

Against “Transracialism”: Revisiting the Debate

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This article critically reflects on some of the themes and assumptions at stake in the “transracialism” controversy, and connects them to important works in critical race theory: namely Rey Chow’s notion of “coercive mimeticism” and Sara Ahmed’s critique of white liberal multiculturalism. It argues that the analytic account of “race” that Tuvel draws upon in her article—Sally Haslanger’s—is politically problematic, both on its own terms and in light of broader reflections on racialized and gendered power relations. In particular, I critique Haslanger’s assumption that all racial identities exist on the same conceptual plane: that a single variable definition of “race” can be applied to any particular racialized group—including white and nonwhite racial identities. This erases racialized power relations, especially where, in liberal “multicultural” nations, whiteness constitutes the implied standard against which an appearance of “racial difference” is conjured. Finally, I extend my argument to the issue of treating “race” and gender analogously. Rejecting this move, I propose an alternative way of conceptualizing these as analytically distinct, yet constitutively interdependent, phenomena. In order to situate the debate historically, I consider an example of “racial transgression” from twentieth-century China.

Rarely has the academic community seen a controversy spread so quickly through its ranks. After *Hypatia*’s publication of Rebecca Tuvel’s essay “In Defense of Transracialism,” which attempted to derive the philosophical legitimacy of “transracialism” from the “permissibility” of transgender identities (Tuvel 2017), the responses were many—and they were vehement: an open letter calling for the retraction of the article garnered a great number of signatories; *Hypatia*’s editorial board issued a public letter of apology, promising to swiftly review their peer-review process; some of its editors resigned. Given the speed and violence of the debate, Tuvel very quickly became the target of a great deal of unwanted, hateful—and perhaps undeserved—attention. As often tends to be the case with controversies, much of its energy evaporated soon after.

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I do not want to rehearse the arguments put forward at the height of this controversy; others have already done so in more timely fashion (for example, Botts 2018a; 2018b; Gordon 2018; Hom 2018; Sealey 2018). Rather, I critically reflect on some of its underlying themes and assumptions in an attempt to tease out the broader stakes of the debate. This aim is broadly in line with Tina Botts's reflections on what the "transracialism" debate revealed about analytic philosophy's limitations in attending to complex sociopolitical phenomena like "race" and gender¹ (Botts 2018a). Whereas Botts focuses on identifying and comparing general methodological tendencies in the "analytic" and the "continental" traditions, in this article I want to explore specifically why the analytic account of "race" that Tuvel draws upon in her article—Sally Haslanger's—is problematic even on its own (analytic) terms. I will show this by connecting the debate concerning "transracialism" to some of the important works in women and queer of color critique, which have addressed the power relations that produce, and render intelligible, racial(ized) identities: Sara Ahmed's critique of liberal multiculturalism, and Rey Chow's notion of coercive mimeticism (Ahmed 2000; Chow 2002). Broadly, this article argues that what is at stake in the "transracialism" debate is not limited to whether or not it is *possible* or *permissible* to claim a "transracial" identity; fundamentally, I argue, it is about how we ought to understand the nature of racial(ized) identities and their embeddedness within a complex grid of power relations.

My argument proceeds in three steps: First, I critically examine Haslanger's and Alcoff's accounts of racial identity, and mobilize Alcoff's phenomenological and hermeneutic insights to critique Haslanger's assumption that all racial identities exist in the same conceptual plane—that they are merely different instantiations of a single social kind called "race" (Alcoff 2006; Haslanger 2012a; Alcoff 2015). Instead, I argue that we should understand them as complex social phenomena with separate and overlapping, similar and different, historical trajectories, always mediated by lived experiences and political positionings. Only then can we adequately attend to racist power relations without simplifying the complex stakes of different antiracist struggles.

In the second section, I want to explore further some of the problematic political implications that result from an analytic account of "race" like Haslanger's. Specifically, I demonstrate that racialized identities cannot be understood in isolation from the conditions in which they take shape as racialized identities. I discuss one particular contemporary example of this: liberal "diversity" regimes. Drawing on Ahmed's critique of liberal multiculturalism and Chow's notion of "coercive mimeticism" (Ahmed 2000; Chow 2002), I show that, under these regimes, white identities are not, as Haslanger claims, racialized: their racial identity is suppressed precisely because whiteness constitutes the implied standard against which the appearance of racial "diversity" is generated. This means that, in a context of white liberal multiculturalism, nonwhite people have to perform their racial identities in a way that white people do not. Given these power relations, white people's claim to have adopted, either partially or fully, nonwhite identities is politically insidious, regardless of whether or not this is also metaphysically impossible and/or ethically impermissible.

