



Race and Gender

Simone de Beauvoir (1949)

Frantz Omar Fanon (1952)

By Y.H. PANG

Scope of Lecture

Simone de Beauvoir

Frantz Fanon

Philosophy - Existentialism

- determination of biology
- Femininity - acquired trait
- "She is the Other."
- Resisting Magna Mater
- colonial order
- Process of "othering"
- Racial adaptation
- Psychological aspects
- "inferiority complex"
- Possible solutions?

“The Second Sex was an act of Promethean audacity—a theft of Olympian fire—from which there was no turning back.”

— literary critic and biographer, Judith Thurman (2009)

“The Second Sex is a call to arms. It explains that women are often complicit in their own subordinated status.”

— Novelist, critic, Zoe Pilger (2014)

“... the book was once one that women had to look at behind closed doors”

— Margaret Atwood

3

prodigy

activist

philosopher



(1908-1986)

Someone we
have to study?

Mistress

Lesbian

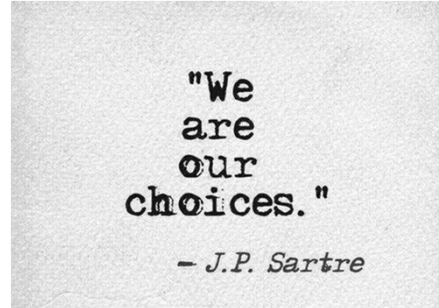
She perceived herself as
Sartre's inferior [?]

4

Philosophy - Existentialism

"This means that in focusing on the individual's possibilities, we will define these possibilities not in terms of happiness but in terms of freedom."(37)

↳ motherhood is an obstacle or "curse" on the path to freedom.



5

Beauvoir – 4 points

- Determination of biology
- Femininity - acquired trait
- "She is the Other."
- Resisting Magna Mater

6

1. Determination of Biology?

“In the early months, it often brings with it appetite loss and vomiting that is not observed in any other domestic female and shows the body’s *revolt* against the species taking possession of it” (64)

Historically, Women had little control over her Body & procreation. She was seen as her Husband’s property [sic]

THE BLOG 01/28/2015 04:27 pm ET | Updated Dec 06, 2017

The Joys of Motherhood

By Meredith Hale



MEREDITH HALE

7

↳ How many women think that?

“The male, by comparison, is infinitely more privileged: his genital life does not thwart his personal existence; it unfolds seamlessly, without crises and generally without accident.” (66)

8

“the position I adopt—that of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty—that if the body is not a thing, it is a situation” (68)

“But her body is not enough to define her; it has a lived reality only as taken on by consciousness through actions and within a society; biology alone cannot provide an answer to the question that concerns us: why is woman the Other?”
(71)

9

2. Femininity – an acquired trait

“On ne naît pas femme: on le devient”

“One is not born, but rather becomes, woman.”
(330)

“Women are seen through a different lens. ... I've learned that I can't be quite so passionate in my presentation. I love to wave my arms, but apparently that's a little bit scary to people. And I can't yell too much. It comes across as 'too loud' or 'too shrill' or 'too this' or 'too that'.”
Hillary Clinton, 2016

↳ **femininity is not a natural, essential and eternal trait; rather it is an acquired trait that is created out of the cultural, historical and economic context.**

10

“No ‘maternal instinct,’ innate and mysterious, lies therein either. The little girl observes that child care falls to the mother ... she is given dolls so she will already feel the tangible aspect of those riches. Her ‘vocation’ is determined imperiously.” (344)



Pro-gun Jamie Gilt, 2016

11

“Throughout her childhood, the little girl was bullied and mutilated ... In a more or less disguised way, her youth is consumed by waiting. She is waiting for Man... She has always been convinced of male superiority; this male prestige is not a childish mirage; it has economic and social foundations; men are, without any question, the masters of the world;... She will free herself from her parents’ home, from her mother’s hold; she will open up her future not by an active conquest but by passively and docilely delivering herself into the hands of a new master.” (395-96)

↳ **Daddy’s little girl [?]**

12

- “[...] and ultimately how she appears to men, is of critical importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life.”
- John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC, 1972), 46.

13

- “Transform the woman into a man. ...Then notice the violence which that transformation does. Not to the image, but to the assumptions of a likely viewer.” (Berger 64)

14

3. “She is the Other.”

“Le problème de la femme a toujours été un problème d’hommes.”

“The problem of woman has always been a problem of men.” (181)

↳ ‘Woman’ as an archetype and philosophical category that is interchangeable with the idea of ‘Other’.

