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Bodyscapes, Biology, and Heteronormativity

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Source: *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 111, No. 4 (Dec., 2009), pp. 504-516

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the American Anthropological Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20638722>

Accessed: 16-07-2019 17:16 UTC

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Bodyscapes, Biology, and Heteronormativity

ABSTRACT The term *bodyscape* encourages thinking about representation of bodies at multiple scales—from different bodies as they move through space to the microlandscape of individual bodily differences. A hegemonic bodyscape's representations tend to idealize and essentialize bodies' differences to reinforce normative ideas about a society's socioeconomic organization. But, a dominant bodyscape is never absolute. Bodyscapes that depart from or subvert hegemonic representations may simultaneously exist. In Western society, the biomedical bodyscape predominates in scientific understandings of bodily difference. Its representation of sex differences conveys heteronormative notions about gender and sexuality. Because the biomedical bodyscape frames studies of ancient bodies, investigators need recognize how their considerations of labor divisions, familial organization, and reproduction may situate modern (hetero)sexist representations deep within antiquity. To innovate analyses of socioeconomic relations, queer theory allows scholars to interrogate human nature. Doing so produces alternative bodyscapes that represent the diversity of past peoples' social and sexual lives. [Keywords: bodyscape, heteronormativity, queer theory, bioarchaeology, paleoanthropology]

THE COMMENTARY TO follow amplifies ideas I have already voiced about the possibility of a *feminist bioarchaeology*, the use of feminist-inspired theories to assess the categorization of sex and advance a study of identities in terms of biocultural interactions (Geller 2008). I alluded to but did not elaborate on the conceptual promise of ideas articulated by queer scholars. Here, I further evaluate analyses of ancient skeletal and mummified remains, stressing that researchers' abilities or methods for discerning biological difference are not at issue. Rather, my concern is with the perspectives contouring subsequent interpretations about socioeconomic organization. I argue that, through the use of a biomedical bodyscape, many investigators of ancient bodies unwittingly naturalize cultural values that are in fact modern constructs. Specifically, considerations of labor divisions, familial organization, and reproduction often situate modern (hetero)sexist ideas deep within antiquity. My constructive criticism applies and adapts the term *bodyscape*. This concept is a tool for thinking about hegemonic representations of bodies that idealize and essentialize differences, especially with regard to sex, gender, and sexuality. But the concept also allows us to examine the production of subversive or alternative representations that resist, interrogate, and queer hegemonic beliefs.

BODYSCAPE(S)

Nicholas Mirzoeff first used the term *bodyscape* to describe Western art's expression of the ideal body: as an "expression of a belief in the perfect form of the human body that art enacts" (1995:19). Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* is one vivid example. Aside from depicting idealized representations, creation of a bodyscape fixates not on wholes but fragments "assembled from various modes of identity" (Mirzoeff 1995:28). The problem with idealized and fragmented representation is the greater likelihood that difference will be essentialized, especially with regard to race and gender (Mirzoeff 1995:191). Through idealized depiction, fragmentation, and reductive meanings, a bodyscape produces and sustains cultural norms and exclusionary beliefs (i.e., sexism, racism, heterosexism, and homophobia). The bodyscape therefore is not just an abstraction but also something that has an impact on the physical body.

To expand Mirzoeff's notion of the "bodyscape" beyond its insights about the ideal and fragmented body, Arjun Appadurai's (1990, 1991) discussion of *-scapes* is constructive. He uses this suffix to track the flow of "people, machinery, money, images, and ideas" (Appadurai 1990:11) across landscapes, which he respectively labels *ethnoscapes*, *technoscapes*, *finanscapes*, *mediascapes*, and *ideoscapes*. Although they differ from one another in important ways,

these -scapes are all constructed, shifting (“fluid”), and historically and politically situated (“perspectival”). Bodyscape is perhaps a necessary addition to Appadurai’s landscapes, because physical bodies and their parts are similarly subject to global cultural movements. But, although Appadurai explores these landscapes on a large scale, the bodyscape concept is best served by a multiscalar approach. We may explore a group’s—culture’s, society’s, subculture’s, field’s—representation of different bodies as they move within or through spaces. But, the term also encourages thinking about the body as a space unto itself, a microlandscape of individual bodily differences that allows for examination of the objectified whole, a detachable or transferable part (e.g., organ, ova), or a distinctive fragment (e.g., gene).

In this vein, anthropological work on the international traffic in human organs emphasizes how the flow of bodies and their parts operates on multiple scales—from the global to the personal (e.g., Scheper-Hughes 2000). And although I am unable to do so here, feminist anthropologists may further develop the bodyscape concept to explore how idealized and essentialized representations of women’s bodies work to maintain their subjugation, exploitation, dehumanization, and objectification in specific social, economic, and political contexts. Global female sex slavery, e-mail order brides from developing nations, and the international trade in surrogacy (or “wombs for rent”) are just some instances in which the bodyscape may prove edifying. That such deeply troubling practices continue to flourish illustrates how a hegemonic bodyscape constructs understandings of bodily difference that clearly reiterate (hetero)sexist and ethnocentric notions.