In other words, “transracialism” obscures and distorts the very power relations that are endemic to white liberal societies seeking to disguise structural racism under a veneer of “diversity.”

Finally, I extend this argument to the issue of setting up “race” and gender as parallel systems of oppression. As evident from Tuvel’s controversial article, this analytic lens situates two complex sociopolitical phenomena within the same conceptual plane in order to render them in the form of an analogy. I want to reject this move, and propose an alternative way of conceptualizing “race” and gender as analytically distinct, yet constitutively interdependent, phenomena. Indeed, I argue, it is precisely because these phenomena are distinct from each other that it makes sense to interrogate their interdependencies. I engage with these theoretical reflections by considering a specific case of “racial transgression” from twentieth-century China.

I. (ANALYTIC) PHILOSOPHY OF “RACE” AND ITS POLITICAL TRAPPINGS

The aim of this first section is to make sense of the vehement reactions by marginalized, trans/queer, and people of color communities to Tuvel’s original article. These reactions, I suggest, are indicative of some of the political trappings that reside in certain analytic accounts of “race” and that need to be made explicit. In particular, I show that Haslanger’s theory of “race,” upon which Tuvel’s defense of “transracialism” rests, contains problematic and misguided assumptions about the nature of “race” and “racial identity.” Then, drawing on the work of Haslanger and Linda Alcoff, I argue that this account of racial identity gives rise to a politically insidious conceptualization of whiteness and (anti)racism.

CONSIDERING HASLANGER’S ANALYTIC ACCOUNT OF “RACE”

Among feminist analytic philosophers, there is an ongoing debate about whether complex sociopolitical categories like “race” and gender should be thought of as “real”—that is, whether they are mind-independently real.² Alcoff identifies three positions within contemporary analytic “race” theory: as she understands it, nominalists, or eliminativists, argue that racial terms do not refer to anything real; essentialists think of “race” as a fundamental category of identity with explanatory power; and contextualists prefer to emphasize the ways in which the idea of “race” is socially constructed and amenable to historical change (Alcoff 2006, 182). While firmly rejecting nominalism about “race” and gender, Haslanger’s constructivist realism could be described as a middle ground between essentialism and contextualism: she argues that racial identities *exist*, but they exist as social, not natural, kinds—they are *both* real *and* socially constructed (Haslanger 2012d).

For Haslanger, this metaphysical view is informed by what she calls an analytical approach to “race” and gender (Haslanger 2012b, 224). Against the common understanding of the term *analytical* within analytic philosophy—roughly, for the purposes

here, as referring to the decomposition of concepts—Haslanger takes an analytical approach to be guided by the question: “what work do we want these concepts to do for us; why do we need them at all?” (224). Specifically, the concepts “race” and gender must be articulated in such a way that they enable us “to identify and explain persistent inequalities between females and males, and between people of different ‘colors’” (226). That is, they must usefully inform a feminist antiracist struggle against gender- and race-based injustices.

From this political aim, Haslanger derives her analytic accounts of gender and “race” as follows:

S is a woman iff *S* is systematically subordinated along some dimension. . . , and *S* is “marked” as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female’s biological role in reproduction.

S is a man iff *S* is systematically privileged along some dimension. . . , and *S* is “marked” as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of a male’s biological role in reproduction (230);

A group is *racialized* iff its members are socially positioned as subordinate or privileged along some dimension. . . , and the group is “marked” as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region. (236; my emphasis)

In the course of this essay, I will address two issues with this account: The first concerns treating gender and “race” analogously, which I discuss in the third section. The second concerns Haslanger’s analytic account of “race” as such, both on its own terms and vis-à-vis gender. Crucially—and this speaks directly to the “transracialism” debate, which focused largely on the first issue—these two issues, although intertwined, are not reducible to each other: Haslanger’s analytic theory of “race” is problematic both for legitimizing analogous thinking across racialized and gendered power relations, as well as for how it independently constructs “race.”