15

- “She is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is **the Other**.” (26)

- Blacks
- Jews
- Orientals
- Gypsies

Made to feel inferior
Subjected to debasement

– ‘Unfriendly people, they probably think we have come here to spy on them. How do they provide for food, there are no shops here on the moors?’ (Enid Blyton, 1961:47)

16

“For all those suffering from an inferiority complex, this is a miraculous liniment; no one is more arrogant toward women, more aggressive or more disdainful, than a man anxious about his own virility.” (34)

Vice versa?
Issue is power?
Not gender?

17

4. Resisting Magna Mater



SJ MAGAZINE'S
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT
SERIES

MONDAY, NOV. 6

Women in Business: A man's point of view

Four black and white headshots of men are displayed in a row.

Sal Paolantonio ESPN National Correspondent	Dr. Ali Houshmand President, Rowan University	Richard P. Miller President/CEO, Virtua	Lou Greenwald Majority Leader, N.J. State Assembly
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Register at sjmagazine.net

(256)

18

“They worship the gods made by males. And males have shaped the great virile figures for their own exaltation: Hercules, Prometheus, Parsifal; in the destiny of these heroes, woman has merely a secondary role.” (196)



↳ Why is the woman in a secondary role?

19

“Here, then, is why woman has a double and deceptive image: she is everything he craves and everything he does not attain. ... As his servant and companion, man expects her also to be his public and his judge, to confirm him in his being; but she opposes him with her indifference, even with her mockery and her laughter.” (250-51)

↳ What threat does a woman constitute to a man?

20

Subjugation of women - Fear that women as a dangerous, castrating organ.

“[A/c to Henry de Montherlant]
Her crime is to want to keep
her son locked up forever in her
womb’s depths; she mutilates
him to make him her own and
thus to fill up the sterile
vacuum of her being; she is the
worst educator; she cuts the
child’s wings; she pulls him
back from the heights he
aspires to; she turns him into a
moron and diminishes him.”
(256-57)

21

**WHAT DOES FEMINISM MEAN IN
THE REAL WORLD?**

22

“They just don’t get it” (1991)



Anita Hill testified at a 1991 Senate hearing about sexual harassment allegations against then Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas

23

Disney?



- Cinderella "waits around for a rich guy to rescue her. Don't! Rescue yourself. Obviously!"
- Little Mermaid: "I mean, the songs are great, but do not give your voice up for a man. Hello!"



Finding Dory, which was voiced by DeGeneres, "is a big favourite" and "Frozen is huge, Moana is totally fine."

Moana is OK [?!!!]

24

de Beauvoir to Fanon...

“But there are deep analogies between the situations of women and blacks: both are liberated today from the same paternalism, and the former master caste wants to keep them ‘in their place,’ that is, the place chosen for them; in both cases, they praise, more or less sincerely, the virtues of the ‘good black,’ the carefree, childlike, merry soul of the resigned black, and the woman who is a ‘true woman’—frivolous, infantile, irresponsible, the woman subjugated to man. In both cases, the ruling caste bases its argument on the state of affairs it created itself.” (32-33)

25

WWII War hero

psychiatrist

Someone we
have to study?



1925-1961

Revolutionary
writer

Ambassador, FLN

editor

26

Fanon – 5 Points

- Colonial order
- Process of “othering”
- Racial adaptation
- Psychological aspects
- “Inferiority complex”

27

Main arguments

- oppose the oppression of black people and to describe the **feelings of dependency** that Black people sense in a White dominated world, due to the detrimental legacy of colonial rule
- psychological relationship between Blacks and Whites, and how the “Other” is **fabricated** and actualized mainly on the basis of race

28

Philosophy - Existentialism

“Yes: teaching them to become aware of the **potentials** they have forbidden themselves, of the passivity they have paraded in just those situations in which what is needed is to hold oneself, ..., if necessary, the chain of command, but in any case, and most assuredly, to stand up to the world.” (Fanon, 57)

Anti-Semite and Jew (1946)

“He chooses the irremediable out of **fear of being free**; he chooses mediocrity out of fear of being alone, and out of pride he makes of this irremediable mediocrity a rigid aristocracy. To this end he finds the existence of the Jew absolutely necessary. Otherwise to whom would he be superior?” (25-28)

29

A. Structure of the colonial order

characterized by the confrontation of two subjectivities

- the colonianist and the colonised,
 - white civilization and black savagery,
 - white science and black animality,
 - white mastery and black slavery,
- fundamentally the whites and the “Others”.