Nevertheless, a hegemonic bodyscape need not be absolute. According to Appadurai, people can use group identity, technology, capital, mass media, and—I would add—bodies to create multiple imagined worlds. Consequently, they “are able to contest and sometimes even subvert the imagined worlds of the official mind” (1990:7). Returning to visual representations of bodies in Western society, we see that for every da Vinci and Vitruvian Man, there are several Guerilla Girls whose feminist activist art contests normative representations of gender, race, sexuality, and ethnocentrism.¹ Hence, a transgressive or alternative bodyscape can provide the fodder for play, reaction, or revolution. In my later discussion of queering, I return to the idea that a proliferation of bodyscapes can simultaneously exist in any socioeconomic system. Before doing so, however, I will further delineate the contemporary Western normative bodyscape that undergirds scientific understandings of bodies.

THE BIOMEDICAL BODYSCAPE

Although Mirzoeff examines the bodyscape concept as it relates to art, the term pertains to any regulating social institution that conceives and creates an ideal body, whether it be education, sports, military, law, or science. Of art and sci-

ence, Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins see a correspondence between these fields’ representations of gendered and racialized bodies, writing, “Like fine art, science attempts to frame the nude female body as devoid of pornographic attributes” (1993:175). Yet, seemingly objective images, like the *National Geographic’s* photographs they appraise, can communicate exclusionary and disparaging attitudes about femininity, sexuality, labor, and non-Western societies. These portrayals of bodies say far more about Western cultural norms pertaining to social interactions and economic organization than the differences they strive to render. As Appadurai cautioned, scapes—bodyscapes or otherwise—“are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors” (1990:7). To expose the machinations of the normative bodyscape at work, then, it is essential to contextualize representations’ production in historical, political, and social locations.

In contemporary Western society, the biomedical bodyscape predominates in scientific studies. Lutz and Collins identify one crucial difference between art and science’s use of imagery that idealizes the female body: “while art aestheticizes it, science dissects, fragments, and otherwise desexualizes it” (1993:175). Indeed, textbooks and medical art are laden with segmented and sterile bodies. Closer examination of the biomedical bodyscape discloses several additional messages about sex and gender. First, from Aristotle and Galen onward, the male body has been the standard, valued body (Laqueur 1990). Second, sex is regarded as dichotomous, immutable, and interchangeable with gender (Geller 2005). Third, modern medical science’s discourse and practice inevitably fragment the female body into reproductive parts and, in so doing, disempower women (Martin 2001)—the implication being that the ideal, normal female body is a reproducing one. Finally, following from sex and gender’s equivalency, women’s production outside of the domestic arena, not reproduction within, is often cause for concern in sociopolitical spheres. The sustained public interest in Mommy Wars (e.g., Brykman 2006; Steiner 2006) signifies an especially hackneyed instance as well as the media’s failure to ask new questions about labor, family, and gender.

Because biomedicine grounds analyses of skeletal and mummified remains (Geller 2008), this hegemonic bodyscape also guides inquiry about ancient bodies’ differences, leading in some cases to oversimplified and heteronormative reconstructions of past peoples’ social identities and interactions. Rather than deterritorialization—which Appadurai (1991:192) regards as the transcending of spatial boundaries by people (i.e., ethnoscapes), ideas (i.e., mediascapes), and so forth—those who use a biomedical bodyscape to study the ancient past may detemporalize it. *Detemporalization* occurs when analysts move from present to past (and back again) without reflecting on bodily differences as made meaningful within specific environmental, historical, and socioeconomic settings. Consequently,

detemporalization often represents certain social behaviors and interactions as human nature. Under closer inspection, however, we often find that arguments about human nature in fact reiterate contemporary, Western cultural values. Examples from bioarchaeology and paleoanthropology indicate as much.

SKELETAL ANALYSIS AND A HEGEMONIC BODYSCAPE

As a facet of North American archaeology, Jane Buikstra initially described bioarchaeology as follows:

A new form of regionally based, interdisciplinary research in mortuary site archeology and human osteology ... with the active participation of both archeologists and physical anthropologists in all phases of research design ... to focus upon the investigation of biocultural change. [1977:69]

Although important precursors existed (Buikstra and Beck 2006: see section 1), formalization of bioarchaeology extended traditional skeletal analyses by emphasizing archaeological contextualization. To construct a dominant paradigm, practitioners also utilized theoretical frames then available: the synthesized evolutionary theory of Sherwood Washburn's (1951) "new" physical anthropology and archaeologists' ecosystems approach. Both stressed adaptive processes related to evolution—biological and cultural, respectively—and variation. Consequently, many analyses of ancient bodies have addressed the variability of groups' qualities of life, behaviors, and lifestyle as well as populations' histories and interactions (Larsen 2006:361–372). Recognition of variability as elemental in bioarchaeology, however, begs inquiry about the degree of difference practitioners can discern as well as how much they are comfortable addressing in their interpretations. Analysts do account for populational differences between groups, but within-group differences are often categorized as "either-or"—that is, subadult or adult, elite or nonelite, male or female. A continuum of categories speaks not to ambiguity but, rather, to a researcher's degree of certainty (Geller 2005).