Without going into the details of Haslanger’s account, I want to show why her realist constructivism about “race” fails even on its own terms, in light of her stated goal to inform and facilitate a critical antiracism (Haslanger 2012b; 2012c). Broadly, this is because her articulation of “race” flattens out the very power relations that sustain and constitute racism; for example, it situates both white and nonwhite identities on the same conceptual plane. For the purposes of this essay, I understand a conceptual plane as mapping out the space within which a single variable definition of “race” applies to any particular racial group. This is politically insidious particularly where it leads Haslanger to claim that white people are, analytically speaking, “racialized” in the same way as people of color. She makes this explicit when she says: “Although the term ‘people of color’ is used to refer to non-Whites, I want to allow that the markers of ‘Whiteness’ count as ‘color’” (Haslanger 2012b, 226, and 2012c, 249). Elsewhere, she writes: “For example, Blacks, Whites, Asians, Native Americans,

are currently racialized in the U.S. insofar as these are all groups defined in terms of physical features associated with places of origin, and insofar as membership in the group functions socially as a basis for evaluation" (Haslanger 2012b, 238).

This understanding of "race" and "racialized identity" is directly reflected in Haslanger's analytic definitions of gender and "race" cited above. Although her approach to gender distinguishes clearly between "man" and "woman" in terms of their positioning in gendered power relations as, respectively, "privileged" or "subordinate,"³ her understanding of "race" includes no such differentiation: it applies to both "subordinate or privileged" racialized groups. Given that elsewhere Haslanger emphasizes the benefits of "theorizing [race] and gender] together" and of "demonstrat[ing]... the parallels between [them]" (222), I wonder why her analytic schema includes "man" and "woman," but not "white" and "nonwhite." Why, in other words, are the social positions of "man" and "woman" located on different conceptual planes—a subordinated and a privileged plane, which distinguishes them in kind—whereas "white" and "nonwhite" share the same conceptual plane? This seems particularly problematic if we grant—without stretching the analogy between gender and "race" to "transracialism" territory—that sexism and racism are at least analogous in the sense that they are constituted by, and give rise to, power relations, whereby some groups are marginalized *vis-à-vis* others.⁴

Despite recognizing that different racialized groups are hierarchically stratified, with some privileged over others (Haslanger 2012c), Haslanger's analytic rendering of "race" subsumes these hierarchies under a singular umbrella category of "race." This means that, on her account, racial power relations are, in some significant sense, external to the concept "race," even as they might also be tracked by it. Thus, Haslanger's realism about "race", while accounting for different kinds of racial identity under a superstructure of "race," does not allow for the possibility of there being genuinely different—even antagonistic—kinds of racial *identities* that each have independent realities. In short, for her, racial identities are different instantiations of one and the same kind of thing: a social kind called "race."⁶

HASLANGER ON "TRANSRACIALISM"

To explore further the political implications of Haslanger's account, it is useful to consider, in addition to the more general observations above, her reflections on "mixed identities." It is here, I believe, that her influence on the original "transracialism" article manifests most starkly. In an essay entitled "You Mixed? Racial Identity without Racial Biology," Haslanger claims that, in virtue of being the white adoptive parent of two Black children, her racial identity is no longer "White," but should count as "mixed" or "fragmented." She justifies this claim as follows: "I have, in an important sense, been resocialized by my kids, and although I do not share their 'blood,' I have 'inherited' some aspects of their race" (Haslanger 2012a, 292). Haslanger supplements these personal anecdotes with an analytic distinction between

“mixed-ness” as “mixed ancestry” and “mixed-ness” as “fragmentation”: in the first case,

X has a racially “mixed” identity, just in case (and to the extent that) X’s internal “map”⁶ is formed to guide someone marked as of “mixed” ancestry through the social and material realities that structure (in that context) the lives of those of “mixed” ancestry as a group (293);

and in the second,

X has a racially “mixed” identity just in case (and to the extent that) X’s internal map is substantially fragmented, that is, is formed to guide, in some contexts and along some dimensions, someone marked as of one race, and in other contexts and other dimensions, a person marked as of a different race. (293)

On this account, people like myself with “mixed” parentage would fall into the first category; “transracial” adoptive parents into the second. For Haslanger, the difference between the two social categories is that, in the first case, “mixedness” is a distinctive but fundamentally unified social category that structurally resembles the identities of other racialized subjectivities, the only difference being that here, the operative feature is being of “mixed ancestry” rather than being “Black” or “Brown,” for instance. The second—“transracial”—category, however, sets itself apart from all other racialized identities in terms of its *internal* fragmentation: the fact that multiple processes of racialization interact within one and the same person, without giving rise to any single particular identity. Here, the emphasis is on temporal and spatial contingencies in the formation of racial identity, as well as on the aspect of “racial transgression”—or, as Haslanger puts it, the “crossing of the color line.”