30

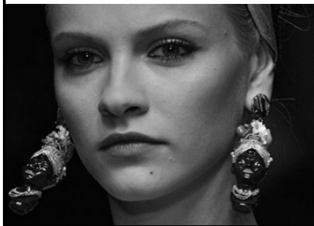
“I begin to suffer from not being a white man to the degree that the white man imposes discrimination on me, makes me a colonized native, robs me of all worth, all individuality, tells me that I am a **parasite** on the world, that I must bring myself as quickly as possible **into step** with the white world, “that I am a brute beast, that my people and I are like a walking dung-heap that disgustingly fertilizes sweet sugar cane and silky cotton, that I have no use in the world.” Then I will quite simply try to make myself white: that is, I will compel the white man to acknowledge that I am human.” (73)

31

Colonizer vs Colonised

Homogeneous cultural perceptions of “the Other”

Dolce & Gabbana's spring/summer 2013



Princess Michael Of Kent Wears 'Racist' Brooch, 2017



B. Process of “othering”

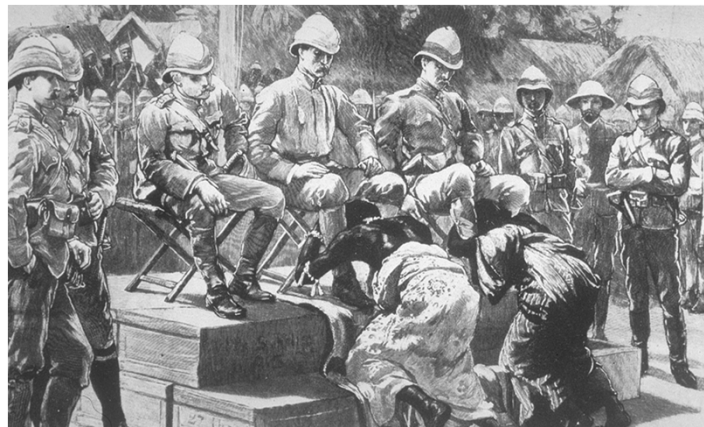
↳ The process of “othering” is being done by means of race.

↳ Black is an identification required not by nature but by an act of political will.

As Fanon states: “The presence of the Negroes besides the whites is an insurance policy on humanness” (98)

33

“The feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: It is the racist who creates his inferior.” (69)



34

C. Racial adaptation

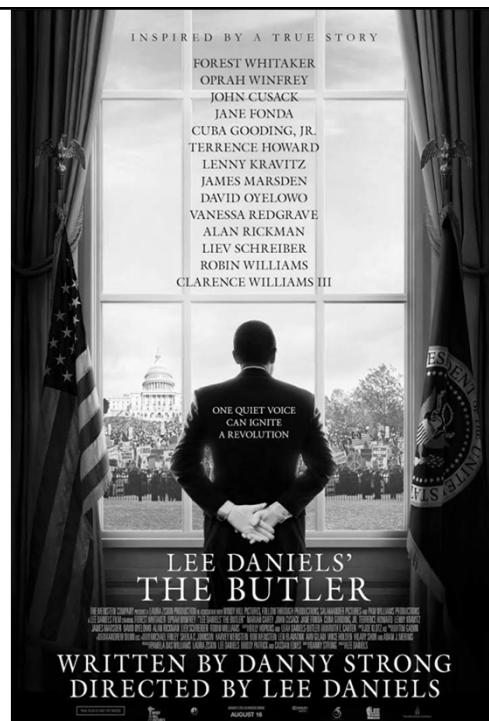
↳ a process of racial adaptation to the image of the Other —of the “**White Mask**” that is adopted by the Black man

“The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.” (9)

35

“A black man understood how power worked, for if he didn’t, he would be dead.”

— James Baldwin, African American Novelist (1924-1987)



White mask

↳ serves as a liberating option for **conformity** in the total mental stasis of the racist stereotype, and gives Black people the opportunity to move from a condition of collective absence to one of individual presence

“The black man wants to be like the white man. For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white. Long ago the black man admitted the unarguable superiority of the white man, and all his efforts are aimed at achieving a white existence.” (178)

37

D. Psychological relationship between Blacks and Whites

“When the Negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitizing action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an actional person. The goal of his behavior will be The Other (in the guise of the white man), for The Other alone can give him worth”(119)

↳ denial of the Black self and embracement of the fabricated racial identity of the White Other.

