and race remain unexplored.<sup>3</sup> This silence around race may be due in part to the relative lack of explicit attention to race in medical and sexological literature of the period. These writers did not self-consciously interrogate race, nor were those whose gender insubordination and sexual transgression brought them under the medical gaze generally identified by race in these accounts.<sup>4</sup> Yet the lack of explicit attention to race in these texts does not mean that it was irrelevant to sexologists’ endeavors. Given the upheavals surrounding racial definition during this period, it is reasonable to imagine that these texts were as embedded within contemporary racial ideologies as they were within ideologies of gender.

Take, for instance, the words of Havelock Ellis, whose massive *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* was one of the most important texts of the late nineteenth-century medical and scientific discourse on sexuality. “I regard sex as the central problem of life,” began the general preface to the

<sup>3</sup>David Halperin has briefly and provocatively suggested that “all scientific inquiries into the aetiology of sexual orientation, after all, spring from a more or less implicit theory of sexual races, from the notion that there exist broad general divisions between types of human beings corresponding, respectively, to those who make a homosexual and those who make a heterosexual object-choice. When the sexual racism underlying such inquiries is more plainly exposed, their rationale will suffer proportionately—or so one may hope,” in “Homosexuality: A Cultural Construct,” in his *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York, 1990), p. 50. In a recent article, Abdul R. JanMohamed offers a useful analysis and critique of Foucault’s failure to examine the intersection of the discourses of sexuality and race. See his “Sexuality on/of the Racial Border: Foucault, Wright, and the Articulation of ‘Racialized Sexuality,’” in *Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to AIDS*, ed. Domna C. Stanton (Ann Arbor, MI, 1992), pp. 94–116. I explore a different (though related) set of questions in this article.

<sup>4</sup>In *Disorders of Desire: Sex and Gender in Modern American Sexology* (Philadelphia, 1990), Janice Irvine notes that, e.g., “the invisibility of Black people in sexology as subjects or researchers has undermined our understanding of the sexuality of Black Americans and continues to be a major problem in modern sexology.” She adds that Kinsey, the other major sexologist of the twentieth century, planned to include a significant proportion of African-American case histories in his *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) but failed to gather a sufficient number of them, and so “unwittingly colluded in the racial exclusion so pervasive in sex research” (p. 43).

first volume. Justifying such unprecedented boldness toward the study of sex, Ellis explained, "And now that the problem of religion has practically been settled, and that the problem of labour has at least been placed on a practical foundation, the question of sex—with the racial questions that rest on it—stands before the coming generations as the chief problem for solution."<sup>5</sup> Despite Ellis's oddly breezy dismissal of the problems of labor and religion, which were far from settled at the time, this passage points suggestively to a link between sexual and racial anxieties. Yet what exactly did Ellis mean by "racial questions"? More significantly, what was his sense of the relationship between racial questions and the question of "sex"? Although Ellis himself left these issues unresolved, his elliptical declaration nevertheless suggested that a discourse of race—however elusively—somehow hovered around or within the study of sexuality.

In this article, I offer speculations on how late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century discourses of race and sexuality might be not merely juxtaposed, but brought together in ways that illuminate both. I suggest that the concurrent bifurcations of categories of race and sexuality were not only historically coincident but in fact structurally interdependent and perhaps mutually productive. My goal, however, is not to garner and display unequivocal evidence of the direct influence of racial categories on those who were developing scientific models of homosexuality. Nor am I interested in identifying individual writers and thinkers as racist or not. Rather, my focus here is on racial ideologies, the cultural assumptions and systems of representation about race through which individuals understood their relationships within the world.<sup>6</sup> My emphasis lies in understanding the relationships between the medical/scientific discourse around sexuality and the dominant scientific discourse around race during this period, that is, scientific racism.

My approach combines literary and historical methods of reading, particularly those that have been so crucial to lesbian and gay studies—the technique of reading to hear "the inexplicable presence of the thing not named,"<sup>7</sup> of being attuned to the queer presences and implications

<sup>5</sup>Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol. 1, *Sexual Inversion* (1897; London, 1900), x; emphasis added.

<sup>6</sup>My use of the concept of ideology draws upon Barbara Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America," *New Left Review* 181 (1990): 95–118; Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in his *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York, 1971), pp. 121–73; and Teresa de Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender," in her *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington, IN, 1987), pp. 1–30.

<sup>7</sup>I borrow this phrase from Willa Cather's essay, "The Novel Demeublé," in her *Not under Forty* (New York, 1922), p. 50.

in texts that do not otherwise name them. Without this collective project to see, hear, and confirm queer inflections where others would deny their existence, it is arguable that gay and lesbian studies itself, and particularly our knowledge and understanding of the histories, writing, and cultures of lesbians and gay men, would be impoverished, if not impossible. In a similar way, I propose to use the techniques of queer reading, but to modulate my analysis from a focus on sexuality and gender to one alert to racial resonances as well.

My attention, then, is focused on the racial pressure points in exemplary texts from the late nineteenth-century discourse on sexuality, including those written by Ellis and other writers of the period who made explicit references to homosexuality. I suggest that the structures and methodologies that drove dominant ideologies of race also fueled the pursuit of scientific knowledge about the homosexual body: both sympathetic and hostile accounts of homosexuality were steeped in assumptions that had driven previous scientific studies of race.<sup>8</sup> My aim is not to replace a focus on gender and sexuality with that of race but, rather, to understand how discourses of race and gender buttressed one another, often competing, often overlapping, in shaping emerging models of homosexuality.

I suggest three broadly defined ways in which discourses of sexuality seem to have been particularly engaged, sometimes overtly, but largely implicitly, with the discourse of scientific racism. All of these models pathologized both the nonwhite body and the nonheterosexual body to greater or lesser extents. Although I discuss these models in separate sections here, they often coexisted, despite their contradictions. These models are speculative and are intended as a first step toward understanding the myriad and historically specific ways that racial and sexual discourses shaped each other at the moment that homosexuality entered scientific discourse.

#### VISIBLE DIFFERENCES: SEXOLOGY AND COMPARATIVE ANATOMY

Ellis's *Sexual Inversion*, the first volume of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* to be published, became a definitive text in late nineteenth-century investigations of homosexuality.<sup>9</sup> Despite the series' titular focus on the

<sup>8</sup>I am not implying, however, that racial anxieties caused the invention of the homosexual, nor that the invention of the homosexual caused increased racial anxieties. Both of these causal arguments seem simplistic and, further, depend upon separating the discourses of race and sexuality, whose convergence, in fact, I am eager to foreground.