On Haslanger’s view, there are singular racial identities, such as “Black” or “Brown”; split racial identities, for those with “mixed ancestry”; and aggregated or fragmented racial identities, for those with “transracial” identities. By claiming that having a racial identity means “being marked” as a member of a certain “race,” Haslanger assumes that any particular racial identity can be understood in terms of the structural similarities that make up the social kind called “race”—including what she calls “transracial” identities. Hence, the “legitimacy” of “transracialism” is, in a sense, already implied in her analytic account of “race,” prior to Tuvel’s—however misguided—attempts at justification. On Haslanger’s account, “transracial” identities are homologous to any other racial identity, in that they, too, can be understood using the conceptual resources given by the concept “race.” They are, in short, a racial identity in just the same way as any other racial identity.

HISTORICAL MEDIATIONS OF RACIAL IDENTITY

This reasoning is problematic not only because it produces the kinds of assumptions that guided Tuvel’s original article (Tuvel 2017). More fundamentally perhaps,

Haslanger's analytic definition of "race" rules out the possibility that there are genuinely different racial identities that are distinct from one another not merely in virtue of being different instantiations of the same concept ("race"), but because they are themselves structurally distinctive social phenomena—and because they are differently positioned vis-à-vis racist power relations. For example, "transracial" identities are, at the very least, not historically mediated in the same way as Asian-American identities, nor are they constituted by power relations in the same way.

In a sense, this issue is prefigured in Haslanger's discussion of Alcoff's reflections on racial identities. For Alcoff, socially meaningful racial identities are formed around the collective experiences and shared histories that racializing systems of oppression, segregation, and discrimination give rise to (Alcoff 1995; 2006): "It is that shared experience and history, more than any physiological or morphological features, that cements the community and creates connections with others along racial lines" (Alcoff 1995, 272). Although broadly sharing Haslanger's realist and constructivist commitments, Alcoff's account provides an important alternative perspective on "racial identity" in an analytically intelligible register. She shows that a realism about "race" need not commit one to situating all racial identities on the same conceptual plane; instead they have independent, although sometimes overlapping, histories that map onto independent realities. As such, the link between "racial identities" and "race" is far more complex than Haslanger assumes: it is always mediated by complex historical trajectories, lived experiences, and shared meanings. Although particular racial identities may be picked out by the concept of "race," they behave as particular sociohistorical phenomena in radically different ways that cannot be leveled out through the seeming metaphysical homogeneity implied in the concept "race."

Contra Alcoff, Haslanger argues that insisting on these historical and cultural connections, besides offering identificatory possibilities for racialized groups, might also perpetuate problematic intragroup hierarchies: "there is a danger in determining what history and experience should count as definitive of Blackness, or of Asianness, that a narrative would be constructed that privileges men, heterosexuals, the economically disadvantaged, the educated, and so on" (Haslanger 2012c, 265). Haslanger says that this problem is, in many ways, analogous to what she has called the "normativity problem" in and about analytic definitions of "woman": that these inevitably "privilege some women as paradigmatic and others as marginal" (265). Nevertheless, Haslanger goes on to argue, her own analytic definition of "woman" is justified given the emancipatory aims of her theory: "Because my theory defines women as those who suffer from sex-based oppression, it theoretically privileges oppressed females. But this is justified given the purpose of the inquiry" (265). In short, in the case of "woman," the normativity problem is canceled out by the emancipatory uses of the concept. But Haslanger does not seem to accept this same reasoning when it comes to Alcoff's historical account of racial identities: racialized identities are not in the same way permitted to generate normative pull from shared experiences, even where this has historically enabled antiracist struggle.