Since its inception, bioarchaeology has proven constructive for studying ancient bodies, as publications in numerous peer-reviewed journals attest (Buikstra et al. 2003). Investigators' application of bioarchaeological perspectives, however, does not mean that Buikstra's vision guides all researchers' frames and foci. Since 1977, other practitioners have offered various definitions of *bioarchaeology* that depart from its original conception. Some divergences reflect expansion of research interests and development of analytical techniques over three decades. The field, like any intellectual enterprise, is most effective and informative because it is dynamic. But, unlike other anthropological subfields, bioarchaeology has minimally interrogated and expanded its theoretical frames (although notable exceptions include Blakey 1987, 1998; Novak 2008; Perry 2004; Rakita and Buikstra 2005; Robb 2002; Shimada et al. 2004; Stojanowski 2005).² Reticence to engage theoretically seems

counterproductive in light of bioarchaeologists' acknowledgement that the complex interactions among biology, culture, and the environment "[are] expressed in multiple ways in biological tissues that are often difficult to interpret" (Larsen 2006:360). Would not the arduousness of drawing social inferences from biological data necessitate the use of all available tools—the methodological, technological, and conceptual advances of recent years?

Bioarchaeological studies of sex provide one example of oversimplifications wrought from a narrow conceptual commitment to positivistic evolutionary theory. Gauging the content of textbooks commonly assigned to students of human osteology is instructive. These manuals introduce students to the skeletal body and therefore are instrumental in their "socialization" as analysts and intellectuals. Osteology textbooks also incorporate several key aspects of the biomedical bodyscape. They contain standardized depictions of skeletons and their parts in which the universal is often presented at the expense of human variation (although see White 2000:16–20). In the case of sex differences, human variation is represented as strictly dimorphic, despite awareness that skeletal data fall along a spectrum of measurements. Sex determination involves fragmentation of bodies, particularly pelvic parts, although the robusticity and gracility of specific elements also aid in categorization.

A link is forged between sex and gender, as exemplified by D. Gentry Steele and Claud Bramblett's substitutions of the latter for the former in *The Anatomy and Biology of the Human Skeleton* (1988). Additionally, distinguishing those who can bear children from those who cannot is a foremost aim. Steele and Bramblett write, "One of the first pieces of information sought in these studies is the gender of the individual" (1988:5). Although he does not confuse gender for sex, William Bass makes a similar statement about the primacy of sex's assessment in *Human Osteology*: "When a skeleton is discovered during excavation or observed in the laboratory," he writes, "one of the first questions asked is: 'Is it male or female?'" (1995:25). My first thought after reading this statement as a student who was concomitantly taking courses in feminist theory was "Why?" Bass's text, however, yielded no response. More recently, an *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* article with *bioarchaeology* as a keyword struck me: "The determination of sex," according to Lynn Cowal and Robert Pastor, "is one of the fundamental assessments in the production of a biological profile for human skeletal remains" (2008:469). Again, the authors provide no further explanation.

To clarify, I do not ask why for the sake of being contrary. Nor do I wish to explain away biological differences or make ad hominem arguments. Many bioarchaeologists, for example, have effectively studied sex differences to hone methods of categorization and reconstruct paleodemographic profiles. I do think, however, that analysts of ancient remains begin with sex differences as a foundation for making inferences about social organization because it seems like good common sense. But, to paraphrase

Annamarie Jagose (1996:102), valorizing common sense is naive and dangerous, because the operations of ideological structures go unexamined. Consequently, certain ways of knowing the world—whether good, bad, intolerant, ignorant—become sanctioned; eventually, they are fixed as truth. Inasmuch as they cite a modern biomedical bodyscape, bioarchaeological studies are informed by common sense that valorizes certain markers of sex differences. Querying “why” shakes up some of the sanctioned ways of knowing ancient bodies, particularly with regard to socioeconomic identities and interactions.

Social Identities: (Re)Producer

As aforementioned, a principal tenet of the dominant scientific bodyscape—that an ideal female body is a reproducing one—often prevails in studies of ancient bodies. More than a biological category, however, the idea of the “reproducer” and its foil of “producer” provide sufficient explanation of social identities. Some researchers presume that reproductive differences dictate a minimal division of labor (Delphy 1993; for exceptions, see Bridges 1989; Hollimon 1992, 1997, 2000, 2001b; Perry 2004; Robb et al. 2001). An implicit biological determinism is at work, which derives little from cultural and prehistoric contexts. In several recent studies of ancient bodies, for example, investigators surmise that robusticity marks males’ labor in the realm of economics, politics, or agriculture (e.g., Eshed et al. 2004; Larsen 1997; Peterson 2002; Ruff 2000). Or, researchers’ analyses of pelvic differences in conjunction with behavioral markers identify males as producers—even when differences between males and females are insignificant or some females exhibit more “male”-like characteristics (e.g., Marchi et al. 2006; Sládek et al. 2007; Standen et al. 1997). In such cases, males are homogenized as an undifferentiated group with little reflection about age or social status, facets of identity that would facilitate or hinder activities related to production.

Discussion of females’ identities and activities are minimal in these same studies. Rather, use of pelvic differences to determine one’s capacity for reproduction inclines thinking about social identity. In general, females are the biological sum of their reproductive parts: bony pelvises, ova, wombs, and breasts. Such fragmentation produces an essentialized and static identity. That is, females as child bearers are women inextricably bound to childcare. Their labor takes place in the menstrual or birth hut or family home. Analysts’ focus on pelvic dimorphic markers of fertility may also suggest that all women die while still in their reproductive prime (although see Agarwal et al. 2004; Walker 1995, 2005). Menopause and its concomitant physiological changes—inability to reproduce and “masculinization” of the greater sciatic notch (Walker 2005)—complicates the normative bodyscape. Yet, developmental shifts that speak to bodies’ dynamism throughout the life course frequently remain unexplored. The impression left is that female re-

producer remains an identity retained throughout every woman’s life.