<sup>9</sup>Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol. 2, *Sexual Inversion*, 3d ed. (Philadelphia, 1915). Further references to this edition will be noted parenthetically unless other-

psychology of sex, *Sexual Inversion* was a hybrid text, poised in methodology between the earlier field of comparative anatomy, with its procedures of bodily measurement, and the nascent techniques of psychology, with its focus on mental development.<sup>10</sup> In *Sexual Inversion* Ellis hoped to provide scientific authority for the position that homosexuality should be considered not a crime but, rather, a congenital (and thus involuntary) physiological abnormality. Writing *Sexual Inversion* in the wake of England's 1885 Labouchère Amendment, which prohibited "any act of gross indecency" between men, Ellis intended in large part to defend homosexuality from "law and public opinion," which, in his view, combined "to place a heavy penal burden and a severe social stigma on the manifestations of an instinct which to those persons who possess it frequently appears natural and normal."<sup>11</sup> In doing so, Ellis attempted to drape himself in the cultural authority of a naturalist, eager to exert his powers of observation in an attempt to classify and codify understandings of homosexuality.<sup>12</sup>

Like other sexologists, Ellis assumed that the "invert" might be visu-

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wise stated. Although *Sexual Inversion* was published originally as vol. 1, Ellis changed its position to vol. 2 in the 2d and 3d eds., published in the United States in 1901 and 1915, respectively. In the later editions, vol. 1 became *The Evolution of Modesty*. Ellis originally coauthored *Sexual Inversion* with John Addington Symonds. For a discussion of their collaboration and the eventual erasure of Symonds from the text, see Wayne Koestenbaum, *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* (New York, 1989), pp. 43–67.

<sup>10</sup>In "Sex and the Emergence of Sexuality," *Critical Inquiry* 14 (Autumn 1987): 16–48, Arnold I. Davidson characterizes Ellis's method as "psychiatric" (as opposed to "anatomical") reasoning. Arguing that "sexuality itself is a product of the psychiatric style of reasoning" (p. 23), Davidson explains, "the iconographical representation of sex proceeds by depiction of the body, more specifically by depiction of the genitalia. The iconographical representation of sexuality is given by depiction of the personality, and it most usually takes the form of depiction of the face and its expressions" (p. 27). The case studies in *Sexual Inversion*, and especially those of women, however, tend to contradict this broad characterization. My understanding of Ellis differs from that of Davidson, who readily places Ellis in a psychiatric model; instead, Ellis might be characterized as a transitional figure, poised at the crossroads between the fields of comparative anatomy and psychiatry. To borrow Davidson's terms, anatomical reasoning does not disappear; it stays in place, supporting psychiatric reasoning.

<sup>11</sup>Ellis, *Sexual Inversion* (1900), xi. Ironically, upon publication in 1897 *Sexual Inversion* was judged to be not a scientific work, but "a certain lewd, wicked, bawdy, scandalous libel"; effectively banned in England, subsequent copies were published only in the United States. See Jeffrey Weeks, "Havelock Ellis and the Politics of Sex Reform," in Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis* (London, 1977), p. 154; and Phyllis Grosskurth, *Havelock Ellis: A Biography* (New York, 1980), pp. 191–204.

<sup>12</sup>For further discussion of Ellis's similarity to Charles Darwin as a naturalist and their mutual interest in "natural" modesty, see Ruth Bernard Yeazel, "Nature's Courtship Plot in Darwin and Ellis," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 2 (1989): 33–53.

ally distinguishable from the “normal” body through anatomical markers, just as the differences between the sexes had traditionally been mapped upon the body. Yet the study of sexual difference was not the only methodological precedent for the study of the homosexual body. In its assumptions about somatic differences, I suggest, *Sexual Inversion* also drew upon and participated in a history of the scientific investigation of race.

Race, in fact, became an explicit, though ambiguous, structural element in Ellis’s *Sexual Inversion*. In chapter 5, titled “The Nature of Sexual Inversion,” Ellis attempted to collate the evidence contained in his collection of case studies, dividing his general conclusions into various analytic categories. Significantly, “Race” was the first category he listed, under which he wrote, “All my cases, 80 in number, are British and American, 20 living in the United States and the rest being British. Ancestry, from the point of view of race, was not made a matter of special investigation” (p. 264). He then listed the ancestries of the individuals whose case studies he included, which he identified as “English . . . Scotch . . . Irish . . . German . . . French . . . Portuguese . . . [and] more or less Jewish” (p. 264). He concluded that “except in the apparently frequent presence of the German element, there is nothing remarkable in this ancestry” (p. 264). Ellis used the term “race” in this passage interchangeably with national origin, with the possible exception of Jewish identity. These national identities were perceived to be at least partially biological and certainly hereditary in Ellis’s account, though subordinate to the categories “British” and “American.” Although he dismissed “ancestry, from the point of view of race” as a significant category, its place as the first topic within the chapter suggested its importance to the structure of Ellis’s analysis.<sup>13</sup>

Ellis’s ambiguous use of the term “race” was not unusual for scientific discourse during this period, in which it might refer to groupings based variously on geography, religion, class, or color.<sup>14</sup> The use of the term to mean a division of people based on physical (rather than genealogical or national) differences had originated in the late eighteenth century, when Johann Friedrich Blumenbach first classified human beings into five dis-

<sup>13</sup>Elsewhere in *Sexual Inversion*, Ellis entertained the idea that certain races or nationalities had a “special proclivity” to homosexuality (p. 4), but he seemed to recognize the nationalistic impulse behind this argument and chided those who wielded it: “The people of every country have always been eager to associate sexual perversions with some other country than their own” (pp. 57–58).

<sup>14</sup>Classic discussions of the term’s history include Peter I. Rose, *The Subject Is Race* (New York, 1968), pp. 30–43; and Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (Dallas, 1963). For a history of various forms and theories of biological determinism, see Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York, 1981).



tinct groups in *On the Natural Variety of Mankind*. This work in turn became a model for the nineteenth-century fascination with anthropometry, the measurement of the human body.<sup>15</sup> Behind these anatomical measurements lay the assumption that the body was a legible text, with various keys or languages available for reading its symbolic codes. In the logic of biological determinism, the surface and interior of the individual body rather than its social characteristics, such as language, behavior, or clothing, became the primary sites of its meaning. "Every peculiarity of the body has probably some corresponding significance in the mind, and the causes of the former are the remoter causes of the latter," wrote Edward Drinker Cope, a well-known American paleontologist, summarizing the assumptions that fueled the science of comparative anatomy.<sup>16</sup> Although scientists debated which particular anatomical features carried racial meanings—skin, facial angle, pelvis, skull, brain mass, genitalia—nevertheless the theory that anatomy predicted intelligence and behavior remained remarkably constant. As Nancy Stepan and Sander Gilman have noted, "The concepts within racial science were so congruent with social and political life (with power relations, that is) as to be virtually uncontested from inside the mainstream of science."<sup>17</sup>

Supported by the cultural authority of an ostensibly objective scientific method, these readings of the body became a powerful instrument for those seeking to justify the economic and political disenfranchisement of various racial groups within systems of slavery and colonialism. As Barbara Fields has noted, however, "Try as they would, the scientific racists of the past failed to discover any objective criterion upon which to classify people; to their chagrin, every criterion they tried varied more within so-called races than between them."<sup>18</sup> Although the methods of science were considered to be outside the political and economic realm, in fact, as we know, these anatomical investigations, however professedly innocent their intentions, were driven by racial ideologies already firmly in place.<sup>19</sup>

Ideologies of race, of course, shaped and reflected both popular and scientific understandings of gender. As Gilman has argued, "Any attempt to establish that the races were inherently different rested to no little

<sup>15</sup> John S. Haller, Jr., *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859–1900* (Urbana, IL, 1971), p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 196. On Cope, see also Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, pp. 115–18.