Further along in her essay, Haslanger discusses the issue of whether or not to "encourage" group formation based on some culturally and historically mediated racial

identity. *Contra* Alcoff, whom she takes to be arguing *in favor* of racial group identities, she says that she “prefer[s] not to take a stand on this normative issue” (268). Without going into the nuances of this debate, I worry that one might follow from Haslanger’s analytic definition of “race” that all racial group identities are to be evaluated in the same way: white racist supremacist organizations the same as people of color groups. The point here is not to say that Haslanger would indeed endorse such a claim, but that this could reasonably be inferred from her suggestion that “whiteness” be considered a racial(ized) identity homologous to other racial(ized) identities. In any case, Haslanger’s stated preference “not to take a stand on this normative issue” might already be undone by the unexamined normativity in her own analytic definition of “race.”

POLITICAL PITFALLS: WHITENESS AND (ANTI)RACISM

Crucially, this also means that Haslanger’s account of “race” cannot do justice to *white* complicities in perpetuating racist power relations. If all racial identities are merely different instantiations of a social kind called “race,” then it follows that “whiteness” *qua* racial identity is simply one racial identity among others, rather than a sociopolitical location that is structurally differentiated by its relative power over nonwhite positionalities. Besides Haslanger’s account of racial identity (Haslanger 2012b), there have, more recently, been other attempts at formulating a notion of whiteness as separate, and separable from, white supremacy—as yet another racial identity among other racial identities (esp. Alcoff 2015). In this section, I examine both Haslanger’s and Alcoff’s conceptualizations of whiteness, and the view of racism that follows from them. I argue that analytic theories of “race” should be challenged, not in the form of a generalized commentary on analytic methodology, but primarily for their specific political implications—the kinds of antiracist politics that follow from them.

In her essay on “mixed identity,” Haslanger is transparent about the fact that she generalizes from her definition of whiteness to arrive at a more general conception of racial identity:

So, someone has a White racial identity just in case their map is formed to guide someone marked as White through the social and material realities that are (in that context) characteristic of Whites as a group. *More generally*, one has an X racial identity just in case their map is formed to guide someone marked as X through the social and material realities that are (in that context) characteristic of Xs as a group. (Haslanger 2012a; 284, my emphasis)

There are many problems with this account. Most strikingly perhaps, it ignores the fact that whiteness does not work in the same way as other racial identities—indeed, Haslanger’s account of racial identities as different instantiations of a singular social kind called “race” cannot account for the ways in which marginalized racial identities

are *produced* by and within structures of racism and white supremacy. If we assume that there is a superstructure of “race” that gives rise to privileged and marginalized racial identities alike, then the power relations between these groups are erased from view. This has problematic implications for how we might understand (anti)racism.

For Haslanger, at least one of the ways in which we might combat racism is by encouraging more “transracial” identities. Toward the end of her essay, she explicitly entertains this thought: “the formation of ‘aggregate’ or ‘fragmented’ identities is one strategy (of many) for disrupting the embodiment of racial hierarchy and the hegemony of current racial categories” (287). If “transracial” identities are considered to “disrupt racial hierarchy,” then, by the same token, failing to “mix” with other racial identities would be seen as missing out on an important opportunity for disrupting white supremacy. This could lead us to a view whereby racism is implicitly attributed to “segregation”—to the failure to “mix” with other racial identities (Ahmed 2000). Crucially, this erases the possibility that segregation might not be the origin of racism, but rather its effect: it might be an important survival tactic for racialized communities who suffer from racism.

Alcoff’s motivation for imagining whiteness as separable from white supremacy is a different one, but it has similar implications for the conceptualization of (anti) racism. Basing her analysis on demographic figures that predict for whites a near future as a “minority” group in the US, she examines how whiteness has changed over time, and how it has been affected by “multiculturalism” and neoliberal austerity regimes. In brief, she argues that whiteness is becoming increasingly detached from white supremacy because “the current subjectivity of many whites today does not correspond to the dominant narrative of whiteness that holds itself ahead of and better than every other culture” (Alcoff 2015, 180). Here, she mistakenly assumes that the ideology of white supremacy is immediately affected by a change in whites’ racial identity. Although I agree with her that white racial identities are produced, and mediated by, racist ideologies, the reverse does not follow: that racist ideologies are, in turn, responsive to changes in how whites understand their whiteness. This is because, as Paul Gilroy argues, racism is fundamentally implicated in keeping alive the power configurations of a European colonial legacy that reaches far beyond the boundaries of any particular nation-state, or the phenomenological experience of being white (Gilroy 2004). It is hard to see how its role in maintaining the geopolitical power imbalance between formerly colonizing and colonized countries would be affected by demographic change in the US.