Bioarchaeologists accurately discern biological differences; neither the data nor their ability to do so are in question. However, they often do not think creatively about what these differences mean in their interpretations. As an example of how using a biomedical bodyscape reiterates contemporary Western cultural norms about sex and gender, and not those of the ancient case under consideration, I consider studies of labor in pre-Columbian Maya society. Although bioarchaeological studies about the Maya have grown exponentially in past years, there are few that address labor and gender (e.g., Cucina and Tiesler 2003; Danforth et al. 1997; Storey 1998; Wanner et al. 2007). Inadequate preservation of bone can obfuscate the subtle marks of habitual activities and anatomical difference. A dearth of data, however, does not preclude some analysts from making inferences that naturalize heteronormative gender ideology. A bioarchaeological study published in *AJPA* offers a representative example. The following passage synthesizes the authors’ main arguments:

The Maya, like most societies, had a sexual division of labor. Xcambó’s men were occupied with salt production, trade activities, agriculture, and construction; women took care of domestic activities, like food processing, child care, crafts, and harvesting. Many activities carried out by Maya females could be independent from economic growth that affected primarily male work. [Maggiano et al. 2008:1–2]

The authors examine pelvic, humeral, and femoral dimorphism as supporting biological evidence, arguing that decreased dimorphism signifies economic changes and reduced mobility for men. For women, dimorphic changes were insignificant, indicating to the authors that economic shifts did not register for (or on) women. Rather than question its cultural contingency, they begin with a biologically deterministic, ethnocentric, and presentist notion central to the biomedical bodyscape—that sex has an equivalency to gender. Males universally produce and females reproduce. Yet, their statements about socioeconomic organization are made with minimal discussion of ancient Maya notions about sex, gender, and sexuality and without pertinent citation from the sizeable corpus (e.g., Ardren 2002; Geller 1998, 2008; Gillespie and Joyce 1997; Gustafson and Trevelyan 2002; Hendon 1996; Joyce 2000a, 2000b, 2001; Pohl 1991; Robin 2002; Stockett 2005; Sweely 1997). Contextual information about social settings, historical circumstances, and political milieu are lacking, and as a consequence we see detemporalization of and essentialization about social differences.

Normative interpretations about the Maya are remarkable in light of varied data and extensive scholarly production that speaks to cultural change and complexity. Archaeological evidence has never validated a strict sexual division of labor for the Maya. In the wake of Iberian colonization, which generated dramatic transformations to indigenous

gender ideology, this belief emerged and then became fixed as truth. Reconstructing Maya socioeconomic organization remains a work in progress. Scholarship conducted thus far points to the complicated nature of social interactions—gendered, sexual, and otherwise. For example, several scholars have described how complementarity—the notion that power dynamics between the genders were balanced and not asymmetrical—structured relations (e.g., Hendon 1997; Joyce 1992, 1996, 2000a). Other scholars have attended to gender's fluidity. In certain contexts, male rulers used gender-bending performances to access feminine, procreative powers, while female rulers aligned themselves with militarism, a predominantly masculine activity (e.g., Geller 2005; Hewitt 1999; Joyce 2000a;Looper 2002; Stockett 2005).

Moreover, archaeologists' discovery of what is argued to be a marketplace in northern Yucatan at Chunchucmil offers further support for complex socioeconomic interactions, likely involving the larger populace and not just a few males (Dahlin et al. 2007). The center is contemporaneous with and geographically proximal to Xcambó, and its possible marketplace would have provided a hub for regional economic interactions. Not only does it seem highly improbable that men would have undertaken all exchange activities related to vending and food processing but also the Chunchucmil example highlights how economic interactions reverberated throughout a community. All types of people—of varied ages, genders, ethnicities, classes—flowed between the social spaces of marketplace and domestic residences, as was the case throughout precontact Mesoamerica. The lesson for bioarchaeology is that the pre-Columbian Maya, a culture that defied dichotomous categorization and sex–gender equivalency, requires researchers to apply an alternative bodyscape in their discussions of social identities, one that acknowledges the analytical shortcomings of detemporalization and situates ancient bodies within their local landscapes.

Social Interactions: Monogamy and Heterosexuality

Aside from notions about socioeconomic organization, deeply embedded within the biomedical bodyscape are normative understandings about intimate, sociosexual interactions. Many analysts of skeletal materials presume that sexuality—with whom one is intimate, whether by choice or societal imposition—is not biologically accessible (but see Hollimon 2000, 2006; Perry 2004). Although science strives to desexualize the body, as aforementioned, such an outcome is not a foregone conclusion, especially when researchers foreground reproductive differences. Queer scholar Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick implores us “to ask how certain categorizations work, what enactments are they performing and what relations they are creating” (2008:27). With this appeal in mind, we may consider categorization of biological difference vis-à-vis sex determination. As the clearest indicator of sexual dimorphism,

the pelvis or its fragments highlights the potential for reproductive capacity. But, beyond biological function, researchers often articulate two implicit notions about humans' social behaviors. As I show, such is the case even in hominid species whose degree of humanness remains debated. First, everyone possesses a biological imperative to procreate, especially women (Wittig 1982). In addition, sexual relations exclusively take place between females and males; same-sex relations are a “less ‘natural’ phenomenon” (Rich 1980:632). As a consequence, the biomedical bodyscape includes unspoken and detemporalized social norms about compulsory reproduction and heterosexuality. Suppositions about human nature make cultural and historical contextualization immaterial.