<sup>17</sup> Nancy Leys Stepan and Sander Gilman, "Appropriating the Idioms of Science: The Rejection of Scientific Racism," in *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*, ed. Dominick LaCapra (Ithaca, NY, 1991), p. 74.

<sup>18</sup> Fields (n. 6 above), p. 97, n. 3.

<sup>19</sup> John Haller, p. 48.

extent on the sexual difference of the black.”<sup>20</sup> Although popular racist mythology in the nineteenth-century United States focused on the supposed difference between the size of African-American and white men’s genitalia, the male body was not necessarily the primary site of medical inquiry into racial difference.<sup>21</sup> Instead, as a number of medical journals from this period demonstrate, comparative anatomists repeatedly located racial difference through the sexual characteristics of the female body.<sup>22</sup>

In exploring the influence of scientific studies of race on the emerging discourse of sexuality, it is useful to look closely at a study from the genre of comparative anatomy. In 1867, W. H. Flower and James Murie published an “Account of the Dissection of a Bushwoman,” which carefully cataloged the various “more perishable soft structures of the body” of a young Bushwoman.<sup>23</sup> They placed their study in a line of inquiry con-

<sup>20</sup>Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca, NY, 1985), p. 112.

<sup>21</sup>According to Gilman, “When one turns to autopsies of black males from [the late nineteenth century], what is striking is the absence of any discussion of the male genitalia” (p. 89). The specific absence of male physiology as a focus of nineteenth-century scientific texts, however, should not minimize the central location of the African-American male body in popular cultural notions of racial difference, esp. in the spectacle of lynching, which had far-reaching effects on both African-American and white attitudes toward the African-American male body. One might also consider the position of the racialized male body in one of the most popular forms of nineteenth-century entertainment, the minstrel show. See Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York, 1993).

<sup>22</sup>The *American Journal of Obstetrics (AJO)* was a frequent forum for these debates. On the position of the hymen, e.g., see C. H. Fort, “Some Corroborative Facts in Regard to the Anatomical Difference between the Negro and White Races,” *AJO* 10 (1877): 258–59; H. Otis Hyatt, “Note on the Normal Anatomy of the Vulvo-Vaginal Orifice,” *AJO* 10 (1877): 253–58; A. G. Smythe, “The Position of the Hymen in the Negro Race,” *AJO* 10 (1877): 638–39; Edward Turnipseed, “Some Facts in Regard to the Anatomical Differences between the Negro and White Races,” *AJO* 10 (1877): 32–33. On the birth canal, see Joseph Taber Johnson, “On Some of the Apparent Peculiarities of Parturition in the Negro Race, with Remarks on Race Pelves in General,” *AJO* 8 (1875): 88–123. This focus on women’s bodies apparently differed from earlier studies. In her recent work on gender and natural history, Londa Schiebinger discusses how eighteenth-century comparative anatomists and anthropologists developed their theories by examining male bodies. See *Nature’s Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Boston, 1993), esp. pp. 143–83.

<sup>23</sup>W. H. Flower and James Murie, “Account of the Dissection of a Bushwoman,” *Journal of Anatomy and Physiology* 1 (1887): 208. Subsequent references will be noted parenthetically within the text. Flower was the conservator of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England; Murie was prosecutor to the Zoological Society of London. For brief discussions of this account, see Gilman, pp. 88–89; and Anita Levy, *Other Women: The Writing of Class, Race, and Gender, 1832–1898* (Princeton, NJ, 1991), pp. 70–72. Although she does not consider questions surrounding the lesbian body, Levy offers an astute reading of this case and its connection to scientific representations of the body of the prostitute.

cerning the African woman's body that had begun at least a half-century earlier with French naturalist Georges Cuvier's description of the woman popularly known as the "Hottentot Venus," or Saartje Baartman, who was displayed to European audiences fascinated by her "steatopygia" (protruding buttocks).<sup>24</sup> Significantly, starting with Cuvier, this tradition of comparative anatomy located the boundaries of race through the sexual and reproductive anatomy of the African female body, ignoring altogether the problematic absence of male bodies from their study.

Flower and Murie's account lingered on two specific sites of difference: the "protuberance of the buttocks, so peculiar to the Bushman race" and "the remarkable development of the labia minora," which were "sufficiently well marked to distinguish these parts from those of any ordinary varieties of the human species" (p. 208). The racial difference of the African body, implied Flower and Murie, was located in its literal excess, a specifically sexual excess that placed her body outside the boundaries of the "normal" female. To support their conclusion, Flower and Murie included corroborating "evidence" in the final part of their account. They quoted a secondhand report, "received from a scientific friend residing at the Cape of Good Hope," describing the anatomy of "two pure bred Hottentots, mother and daughter" (p. 208). This account also focused on the women's genitalia, which they referred to as "appendages" (p. 208). Although their account ostensibly foregrounded boundaries of race, their portrayal of the sexual characteristics of the Bushwoman betrayed Flower and Murie's anxieties about gender boundaries. The characteristics singled out as "peculiar" to this race, the (double) "appendages," fluttered between genders, at one moment masculine, at the next moment exaggeratedly feminine. Flower and Murie constructed the site of *racial* difference by marking the sexual and reproductive anatomy of the African woman as "peculiar"; in their characterization, sexual ambiguity delineated the boundaries of race.

