

## **THEME 1: BIOLOGY AND BIOTECHNOLOGY**

The saga continues. Again, we're asking:

What cultural effects and risks follow from treating biology as technology? We looked last time at Emily Martin's argument about how the technology of manufacture has shaped the way recent obstetrics has conceptualized the processes of reproduction and birth — and part of that argument was about *gender* — embodied experience of sexed bodies.

Definition of gender?

Sex/Gender.

Today, we're looking at what happens when *some* people's bodies are treated as technological proxies or substitutes for other people's bodies. We're looking at what happens when racial and racist ideas about different people are used to treat some people as technologies in the service of others.

Definition of race?

### **Technologies of Race: Medical Experimentation**

Kapsalis, Terri. 1997. *Mastering the Female Pelvis: Race and the Tools of Reproduction*. In *Public Privates: Performing Gynecology from Both Ends of the Speculum*. Durham: Duke University Press, (pp. 31-59).

*Exchange your paragraphs on Martin and Kapsalis.*

The story of Sims "father of gynecology"

There are three claims in this article:

1. The institution of slavery served medicine in providing subjects for experimentation
2. The use of the speculum was founded on slave women's bodies
3. Sims surgical experimentation was precedent for medical institutional involvement in racist eugenicist practices concerned with the reproductive capacities of poor women of color.

*EXPLAIN?*

SAMENESS?

DIFFERENCE?

These enslaved women were treated as a TECHNOLOGY.

In part, this was because they were treated as COMMODITIES.

But using just Marx won't get us all the way here. RACE and GENDER are important too:

### **NORPLANT**

Can we think about the continuities and differences with Sims treatment of the women who were subject to his experiments?

*What is the relationship here between CULTURE and TECHNOLOGY?*

Jones, James. 1993. The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment: "A Moral Astigmatism." In *The "Racial" Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future*. Sandra Harding, ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993, (pp. 275-286).

Beginning in 1932, the United States Public Health Service conducted a study of the effects of untreated syphilis on 600 black men in Macon County Alabama. They received no treatment. This was discovered in the 1970s, along with the fact that new treatments had come into existence during years of the "experiment." They were never given to these men.

*Why did these men participate?*

film: *The Deadly Deception*.

Landecker, Hannah. 2000. Immortality, In Vitro: A History of the HeLa Cell Line. In *Biotechnology and Culture: Bodies, Anxieties, Ethics*. Paul Brodwin, ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, (pp. 53-72).

This piece documents the ways ideas about race — and the imagery of race — can operate at many different levels, even when there are NO HUMANS AROUND! This article shows how prejudices about race can materialize even at the level of the single cell.

It is the story of the HeLa cell line. *Can someone spell out the facts of the case here?*

Landecker writes that "The woman and the cells are immortal, the woman through the cells' life and the cells through the woman's death" (p. 54). *What does this mean? Does it make sense to put it this way? Why or why not?*

What IS immortalizing a cell? *Where are we: magic, science or religion?*

*EXPLAIN?* What is *biotechnology* here?

*Technological determinism*: an ideology that obscures human relationships that support technology. Remember *The Matrix*.

*How did the HeLa cell line become RACIALIZED?*

Digression on CATEGORY OF RACE AND ONE DROP RULE.

See Landecker's 3<sup>rd</sup> full paragraph (p. 62).

Lack's lack of consent and control also brings up disturbing echoes of black women as subject to experimentation...

Nowadays the issue has become a question of whether one owns all of one's body.

I'd like to review some of the themes in the class so far

magic, science, religion

the function of ritual

commodity fetishism

use-value, exchange-value

labor

alienation

the role of metaphor in how we describe our bodies and our technologies

those metaphors may make use of gender, of race

Feel free to come talk to me in office hours about what you might be thinking of for papers.

*For next time:*

*Write a paragraph: What is biopower?*