Heteronormative presumptions about social arrangements and intimacies have appeared in paleoanthropological literature. Similar to bioarchaeologists, paleoanthropologists bridge subfields, utilize an evolutionary model, and make inferences about social interactions based on biological data. The repercussions of doing the latter, however, are dramatic because certain behaviors can become codified as human nature (Hager 1997:4). Researchers have envisioned a hominid past replete with monogamy, heterosexual pair bonding, and division of labor (e.g., Alexander and Noonan 1979; Lovejoy 1981). In answer, feminist-inspired paleoanthropologists have long refuted these arguments as androcentric and presentist (Adovasio et al. 2007; Falk 1997; Fedigan 1986; Hager 1997; McBrearty and Moniz 1991; Taylor 2006; Zihlman 1995, 1997).

Yet, despite these critiques, heterosexist portrayals of the human past continue to materialize in mainstream scholarship. In recent publications from the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, several paleoanthropologists have again asserted that monogamy characterized our early hominid ancestors, *Australopithecus afarensis* (Larsen 2003; Reno et al. 2003). Although they do not specify, the assumption is that monogamy occurred between individuals of the opposite sex.³ As a reproductive strategy, monogamy entailed male provisioning for females and offspring (Reno et al. 2003:9408); in other words, australopithecines' ancient social arrangements were monogamous, heterosexual, and organized around a patriarchal, nuclear family. In support, Clark Spencer Larsen comments that this understanding of early hominids creates “implications for social behavior and organization in later and present-day humans” (2003:9103). Not interrogating the presentist implications of arguments put forth by P. L. Reno and coauthors, Larsen proceeds to take them as truth, claiming that “the roots of human behavior may go deep in time” (2003:9104). An impenetrable circular argument is created—one that is based on fossil evidence of fragmentary body parts representing approximately 300 individuals who lived roughly three million years ago. The resemblances between temporally distant australopithecines' social organization and *Homo sapiens* living in 21st-century United States are viewed as striking but not in need of querying.

In this instance, several facets of the biomedical bodyscape are apparent: namely, detemporalization and essentialized representations of gendered and sexual experiences.

Aside from the academy, mass media disseminate ideas about human nature to the lay public through narrative and imagined representations. In *Discover*, for instance, Jared Diamond has remarked:

We're exceptional animals in that human males and females stay together after mating and are both involved in rearing the resulting child. No one could claim that men's and women's parental contributions are equal in most marriages and societies. But most fathers contribute at least something to their children, even if it's just food or defense or land rights. We take this so much for granted that it's written into our child-support laws. [1995:84]

Because Diamond's larger discussion is concerned with human evolution, these practices are presented as our human birth right. Yet, no mention is made about cultures' roles in shaping practices and beliefs related to marriage, child rearing, monogamy, or kin organization. Rather, it is "human nature." Seeing that Diamond's social science is marketed as popular culture, his authoritative statements are less likely to generate critical reflection by consumers, and for that reason such generalizations are dangerous.

Similar ideas about human nature are on permanent exhibit in a depiction of the Laetoli footprints at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH). Marrying art and science, museum dioramas incorporate two normative bodyscapes. The familiar message communicated by the displayed male and female linked arm-in-arm, trekking across an otherwise empty landscape, is that our hominid ancestors were monogamous and exclusively heterosexual. In previous critiques, however, feminist paleoanthropologists have noted that evolutionary biologists' evidence for monogamous pair bonding is tenuous at best and that australopithecines' level of sexual dimorphism remains in question (Hager 1997; Zihlman 1985, 1997). Such representations are all the more troubling considering the Hall of Human Origin's two-year renovation and reopening on February 10, 2007. The australopithecines' faces and bodies have remained unaltered. Such stasis indicates that "despite the enormous growth of knowledge on human origins the basic explanatory themes have not changed" (Moser and Gamble 1997:210). Museum curators may have imagined other relations based on the fact that one pair of prints is larger in length, width, and length of pace: perhaps the individuals were siblings or a parent-child pair. Yet, for the four million people who visit the museum each year, the diorama does not depart from representations conveyed by the dominant bodyscape.⁴ Clearly, AMNH's number of visitors exceeds readers of academic journals. Hence, such recreations are persuasive, educational tools for the public, a point made by others that bears repeating (Hager 1997:15; Haraway 1989; Moser and Gamble 1997; Zihlman 1997). The notion that the happy couple laid the groundwork for future human behaviors is not different from that which

gets published in journals, but given its audience a much wider swath is cut.