The techniques and logic of late nineteenth-century sexologists, who also routinely included physical examinations in their accounts, reproduce the methodologies employed by comparative anatomists like Flower and Murie. Many of the case histories included in Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, for instance, included a paragraph detailing any an-

<sup>24</sup> Georges Cuvier, "Extraits d'observations faites sur le cadavre d'une femme connue à Paris et à Londres sous le nom de Vénus Hottentote," *Memoires du Musée d'histoire naturelle* 3 (1817): 259–74. After her death in 1815 at the age of 25, Baartman's genitalia were preserved and redisplayed within the scientific space of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. On Baartman, see Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, pp. 160–72; and Stephen Jay Gould, *The Flamingo's Smile* (New York, 1985), pp. 291–305.

atomical peculiarities of the body in question.<sup>25</sup> Although Krafft-Ebing could not draw any conclusions about somatic indicators of “abnormal” sexuality, physical examinations remained a staple of the genre. In Ellis’s *Sexual Inversion*, case studies often focused more intensely on the bodies of female “inverts” than those of their male counterparts.<sup>26</sup> Although the specific sites of anatomical inspection (hymen, clitoris, labia, vagina) differed, the underlying theory remained constant: women’s genitalia and reproductive anatomy held a valuable and presumably visual key to ranking bodies according to norms of sexuality.

Sexologists reproduced not only the methodologies of the comparative anatomy of races, but also its iconography. One of the most consistent medical characterizations of the anatomy of both African-American women and lesbians was the myth of an unusually large clitoris.<sup>27</sup> As late as 1921, medical journals contained articles declaring that “a physical examination of [female homosexuals] will in practically every instance disclose an abnormally prominent clitoris.” Significantly, this author added, “This is particularly so in colored women.”<sup>28</sup> In an earlier account of racial differences between white and African-American women, one gynecologist had also focused on the size and visibility of the clitoris; in his examinations, he had perceived a distinction between the “free” clitoris of “negresses” and the “imprisonment” of the clitoris of the “Aryan American woman.”<sup>29</sup> In constructing these oppositions, these characterizations literalized the sexual and racial ideologies of the nineteenth-century “Cult of True Womanhood,” which explicitly privileged white

<sup>25</sup>Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 12th ed., trans. Franklin S. Klaf (1903; reprint, New York, 1965).

<sup>26</sup>This practice continued well into the twentieth century. See, e.g., Jennifer Terry’s discussion of the anatomical measurement of lesbians by the Committee for the Study of Sex Variants in the 1930s, in “Lesbians under the Medical Gaze: Scientists Search for Remarkable Differences,” *Journal of Sex Research* 27 (August 1990): 317–39, and “Theorizing Deviant Historiography,” *Differences* 3 (Summer 1991): 55–74.

<sup>27</sup>In the first edition of *Sexual Inversion*, Ellis, who did search the lesbian body for masculine characteristics, nevertheless refuted this claim about the clitoris: “there is no connection, as was once supposed, between sexual inversion and an enlarged clitoris” (p. 98).

<sup>28</sup>Perry M. Lichtenstein, “The ‘Fairy’ and the Lady Lover,” *Medical Review of Reviews* 27 (1921): 372. In “Lesbians under the Medical Gaze,” Terry discusses sexologists’ conjectures about the size of lesbians’ genitalia in a report published in 1941. Researchers were somewhat uncertain whether perceived excesses were congenital or the result of particular sex practices. On the history of scientific claims about the sexual function of the clitoris, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), pp. 233–37.

<sup>29</sup>Morris, “Is Evolution Trying to Do Away with the Clitoris?” (paper presented at the meeting of the American Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, St. Louis, September 21, 1892), Yale University Library, New Haven, CT.

women's sexual "purity," while it implicitly suggested African-American women's sexual accessibility.<sup>30</sup>

The case histories in Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* differed markedly according to gender in the amount and degree of attention given to the examination of anatomical details. "As regards the sexual organs it seems possible," Ellis wrote, "so far as my observations go, to speak more definitely of inverted women than of inverted men" (p. 256). Ellis justified his greater scrutiny of women's bodies in part by invoking the ambiguity surrounding women's sexuality in general: "we are accustomed to a much greater familiarity and intimacy between women than between men, and we are less apt to suspect the existence of any abnormal passion" (p. 204). To Ellis, the seemingly imperceptible differences between normal and abnormal intimacies between women called for greater scrutiny into the subtleties of their anatomy. He included the following detailed account as potential evidence for understanding the fine line between the lesbian and the "normal" woman:

*Sexual Organs.*—(a) Internal: Uterus and ovaries appear normal.  
(b) External: Small clitoris, with this irregularity, that the lower folds of the labia minora, instead of uniting one with the other and forming the frenum, are extended upward along the sides of the clitoris, while the upper folds are poorly developed, furnishing the clitoris with a scant hood. The labia majora depart from normal conformation in being fuller in their posterior half than in their anterior part, so that when the subject is in the supine position they sag, as it were, presenting a slight resemblance to fleshy sacs, but in substance and structure they feel normal. [P. 136]

This extraordinary taxonomy, performed for Ellis by an unnamed "obstetric physician of high standing," echoed earlier anatomical catalogs of African women. The exacting eye (and hand) of the investigating physician highlighted every possible detail as meaningful evidence. Through the triple repetition of "normal" and the use of evaluative language like "irregularity" and "poorly developed," the physician reinforced his position of judgment. Without providing criteria for what constituted "normal" anatomy, the physician simply knew irregularity by sight and touch. Moreover, his characterization of what he perceived as abnormal echoed the anxious account by Flower and Murie. Although the description of the clitoris in this account is a notable exception to the tendency to ex-

<sup>30</sup>See Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York, 1987), pp. 20–39; and Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820–1860," in her *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Columbus, OH, 1976), pp. 21–41.

aggerate its size, the account nevertheless scrutinized another site of genital excess. The “fleshy sacs” of this woman, like the “appendages” fetishized in the earlier account, invoked the anatomy of a phantom male body inhabiting the lesbian’s anatomical features.<sup>31</sup>

Clearly, anxieties about gender shaped both Ellis’s and Flower and Murie’s taxonomies of the lesbian and the African woman. Yet their preoccupation with gender cannot be understood as separate from the larger context of scientific assumptions during this period, which one historian has characterized as “the full triumph of Darwinism in American thought.”<sup>32</sup> Gender, in fact, was crucial to Darwinist ideas. One of the basic assumptions within the Darwinian model was the belief that, as organisms evolved through a process of natural selection, they also showed greater signs of differentiation between the (two) sexes. Following this logic, various writers used sexual characteristics as indicators of evolutionary progress toward civilization. In *Man and Woman*, for instance, Ellis himself cautiously suggested that since the “beginnings of industrialism,” “more marked sexual differences in physical development seem (we cannot speak definitely) to have developed than are usually to be found in savage societies.”<sup>33</sup> In this passage, Ellis drew from theories developed by biologists like Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson. In their important work *The Evolution of Sex*, which traced the role of sexual difference in evolution, Geddes and Thomson stated that “hermaphroditism is primitive; the unisexual state is a subsequent differentiation. The present cases of normal hermaphroditism imply either persistence or reversion.”<sup>34</sup> In characterizing either lesbians’ or African-American women’s bodies as less sexually differentiated than the norm (always pos-

<sup>31</sup> Characterizing this passage as “punitively complete,” Koestenbaum (n. 9 above) has suggested that Ellis also had personal motivations for focusing so intently on the lesbian body: “Ellis, by taking part in this over-description of a lesbian, studied and subjugated the preference of his own wife; marrying a lesbian, choosing to discontinue sexual relations with her, writing *Sexual Inversion* with a homosexual [Symonds], Ellis might well have felt his own heterosexuality questioned” (pp. 54, 55).