38

“Ego-withdrawal as a successful defense mechanism is impossible for the Negro. He requires a white approval.” (36)



- image of “the Other” in the white mind, as this particular image played a crucial role in the making of the European self

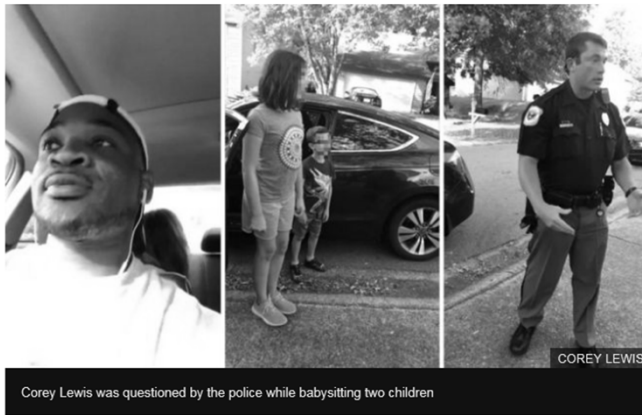
39

#BabysittingWhileBlack

Police called on Atlanta man for 'babysitting while black'

© 10 October 2018

f ⓘ t ✉ Share



40

E. The “inferiority complex” of the colonized

↳ a device of social alienation which is both personal and historical.

“If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process:

- primarily, economic;
- subsequently, the internalization—or, better, the epidermalization— of this inferiority.” (4)

⁴¹

“The black man contented himself with thanking the white man, and the most forceful proof of the fact is the impressive number of **statues** erected all over France and the colonies to show white France stroking the kinky hair of this nice Negro whose chains had just been broken.”
(171)

42

“the Negroes’ inferiority complex is particularly intensified among the most educated, who must struggle with it unceasingly. Their way of doing so, he adds, is frequently naïve... adorning the Native language with European expressions; using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements.” (14)

Installed in 1969
4 yrs after independence



Some blind spots.

- Fanon did not acknowledge rebellions of enslaved or colonized black people — for example, in Haiti — who sought to overthrow their white rulers, not to win their approval.
- His one-sided emphasis on psychological pain ignored the healthy anger that has often put black workers in the lead of the fight against racist capitalism.

44

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS?

45

Fanon's solution?

At the individual level, violence is a cleansing force. It rids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitude. It emboldens them, and restores their self-confidence. Even if the armed struggle has been symbolic, and even if they have been demobilized by rapid decolonization, the people have time to realize that liberation was the achievement of each and every one and no special merit should go to the leader. Violence hoists the people up to the level of the leader. Hence their aggressive tendency to distrust the system of protocol that young governments are quick to establish. When they have used violence to achieve national liberation, the masses allow nobody to come forward as "liberator." They prove themselves to be jealous of their achievements and take care not to place their future, their destiny, and the fate of their homeland

The Wretched of the Earth, pg 51.

46

From Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 30 January 1787

“Even this evil is productive of good. It prevents the degeneracy of government, and nourishes a general attention to the public affairs. I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical.”

47

Reverse Orientalism [?]

“A prostitute told me that in her early days the mere thought of going to bed with a Negro brought on an orgasm. She went in search of Negroes and never asked them for money. But, she added, ‘going to bed with them was no more remarkable than going to bed with white men. It was before I did it that I had the orgasm. I used to think about (imagine) all the things they might do to me: and that was what was so terrific.’ ” (122)

48

Tayeb Salih (1969), *Season of Migration to The North*

Meanwhile I closely examined her face: each one of her features increased my conviction that this was my prey. With the instinct of a gambler I knew that this was a decisive moment. At this moment everything was possible. My smile changed to a gladness. I could scarcely keep in rein as she said: "Yes, why not?" We walked along together; she beside me, a glittering figure of bronze under the July sun, a city of secrets and rapture. I was pleased she laughed so freely. Such a woman — there are many of her type in Europe — knows no fear; they accept life with gaiety and curiosity. And I am a thirsty desert, a wilderness of southern desires.

Revenge of the colonized? Or Toxic masculinity?

49

"Meanwhile, Egypt and Morocco flog orientalism to western tourists. For 150 quid on easyJet, you can fly to Marrakesh and become a latter-day Freya Stark or Wilfred Thesiger. The locals happily play along with it, dressing up in colourful clothes to sell their exotic wares before going home to watch TV and count their profits."



Brian Whitaker
19 Jun 2008

50

Further reading ...

- **Ntozake Shange**
- What does it mean to be both black and female?
- *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf* (1975).



51