Persistence of heteronormative presumptions is confounding because ethnographers detail humans' varied social arrangements (i.e., monogamy, polyandry, polygyny). Nor does mainstream scholarship or popular culture acknowledge feminist scholars' theoretical and evidentiary refutations. The salient question, then, is why do these sources continue to perpetuate heterosexist portrayals of the human past? Generational divide is likely not at issue because many feminist-inspired scholars of human evolution are not above reproach. Although their treatment of human social organization does not presume the prevalence of patriarchy, these scholars maintain that key to woman's human nature is a proclivity to rear children, which itself is born of an innate maternal bond (Gowaty 1997; Lancaster 1991; Power and Aiello 1997). Persistent use of a normative bodyscape and an inability (or disinclination) to scrutinize this frame make for a deep chasm to cross for all who reconstruct aspects of past social lives from biological data. Because the proverbial horse remains very much alive despite repeated beatings, I sadly see a sustained critique of hegemonic assumptions about gender and sexuality as still necessary.

TO QUEER

Whether studying the pre-Columbian Maya or early hominids, analysts of ancient bodies have incorporated a hegemonic bodyscape, reiterating commonsense ideas about labor, family, reproduction, and sexuality. With this in mind, I invoke Sedgwick's axiom that people are different from each other, and I am similarly astonished by the "few respectable conceptual tools we have for dealing with this self-evident fact" (2008:22). Queering the entrenched dominant bodyscape strives to destabilize commonsensical notions. Other feminist scholars who stress difference not reducible to dichotomy have initiated this project (Fausto-Sterling 1997, 2000; Haraway 1989; Roughgarden 2004). I extend their efforts by highlighting the biological and cultural validity of alternative bodyscapes in the present and past.

Queer ideas that conceptualize difference along a continuum rather than a binary signaled paradigm shifts as feminism transitioned from the second to third wave. Providing momentum were anthropologists' insights about performativity (Newton 1972), "sex/gender systems" (Rubin 1975), and nonnormative sexuality (Rubin 1984). Because of this fomentation, the corpus has grown as comprehensive reviews outline (e.g., Boellstorff 2007; Weston 1993). The relationship between queer studies and feminism, however, is a complicated one (Weed and Schor 1997). Some scholars continue to see a queer project as one that expands feminist scholarship, while others regard scholarly work on queerness as an intellectual departure. There are also scholars who eschew queer studies. Teresa de Lauretis (1997:315–316), for example, positions her

investigation of sexuality as a contribution to gay and lesbian studies but one that derives impetus from feminist practices like critical writing and rhetorical strategies. Regardless, such scholarship focuses on the transgressive and not dichotomous as it pertains to sex, gender, and sexuality and recognizes that these concepts need to be disentangled theoretically. Doing so effectively makes transparent the ways in which heteronormativity structures our understanding and privileging of gender ideology and heterosexual interactions (Smyth 1996:280). This project of destabilization requires the formulation of *queer* as a verb rather than an adjective or noun (Sullivan 2003:50).

To queer a biomedical bodyscape and engender transgressive bodyscapes, I find it useful to reflect on breasts, a much probed fragment of the female body. Breastfeeding is perceived as something only an infant's biological mother can (or should) do. But to query this established truth, Londa Schiebinger (1993) has drawn attention to Carl Linnaeus' creation of the term *Mammalia*. Although a significant development in scientific taxonomy, she notes, Linnaeus also had a political agenda that denigrated wet nurses and promoted women's domestic, maternal, and mammary responsibilities. Hence, breastfeeding is as much a cultural practice as it is a physiological process.

Queering breastfeeding illumines alternative arrangements (Longhurst 2008). Children can procure milk from a variety of sources, including wet nurses, certain animal species, and even males. Yes, males possess mammary glands and have an underdeveloped, physiological capability to lactate (Diamond 1995; Giles 2003:185–197; Longhurst 2008:107–109).⁵ Modern medical treatments are often a stimulus for male lactation, but starvation and nipple stimulation are also catalysts (Bartlett 2002:375). That male lactation is natural, as well as awareness that biological maternity does not necessitate maternal responsibility, considerably queers our understanding of norms surrounding breastfeeding practices. Although unusual, male lactation is worthy of consideration. "Showing other alternatives are thinkable by no means debunks our current beliefs," historian of science Lorraine Daston remarks, "it only exposes as fraudulent the absolute authority with which we think them" (Conkey 1997:197).

To acknowledge difference moves us beyond narrow, unimaginative binaries where female is to male as reproduction is to production. Accordingly, child care as the exclusive purview of biological mothers becomes more difficult to support. Indeed, ethnographies from preindustrial societies offer cross-cultural examples of child care as a community responsibility shared by mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, and so forth (Bolen 1992; Brown 1970; Hewlett 1989, 1991; Tronick et al. 1985). The Efe of Zaire provide a compelling example. Edward Tronick and colleagues (1985) found that infants' biological mothers were often not the first to nurse them. Four-month-old infants were only with their mothers 40 percent of their time, and an average of 14.2 different people cared for infants

over an eight-hour period. It takes a village to reproduce, not just a female body. Because the ethnographic present reveals phenomena that to our ethnocentric minds seem queer, it is not a stretch to imagine the existence of such wonders in the past. Generating multiple bodyscapes facilitates exploration of physiological possibilities and cultural differences.