<sup>32</sup> George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York, 1971), p. 246.

<sup>33</sup> Havelock Ellis, *Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters* (1894; New York, 1911), p. 13. Of course, the “beginnings of industrialism” coincided with the late eighteenth century, the period during which, as Schiebinger has shown, anatomists began looking for more subtle marks of differentiation. See Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), pp. 189–212.

<sup>34</sup> Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson, *The Evolution of Sex* (London, 1889; New York, 1890), p. 80. Ellis no doubt read this volume closely, for he had chosen it to inaugurate a series of popular scientific books (the Contemporary Science Series) that he edited for the Walter Scott company. For more on this series, see Grosskurth (n. 11 above), pp. 114–17.

ited as white heterosexual women's bodies), anatomists and sexologists drew upon notions of natural selection to dismiss these bodies as anomalous "throwbacks" within a scheme of cultural and anatomical progress.

### THE MIXED BODY

The emergence of evolutionary theory in the late nineteenth century foregrounded a view of continuity between the "savage" and "civilized" races, in contrast to earlier scientific thinking about race, which had focused on debates about the origins of different racial groups. Proponents of monogeny, on the one hand, argued that all races derived from a single origin. Those who argued for polygeny, on the other hand, argued that different races descended from separate biological and geographical sources, a view, not coincidentally, that supported segregationist impulses.<sup>35</sup> With Darwin's publication of *Origin of the Species* in 1859, the debate between polygeny and monogeny was replaced by evolutionary theory, which was appropriated as a powerful scientific model for understanding race. Its controversial innovation was its emphasis on the continuity between animals and human beings. Evolutionary theory held out the possibility that the physical, mental, and moral characteristics of human beings had evolved gradually over time from apelike ancestors.<sup>36</sup> Although the idea of continuity depended logically on the blurring of boundaries within hierarchies, it did not necessarily invalidate the methods or assumptions of comparative anatomy. On the contrary, the notion of visible differences and racial hierarchies were deployed to corroborate Darwinian theory.

The concept of continuity was harnessed to growing attention to miscegenation, or "amalgamation," in social science writing in the first decades of the twentieth century. Edward Byron Reuter's *The Mulatto in the United States*, for instance, pursued an exhaustive quantitative and comparative study of the mulatto population and its achievements in relation to those of "pure" white or African ancestry. Reuter traced the presence of a distinct group of mixed-race people back to early American history: "Their physical appearance, though markedly different from that of the pure blooded race, was sufficiently marked to set them off as

<sup>35</sup>For a full account of the debates around monogeny and polygeny, see Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (n. 14 above), pp. 30–72. Polygeny was a predominantly American theoretical development and was widely referred to as the "American school" of anthropology.

<sup>36</sup>See Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800–1960* (Hamden, CT, 1982), p. 53.

a peculiar people.”<sup>37</sup> Reuter, of course, was willing to admit the viability of “mulattoes” only within a framework that emphasized the separation of races. Far from using the notion of the biracial body to refute the belief in discrete markers of racial difference, Reuter perpetuated the notion by focusing on the distinctiveness of this “peculiar people.”

Miscegenation was, of course, not only a question of race but also one of sex and sexuality. Ellis recognized this intersection implicitly, if not explicitly. His sense of the “racial questions” implicit in sex was surely informed by his involvement with eugenics, the movement in Britain, Europe, and the United States that, to greater or lesser degrees, advocated selective reproduction and “race hygiene.”<sup>38</sup> In the United States, eugenics was both a political and scientific response to the growth of a population beginning to challenge the dominance of white political interests. The widespread scientific and social interest in eugenics was fueled by anxieties expressed through the popularized notion of (white) “race suicide.” This phrase, invoked most famously by Theodore Roosevelt, summed up nativist fears about a perceived decline in reproduction among white Americans. The new field of eugenics worked hand in hand with growing antiscegenation sentiment and policy, provoked not only by attempts for political representation among African-Americans but also by the influx of large populations of immigrants.<sup>39</sup> As Mark Haller has pointed out, “Racists and [immigration] restrictionists . . . found in eugenics the scientific reassurances they needed that heredity shaped man’s personality and that their assumptions rested on biological facts.”<sup>40</sup> Ellis saw himself as an advocate for eugenics policies. As an active member of the British National Council for Public Morals, Ellis

<sup>37</sup> Edward Byron Reuter, *The Mulatto in the United States: Including a Study of the Role of Mixed-Blood Races throughout the World* (Boston, 1918), p. 338. Interestingly, in a paper delivered to the Eugenics Society of Britain in 1911, Edith Ellis (who had at least one long-term lesbian relationship while she was married to Havelock Ellis) had also used the phrase “peculiar people” to describe homosexual men and women. See Grosskurth, pp. 237–38.

<sup>38</sup> Francis Galton (a cousin of Charles Darwin) introduced and defined the term “eugenics” in his *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* as “the cultivation of the race” and “the science of improving stock, which . . . takes cognisance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have had” (1883; reprint, New York, 1973).

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of Roosevelt’s place within the racial ideology of the period, see Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1980). See also John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New York, 1955; reprint, 1963), pp. 146–57.

