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Body Imaging and the Body Imaginary: An Interdisciplinary Psychoanalytic Conference
Emory Psychoanalytic Studies Program
Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, April 3-4, 2015

November 15, 2014

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The blackness of intersex flesh: a psychoanalytical reimagining of the corporeal

...before the "body" there is the "flesh," that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse...

Hortense J. Spillers, 1987

Psychoanalysis gives an account of how "the body is something that we must come to accommodate psychically" (Grosz). Feminist science and technology studies (FSTS) reminds us of the corporeal body in its sexed specificity as well as the political nature of scientific apprehension of *the body*. Indeed, FSTS scholars have encouraged a "return to the body" to overcome blindspots inherent in feminist anti-biologism (Wilson, Roy). However, work in blackness studies challenges notions of *the body* as an always discursive construct and thus a privileged site. In the Afro-diasporic sense, laying claim to one's *body* is not a universal possibility. The body is a discursively constructed, privileged entity. Theoretical attention should thus focus on *flesh* (Moten, Spillers). Intersex presents a further corporeal challenge to psychoanalytic theories of development which are founded on an unconscious awareness of genitalia. According to Klein "in both sexes there is an inherent unconscious knowledge of the existence of the penis as well as of the vagina" which informs mental and sexual development. Thus, complicating both notions of *the body*, and the *sexed* body, I explore the generative possibilities emerging from a postcolonial FSTS analytic. Specifically, I present the example of *raced intersexuality* (Swarr). I interrogate the moment that Sara Baartman's (The Hottentot Venus) flesh encounters the politico-economic libido of colonial conquest as not only resistance to psychoanalytic theories of development, but also as a condition of possibility that animates psychoanalysis.

Key words: postcolonial feminist science and technology studies, psychoanalysis, blackness, intersex, raced intersexuality, Melanie Klein