ANCIENT BODIES AND ALTERNATIVE BODYSCAPES

That being said, it is challenging to make the rather abstract ideas of queer scholars applicable to the materiality of the past and the corporeality of ancient bodies. Those fore-queers like Sedgwick (1993, 2008), de Lauretis (1991), and Judith Butler (1990, 1993) conceived of their groundbreaking ideas in terms of the discursive: textual expressions, semiotic experiences, and speech acts. Use of queer ideas presents an aporia of sorts to scholars who take long-silent remains as their primary evidence. To undertake the intellectual labor of deliberation and adaptation, those studying human remains as the outcome of complex biological and cultural interactions may look to archaeologists who have fruitfully incorporated queer scholarship in their analyses of masculinity, labor, rock art, and pottery (e.g., Alberti 2006; Cobb 2005; Croucher 2005; Dowson 1998, 2000, 2001, 2006; Gero 2004; Joyce 2000b; Perry and Joyce 2001; Schmidt 2002; Schmidt and Voss 2000; Voss 2005; Weismantel 2004; Yates 1993). Analysts of burials have also spotlighted individuals who engaged in transgressive gender roles and sexual relations (e.g., Arnold 1991; Lucy 1997; Halsall 2001; Strassburg 2000). Of note is Sandra Hollimon's exhaustive bioarchaeological study of prehistoric Native American two-spirits (1992, 1997, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2006). From biological data, material culture, and historic documentation, she draws certain conclusions: biological differences aside from sex are crucial to consider; to disentangle sex and gender, one must attend to the patterned and particular in mortuary samples; dichotomous categorizations do not capture the fluidity and situatedness of gender performances; and compulsory reproduction and heterosexuality are not the rule.

To not presume the primacy of sex, duality, or gendered essences in our bodyscapes, there are additional avenues to explore. Instead of the pelvis and breast, genitals filled with latent symbolic meaning, what if the seemingly neutral ulna was examined for difference? Analysts, after all, continue to advance methods for sex determination, like measuring dimensional variation in the proximal ulna (Cowan and Pastor 2008). Granted the ulna is not as dimorphic as the pelvis, but my intent is to propose how refocusing on a different fragment would alter the dominant bodyscape. Might we then identify individuals deep within our hominid past whose exceptional waving or gesturing abilities were evolutionarily innovative? Would we find that activity patterns and muscle markings highlight male and female artisans' equal involvement in the weaving trade, as

Margaret Cox (1996) has argued for the postmedieval sample from Spitalfields, London? Similarly, might the ulnas of aforementioned pre-Columbian Maya peoples exhibit musculoskeletal stress markers suggestive of women's involvement in craft production? Or would replacing one fragment for another sustain well-worn, presentist, and essentialized inferences about social differences? Would we, for instance, reiterate the dominant bodyscape's ancient tale about "naturally" throwing like a girl (Young 1990)? That is, would we allow the data to guide us toward new understandings in which we recognize the pelvis' measurable differences but conduct a categorization that is conjunctive so as not to be socially reductive?

The point that I want to make with these open-ended questions is twofold. First, bodies can be biologically different from each other in ways that have nothing to do with reproduction and yet still have social significance. Second, it is important to ask new questions before the business of revision and reinterpretation can begin. These new inquiries can commence with categorization of difference that is not reducible to sex and does not presume the naturalness of monogamy and procreative heterosexuality.

Consideration of Neolithic burials from Europe demonstrates how we might profit from a queer venture. In 2005, Wolfgang Haak and colleagues (2008) uncovered a late Neolithic burial site from Eulau, Germany, with four graves and 13 decedents who appear to have been interred simultaneously. Grave 99 contained a female adult, male adult, and two children; Grave 98 included a female adult not related genetically to three adjacent children; Grave 93 had a male adult and two children; and a female adult and child comprised Grave 90. Several paired interments had bodies flexed, heads adjacent, and limbs intertwined. Wedding body positions with molecular evidence, researchers established a parental-child link between decedents in Grave 99—that is, evidence of a "classic nuclear family" (Haak et al. 2008:18229). Although they do not argue that the nuclear family is a "universal model or the most ancient institution of human communities" (2008:18229), Haak and colleagues do gloss over the heterosexist implications of positing such a familial arrangement 4,600 years ago. To do so is not without repercussions.

Grave 99 has garnered international attention in subsequent news coverage. Here we might deliberate about the role that modern mediascapes have played in perpetuating (hetero)sexist ideas communicated by the biomedical bodyscape. Headlines proclaim: "DNA Reveals Stone Age Family Took Nuclear Option" (Anonymous 2008), "The Flintsteins? Germans Find Stone Age Family" (Schmid 2008), and "Buried in Each Other's Arms: Scientists Discover Remains of World's Most Ancient Nuclear Family" (Derbyshire 2008). The public views the find, displayed at Germany's Landesmuseum Sachsen-Anhalt, as evidence for "natural" heterosexual relations and heteronormative gender roles. Unsurprisingly, mortuary variability at Eulau is regarded as tangential or ignored altogether. There is no

musings about the single "father" in Grave 93 or reflection on Grave 98's infertile "step-mother." Ethnographic lessons about the community's role in child care and social reproduction go unheeded.

Comparable reiteration of a dominant heteronormative bodyscape frames interpretations of a Neolithic double burial from Italy, which made international headlines in February of 2007. Like Eulau, the potential for queer interpretations are ripe. "Two 5,000-year-old skeletons found locked in an embrace near the city where Shakespeare set the star-crossed tale 'Romeo and Juliet' have sparked theories the remains of a far more ancient love story have been found" wrote one journalist (David 2007). The accompanying image portrayed two skeletons facing each other, bodies flexed, and arms bent. "From thousands of years ago we feel the strength of this love," said excavator Elena Menotti. To preserve the decedents' embrace, excavators removed the "lovers" still intertwined and entombed within a block of earth, which was then transported to Como's Musei Civici for further analysis (Urbanus 2008).