<sup>40</sup> Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1963), p. 144.



wrote several publications concerning eugenics, including *The Problem of Race Regeneration*, a pamphlet advocating “voluntary” sterilization of the unfit as a policy in the best interest of “the race.”<sup>41</sup> In a letter to Francis Galton in 1907, Ellis wrote, “In the concluding volume of my Sex ‘Studies’ I shall do what I can to insinuate the eugenic attitude.”<sup>42</sup>

The beginnings of sexology, then, were related to and perhaps even dependent on a pervasive climate of eugenicist and antimiscegenation sentiment and legislation. Even at the level of nomenclature, anxieties about miscegenation shaped sexologists’ attempts to find an appropriate and scientific name for the newly visible object of their study. Introduced in 1892 through the English translation of Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*, the term “homosexuality” itself stimulated a great deal of uneasiness. In 1915, Ellis reported that “most investigators have been much puzzled in coming to a conclusion as to the best, most exact, and at the same time most colorless names [for same-sex desire].”<sup>43</sup> Giving an account of the various names proposed, such as Ulrichs’s “Uranian” and Westphal’s “contrary sexual feeling,” Ellis admitted that “homosexuality” was the most widespread term used. Far from the ideal “colorless” term, however, “homosexuality” evoked Ellis’s distaste for its mixed origins: in a regretful aside, he noted that “it has, philologically, the awkward disadvantage of being a bastard term compounded of Greek and Latin elements” (p. 2). In the first edition of *Sexual Inversion*, Ellis had stated his alarm more directly: “‘Homosexual’ is a barbarously hybrid word.”<sup>44</sup> A similar view was expressed by Edward Carpenter, an important socialist organizer in England and an outspoken advocate of homosexual and women’s emancipation at this time. Like Ellis, Carpenter winced at the connotations of illegitimacy in the word: “‘homosexual,’ generally used in scientific works, is of course a bastard word. ‘Homogenic’ has been suggested, as being from two roots, both Greek, i.e., ‘homos,’ same, and ‘genos,’ sex.”<sup>45</sup> Carpenter’s suggestion, “homogenic,” of course, resonated both against and within the vocabularies of eugenics and miscegenation. Performing these etymological gyrations with almost comic literalism, Ellis and Carpenter expressed pervasive cultural sensitivities around questions of racial origins and purity. Concerned above all with legitimacy, they attempted to remove and rewrite

<sup>41</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents: Meanings, Myths, and Modern Sexualities* (Boston, 1985), p. 76; Grosskurth, p. 410. See also Havelock Ellis, “The Sterilization of the Unfit,” *Eugenics Review* (October 1909): 203–6.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted by Grosskurth, p. 410.

<sup>43</sup> Ellis, *Sexual Inversion* (1915), p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Ellis, *Sexual Inversion* (1900), p. 1n.

<sup>45</sup> Edward Carpenter, “The Homogenic Attachment,” in his *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women*, 5th ed. (London, 1918), p. 40n.

the mixed origins of “homosexuality.” Ironically, despite their suggestions for alternatives, the “bastard” term took hold among sexologists, thus yoking together, at least rhetorically, two kinds of mixed bodies—the racial “hybrid” and the invert.

Although Ellis exhibited anxieties about biracial bodies, for others who sought to naturalize and recuperate homosexuality, the evolutionary emphasis on continuity offered potentially useful analogies. Xavier Mayne, for example, one of the earliest American advocates of homosexual rights, wrote, “Between whitest of men and the blackest negro stretches out a vast line of intermediary races as to their colours: brown, olive, red tawny, yellow.”<sup>46</sup> He then invoked this model of race to envision a continuous spectrum of gender and sexuality: “Nature abhors the absolute, delights in the fractional. . . . Intersexes express the half-steps, the between-beings.”<sup>47</sup> In this analogy, Mayne reversed dominant cultural hierarchies that privileged purity over mixture. Drawing upon irrefutable evidence of the “natural” existence of biracial people, Mayne posited a direct analogy to a similarly mixed body, the intersex, which he positioned as a necessary presence within the natural order.

Despite Carpenter’s complaint about “bastard” terminology, he, like Mayne, also occasionally appropriated the scientific language of racial mixing in order to resist the association between homosexuality and degeneration. In *The Intermediate Sex*, he attempted to theorize homosexuality outside of the discourse of pathology or abnormality; he too suggested a continuum of genders, with “intermediate types” occupying a place between the poles of exclusively heterosexual male and female. In an appendix to *The Intermediate Sex*, Carpenter offered a series of quotations supporting his ideas, some of which drew upon racial analogies: “Anatomically and mentally we find all shades existing from the pure genus man to the pure genus woman. Thus there has been constituted what is well named by an illustrious exponent of the science ‘The Third Sex.’ . . . As we are continually meeting in cities women who are one-quarter, or one-eighth, or so on, *male* . . . so there are in the Inner Self similar half-breeds, all adapting themselves to circumstances with perfect ease.”<sup>48</sup> Through notions of “shades” of gender and sexual “half-breeds,” Carpenter appropriated dominant scientific models of race to construct and embody what he called the intermediate sex. These racial

<sup>46</sup>Xavier Mayne [Edward Irenaeus Prime Stevenson], *The Intersexes: A History of Similitudinism as A Problem in Social Life* ([Naples?], ca. 1908; reprint, New York, 1975), p. 14.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 15, 17.

<sup>48</sup>Quoted in Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, pp. 133, 170. Carpenter gives the following citations for these quotations: Dr. James Burnet, *Medical Times and Hospital Gazette*, vol. 34, no. 1497 (London, November 10, 1906); and Charles G. Leland, “The Alternate Sex” (London, 1904), pp. 41, 57.

paradigms, in addition to models of gender, offered a Carpenter a coherent vocabulary for understanding and expressing a new vision of sexual bodies.

#### SEXUAL "PERVERSION" AND RACIALIZED DESIRE

By the early twentieth century, medical models of sexuality had begun to shift in emphasis, moving away from a focus on the body and toward psychological theories of desire. It seems significant that this shift took place within a period that also saw a transformation of scientific notions about race. As historians have suggested, in the early twentieth century, scientific claims for exclusively biological models of racial difference were beginning to be undermined, although, of course, these models have persisted in popular understandings of race.<sup>49</sup>

In what ways were these shifts away from biologized notions of sexuality and race related in scientific literature? One area in which they overlapped and perhaps shaped one another was through models of interracial and homosexual desire. Specifically, two tabooed sexualities—miscegenation and homosexuality—became linked in sexological and psychological discourse through the model of "abnormal" sexual object choice.

The convergence of theories of "perverse" racial and sexual desire shaped the assumptions of psychologists like Margaret Otis, whose analysis of "A Perversion Not Commonly Noted" appeared in a medical journal of 1913. Otis noted that in all-girl institutions, including reform schools and boarding schools, she had observed widespread "love-making between the white and colored girls."<sup>50</sup> Both fascinated and alarmed, Otis remarked that this perversion was "well known in reform schools and institutions for delinquent girls," but that "this particular

<sup>49</sup>In *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States* (New York, 1980), Joel Williamson suggests that a similar psychologization of race was underway: "By about 1900 it was possible in the South for one who was biologically purely white to become behaviorally black. Blackness had become not a matter of visibility, not even, ironically, of the one-drop rule. It had passed on to become a matter of inner morality and outward behavior" (p. 108). See also Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (New York, 1992). Legal scholars have begun to explore the analogies between sodomy law and antimiscegenation statutes. See, e.g., Andrew Koppelman, "The Miscegenation Analogy: Sodomy Law as Sex Discrimination," *Yale Law Journal* 98 (November 1988): 145–64. See also Janet Halley, "The Politics of the Closet: Towards Equal Protection for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Identity," *UCLA Law Review* 36 (1989): 915–76. I am grateful to Julia Friedlander for bringing this legal scholarship to my attention.

<sup>50</sup>Margaret Otis, "A Perversion Not Commonly Noted," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 8 (June–July 1913): 113–16. Subsequent references will be noted parenthetically within the text.

form of the homosexual relation has perhaps not been brought to the attention of scientists" (p. 113). Performing her ostensible duty to science, Otis carefully described these rituals of interracial romance and the girls' "peculiar moral code." In particular, she noted that the girls incorporated racial difference into courtship rituals self-consciously patterned on traditional gender roles: "One white girl . . . admitted that the colored girl she loved seemed the man, and thought it was so in the case of the others" (p. 114). In Otis's account, the actions of the girls clearly threatened the keepers of the institutions, who responded to the perceived danger with efforts to racially segregate their charges (who were, of course, already segregated by gender). Otis, however, left open the motivation for segregation: Did the girls' intimacy trouble the authorities because it was homosexual or because it was interracial? Otis avoided exploring this question and offered a succinct theory instead: "The difference in color, in this case, takes the place of difference in sex" (p. 113).

Otis's explicit discussion of racial difference and homosexuality was extremely rare amidst the burgeoning social science literature on sexuality in the early twentieth century.<sup>51</sup> Significantly, Otis characterized this phenomenon as a type of "the homosexual relation" and not as a particular form of interracial sexuality. Despite Otis's focus on desire rather than physiology, her characterization of the schoolgirls' "system" participated in stereotypes based on the earlier anatomical models. She used a simple analogy between race and gender in order to understand their desire: black was to white as masculine was to feminine.

Recent historical work on the lesbian subject in turn-of-the-century America offers useful ways of thinking about the implications of Otis's account, and perhaps in the culture at large. In a compelling analysis of the highly publicized 1892 murder of Freda Ward by her lover, Alice Mitchell, Lisa Duggan has argued that what initially pushed the women's relationship beyond what their peers accepted as normal was Mitchell's decision to pass as a man.<sup>52</sup> Passing, according to Duggan, was "a strategy so rare among bourgeois white women that their plan was perceived as so radically inappropriate as to be insane."<sup>53</sup> Duggan characterizes passing as a kind of red flag that visually marked Mitchell and Ward's relationship. Suddenly, with the prospect of Mitchell's visible transformation from "woman" to "man," the sexual nature of their relationship

<sup>51</sup>Chauncey (n. 1 above) notes that "by the early teens the number of articles of abstracts concerning homosexuality regularly available to the American medical profession had grown enormously" (p. 115, n. 3).

<sup>52</sup>Lisa Duggan, "The Trials of Alice Mitchell: Sensationalism, Sexology, and the Lesbian Subject in Turn-of-the-Century America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18 (Summer 1993): 791-814.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 798.

also came into view—abnormal and dangerous to the eyes of their surveyors.

Following Duggan's line of analysis, I suggest that racial difference performed a similar function in Otis's account. In turn-of-the-century American culture, where Jim Crow segregation erected a structure of taboos against any kind of public (non-work-related) interracial relationship, racial difference visually marked the alliances between the school-girls as already suspicious. In a culture in which Ellis could remark that he was accustomed to women being on intimate terms, race became a visible marker for the sexual nature of that liaison. In effect, the institution of racial segregation and its fiction of "black" and "white" produced the girls' interracial romances as "perverse."<sup>54</sup>

It is possible that the discourse of sexual pathology, in turn, began to inform scientific understandings of race. By 1903, a southern physician drew upon the language of sexology to legitimate a particularly racist fear: "A perversion from which most races are exempt, prompt the negro's inclinations towards the white woman, whereas other races incline toward the females of their own."<sup>55</sup> Using the medical language of perversion to naturalize and legitimate the dominant cultural myth of the black rapist, this account characterized interracial desire as a type of congenital abnormal sexual object choice. In the writer's terms, the desire of African-American men for white women (though not the desire of white men for African-American women) could be understood and pathologized by drawing upon emergent models of sexual orientation.<sup>56</sup>

#### DIVERGENCES IN RACIAL AND SEXUAL SCIENCE

The inextricability of the "invention" of homosexuality and heterosexuality from the extraordinary pressures attached to racial definition in the late nineteenth century obtained, of course, at a particular historical moment. Although sexologists' search for physical signs of sexual orienta-

<sup>54</sup>In a useful discussion of recent feminist analyses of identity, Lisa Walker suggests that a similar trope of visibility is prevalent in white critics' attempts to theorize race and sexuality. See her "How to Recognize a Lesbian: The Cultural Politics of Looking Like What You Are," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18 (Summer 1993): 866–90.

<sup>55</sup>W. T. English, "The Negro Problem from the Physician's Point of View," *Atlanta Journal-Record of Medicine* 5 (October 1903): 468.

<sup>56</sup>On the other hand, antilynching campaigns could also invoke the language of sexology. Although the analogy invoked sadism, rather than homosexuality, in 1935 a psychologist characterized lynching as a kind of "Dixie sex perversion. . . . Much that is commonly stigmatized as cruelty is a perversion of the sex instinct." Quoted in Phyllis Klotman, "'Tearing a Hole in History': Lynching as Theme and Motif," *Black American Literature Forum* 19 (1985): 57. The original quote appeared in the *Baltimore Afro-American* (March 16, 1935).

tion mirrored the methods of comparative racial anatomists, the modern case study marked a significant departure from comparative anatomy by attaching a self-generated narrative to the body in question. As Jeffrey Weeks has written, Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* was a decisive moment in the "invention" of the homosexual because "it was the eruption into print of the speaking pervert, the individual marked, or marred, by his (or her) sexual impulses."<sup>57</sup>

The case study challenged the tendency of scientific writers to position the homosexual individual as a mute body whose surface was to be interpreted by those with professional authority. Whether to grant a voice, however limited, to the homosexual body was a heavily contested methodological question among sexologists. The increasingly central position of the case study in the literature on homosexuality elicited concern from contemporary professionals, who perceived an unbridgeable conflict between autobiography and scientific objectivity. Invested in maintaining authority in medical writing, Morton Prince, for example, a psychologist who advocated searching for a "cure" to homosexuality, described in exasperation his basic distrust of the case history as a source of medical evidence, especially in the case of "perverts": "Even in taking an ordinary medical history, we should hesitate to accept such testimony as final, and I think we should be even more cautious in our examination of autobiographies which attempt to give an analysis, founded on introspection, of the feelings, passions and tastes of degenerate individuals who attempt to explain their first beginnings in early childhood."<sup>58</sup> The "speaking pervert," for Prince, was a challenge to the "truth" of medical examination and threatened to contradict the traditional source of medical evidence, the patient's mute physical body as interpreted by the physician. In Prince's view, the case history also blurred the boundaries between the legal and medical spheres: "Very few of these autobiogra-

<sup>57</sup>Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents* (n. 41 above), p. 67. Weeks points out that beginning with Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (n. 25 above), the case study became the standard in sexological writing. The dynamic between the medical literature and a growing self-identified gay (male) subculture is exemplified by the growth of different editions of this single work. The first edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, published in 1886, contained forty-five case histories and 110 pages; by 1903, the twelfth edition contained 238 case histories and 437 pages. Many of the subsequent case histories were supplied by readers who responded to the book with letters detailing their own sexual histories. This information suggests that, to at least some extent, an emerging gay male subculture was able to appropriate the space of "professional" medicolegal writing for its own use, thus blurring the boundaries between professional medical and popular literature.