Although excavators conceded that gaps in their knowledge would persist until further analysis, statements about the individuals' sex, love, and embrace indicate that they have already drawn certain conclusions. Foremost is the presumption that decedents are male and female, which in news stories is designated as "gender." Seeing that incomplete disinterment would have complicated in situ sex determination, it is unclear how assignment proceeded. From sex differences, excavators then claimed that decedents were in a heterosexual relationship. Is preliminary assessment creative license or uninspired replication of a normative bodyscape? I presume that bodily fragmentation will occur during the course of analysis but the question remains if interpretations gleaned from biological parts will sustain heterosexist, ethnocentric, and presentist ideas about sex, sexual relations, and emotions. Whether or not they do, however, almost seems beside the point given the media's initial coverage of the discovery and bloggers' subsequent commentary. In the court of public opinion, (opposite-sex) love is eternal. Yet, if scholarly analysis determines otherwise—that decedents were two males or two females—will alternative bodyscapes inform interpretations? Will the popular press disseminate the story about Romeo and Mercutio (or Juliet and the Nurse) as widely? And, without the archaeologists' forceful dismissal of heteronormative notions, what message will the public take from the future display of these decedents in Mantua's Archaeological Museum?

CONCLUSION

In analyses of ancient bodies, technological developments continue to advance identification and categorization. Yet, conceptual innovation has not kept pace. Evolutionary models provide a narrow frame for thinking about how past peoples made bodily differences socially meaningful.

To this end, I have introduced the bodyscape concept. A bodyscape can be hegemonic, and as such its representations of bodies or their parts idealize and essentialize differences to reinforce normative ideas about a society's socioeconomic organization. But this dominant bodyscape also meets resistance and subversion from alternative visions of living, moving, experiencing.

The hegemonic bodyscape at work in contemporary Western science is in large part informed by biomedicine. In its representation of certain bodily differences, the biomedical bodyscape conveys heteronormative notions about sexual divisions of labor, gendered identities, and intimate interactions. This modern bodyscape is central in scientific studies of ancient bodies, and here I have critically examined its application in bioarchaeological and paleoanthropological studies. Inadvertently, many analysts have naturalized certain contemporary cultural values, which are not without problems themselves—particularly the ideas that sexual dimorphism provides the most important biological indicators of social differences and that socioeconomic organization is characterized by monogamy, heterosexuality, sexual division of labor, and patriarchal nuclear families.

Queer scholar Nikki Sullivan stresses that “deconstructing ... the ‘unnatural’ and the ‘natural’ is important because it enables us to acknowledge the constructedness of meaning and identity and thus to begin to imagine alternative ways of thinking and of living” (2003:51). When those who study ancient bodies do not query this binary, detemporalization frequently results. That is, researchers may collapse the distant past and present day, distorting the former and reifying the latter. More problematic, however, are misappropriations of ideas about “human nature” in mass media, museums, and the blogosphere, where certain existences are normalized while others are stigmatized. For this reason, I think it is imperative that we queer bodyscapes. Anthropologists' vast knowledge about the different ways to be human, whether in prehistoric or modern settings, presents the perfect springboard for just such an endeavor.

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NOTES

Acknowledgments. I originally presented a draft of this article in May of 2008 at the Theoretical Archaeological Group's First Annual Meeting in the United States, hosted by Columbia University. I would like to thank Bryan Boyd and Kaet Heupel for coorganizing the session and extending to me an invitation to participate. Comments from Wendy Ashmore, Thomas Patterson, Miranda Stockett, and Traci Ardren have provided supportive and valuable feedback on many drafts of this article, although they should not be held responsible for any inadequacies or inappropriate comments. I would also like to thank several anonymous reviewers and Tom Boellstorff for helping me flesh out what is still an evolving understanding of the “bodyscape” concept.

1. For information about the Guerrilla Girls as well as their activist art, visit <http://www.guerillagirls.com>.
2. In the United Kingdom, where osteoarchaeology is a more appropriate designator, practitioners are more open to the integration of social theory, generating intellectually productive and interesting results (e.g., Gowland and Knüsel 2006; Sofaer 2006).
3. It is likely that the authors define *monogamy* as the “condition of having only one mate during a breeding season or during the breeding life of a pair,” per the American Heritage Dictionary (2000). However, they do not explicitly provide a definition, which leads to a more open-ended reading. Monogamy also means “practice or condition of being married to only one person at a time,” an inappropriate definition for the hominids under study.
4. Visitor information is from http://rggs.amnh.org/pages/school_overview/amnh_education_exhibition. AMNH's website suggests that a mother and child may have produced the trail of footprints. But the theory of the footprints belonging to a mother and child is not on display in the museum's diorama, nor is it any less heteronormative in its fossilizing of females to child rearing (www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/humanorigins/history/humans3.php).
5. Although Diamond lends credence to male lactation, the heteronormative ideas he expresses suggest he does not recognize the complications to gender ideology and sexual interactions that male lactation produce.

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