<sup>58</sup>Morton Prince, "Sexual Perversion or Vice? A Pathological and Therapeutic Inquiry," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 25 (April 1898): 237–56, reprinted in his *Psychotherapy and Multiple Personality: Selected Essays*, ed. Nathan G. Hale (Cambridge, MA, 1975), p. 91.

phies will stand analysis. Probably there is no class of people whose statements will less stand the test of a scorching cross-examination than the moral pervert. One cannot help feeling that if the pervert was thus examined by an independent observer, instead of being allowed to tell his own story without interruption, a different tale would be told, or great gaps would be found, which are now nicely bridged, or many asserted facts would be resolved into pure inferences.”<sup>59</sup> A “different tale” indeed. Prince’s focus on “testimony” and “cross-examination” illustrated the overlapping interest and methods of the medical and the legal spheres. His tableau of litigation placed the homosexual individual within an already guilty body, one that defied the assumption that it was a readable text; its anatomical markers did not necessarily correspond to predictable sexual behaviors. The sure duplicity of this body demanded investigation by the prosecutor/physician, whose professional expertise somehow guaranteed his access to the truth.

Ellis, who sought legitimacy both for himself as a scientist and for the nascent field of sexology, also worried about the association between autobiographical accounts and fraud. In *Sexual Inversion*, he stated that “it may be proper, at this point, to say a few words as to the reliability of the statements furnished by homosexual persons. This has sometimes been called in question” (p. 89). Although he also associated the homosexual voice with duplicity, Ellis differed from Prince by placing this unreliability within a larger social context. He located the causes of insincerity not in the homosexual individual, but in the legal system that barred homosexuality: “we cannot be surprised at this [potential insincerity] so long as inversion is counted a crime. The most normal persons, under similar conditions, would be similarly insincere” (p. 89).

With the movement toward the case study and less biologized psychoanalytic models of sexuality, sexologists relied less and less upon the methodologies of comparative anatomy and implicitly acknowledged that physical characteristics were inadequate evidence for the “truth” of the body in question. Yet the assumptions of comparative anatomy did not completely disappear; although they seemed to contradict more psychological understandings of sexuality, notions of biological difference continued to shape cultural understandings of sexuality, particularly in popular representations of lesbians and gay men.

#### TROUBLING SCIENCE

My efforts here have focused on the various ways that late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific discourses around race became

<sup>59</sup>Prince, *Psychotherapy and Multiple Personality*, p. 92.

available to sexologists and physicians as a way to articulate emerging models of homosexuality. Methodologies and iconographies of comparative anatomy attempted to locate discrete physiological markers of difference by which to classify and separate types of human beings. Sexologists drew upon these techniques to try to position the “homosexual” body as anatomically distinguishable from the “normal” body. Likewise, medical discourses around sexuality appear to have been steeped in pervasive cultural anxieties toward “mixed” bodies, particularly the mulatto, whose symbolic position as a mixture of black and white bodies was literalized in scientific accounts. Sexologists and others writing about homosexuality borrowed the model of the mixed body as a way to make sense of the “invert.” Finally, racial and sexual discourses converged in psychological models that understood “unnatural” desire as a marker of perversion: in these cases, interracial and same-sex sexuality became analogous.

Although scientific and medical models of both race and sexuality held enormous definitional power at the turn of the century, they were variously and complexly incorporated, revised, resisted, or ignored both by the individuals they sought to categorize and within the larger cultural imagination. My speculations are intended to raise questions and to point toward possibilities for further historical and theoretical work. How, for instance, were analogies between race and sexual orientation deployed or not within popular cultural discourses? In religious discourses? In legal discourses? What were the material effects of their convergence or divergence? How have these analogies been used to organize bodies in other historical moments, and, most urgently, in our own?

In the last few years alone, for example, there has been a proliferation of “speaking perverts”—in political demonstrations, television, magazines, courts, newspapers, and classrooms. Despite the unprecedented opportunities for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer speech, however, recent scientific research into sexuality has reflected a determination to discover a biological key to the origins of homosexuality. Highly publicized new studies have purported to locate indicators of sexual orientation in discrete niches of the human body, ranging from a particular gene on the X chromosome to the hypothalamus, a segment of the brain.<sup>60</sup> In an updated and more technologically sophisticated form, comparative anatomy is being granted a peculiar cultural authority in the study of sexuality.

<sup>60</sup>See, e.g., Natalie Angier, “Report Suggests Homosexuality Is Linked to Genes,” *New York Times* (July 16, 1993), pp. A1, A12, and “Zone of Brain Linked to Men’s Sexual Orientation,” *New York Times* (August 30, 1991), pp. A1, D8. See also Simon LeVay, *The Sexual Brain* (Cambridge, MA, 1993).



These studies, of course, have not gone uncontested, arriving as they have within a moment characterized not only by the development of social constructionist theories of sexuality but also, in the face of AIDS, by a profound and aching skepticism toward prevailing scientific methods and institutions. At the same time, some see political efficacy in these new scientific studies, arguing that gay men and lesbians might gain access to greater rights if sexual orientation could be proven an immutable biological difference. Such arguments make an analogy, whether explicit or unspoken, to precedents of understanding race as immutable difference. Reverberating through these arguments are echoes of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century medical models of sexuality and race, whose earlier interdependence suggests a need to understand the complex relationships between constructions of race and sexuality during our own very different historical moment. How does the current effort to rebiologize sexual orientation and to invoke the vocabulary of immutable difference reflect or influence existing cultural anxieties and desires about racialized bodies? To what extent does the political deployment of these new scientific “facts” about sexuality depend upon reinscribing biologized racial categories? These questions, as I have tried to show for an earlier period, require a shift in the attention and practices of queer reading and lesbian and gay studies, one that locates questions of race as inextricable from the study of sexuality, rather than a part of our peripheral vision.