What this shows is that we should assess analytic accounts of complex sociopolitical phenomena like “race” not only for how well these accounts track real states of affairs in the world, but, more importantly, for whether or not they enable us to make visible the power relations at stake in these states of affairs. Despite her insistence that she wants her analytic definitions to be informed by, and accountable to, political (antiracist and feminist) concerns, Haslanger fails to frame these “political concerns” in a register that is sensitive to power relations under white supremacy. I want to expand on this argument in the next section, where I leave the national context of the US to consider, specifically, how ideologies of liberal multiculturalism in

dominant white societies—as we find them, for example, in the UK and Australia—structure the conditions in which racialized identities can become intelligible. There, I also argue that whiteness is intimately tied to racism precisely because white identities, generally seen as unmarked within discourses of “racial diversity,” constitute the implied standard against which the “racial difference” of racialized others is called upon. “Liberal diversity” is thus a powerful counterexample to Haslanger’s claim that whiteness is racially marked.

II. LIBERAL “DIVERSITY” AND THE POLITICS OF COERCIVE MIMETICISM

The previous section critiqued Haslanger’s analytic—and ahistorical—definition of “race” and “racial identity”; this section considers racial power relations in a particular contemporary context: liberal “diversity” regimes.⁷ I want to highlight two aspects in particular: one, that there is in white liberal multicultural nations a difference between “having” and “being” difference; and two, that it is *being* without *having* difference that entails the burden of having to repeatedly *perform* difference. To this end, I revisit Haslanger’s geography of racial identities in light of Ahmed’s critique of liberal multiculturalism (Ahmed 2000; Haslanger 2012a). In this way, my article seeks to address two issues with the defense of “transracialism”: one, that it focuses on individual cases of “racial transgression” at the cost of making invisible the labor of incessantly reproducing racialized difference—labor that is, under liberal “diversity,” exclusively performed by people of color; and two, that it erroneously situates white and nonwhite identities within the same conceptual plane, even where this obscures and distorts the very racializing power relations that underpin liberal diversity discourse.

HAVING VERSUS BEING DIFFERENCE

In liberal multicultural societies, nonwhite, racialized subjects figure as important signifiers for “difference” and “diversity.” This racial diversity constitutes important cultural capital for what Ahmed calls the “multicultural nation.” The appeal of urban areas in particular is often constructed in terms of access to minoritized “cultures”—food, products, and, not least, people. Fundamentally, however, their “differences” are incorporated only as consumable commodities: in the same way as the culinary flavors of foreign cuisines ought to be strange, yet digestible, the “difference” of racialized people cannot be a difference that challenges the dominant set-up of the nation—as Ahmed states, it is a difference only in *appearance* (Ahmed 2000, 107). Crucially, and *contra* Haslanger, these liberal “diversity” regimes figure white people as *consumers*, and nonwhite people as the *bearers* of racial difference. That is, under liberal understandings of racial diversity, white people are not racialized or ascribed a distinctive racial identity precisely because whiteness functions as the sublimated foil—the implied standard—against which the “diversity” of nonwhite people is conjured.

In order to generate an appearance of “racial diversity” in white-dominant societies, whiteness must remain racially unmarked; the dominance of the white majority must be concealed under a veneer of “diversity.”

According to Ahmed, there is yet a deeper sense in which the multicultural nation deploys the language of “diversity”: it does not merely want to “appear” different; it wants to “be” different in the sense of incorporating “diversity” as an essential feature of itself—as that which describes the nation’s *being*. But in order for the multicultural nation to “be” different such that “difference” is rendered as an attribute of itself—rather than as something that the nation “has” in the propertied sense, like a fancy accessory—it has to demonstrate that it can include those “diverse” subjects who “appear” different. Ahmed formulates this as follows: “The multicultural nation claims ‘to be’ different, insofar as it incorporates those others whose difference is a matter of appearance. It hence takes on their difference (*becomes* different) by requiring that they *appear* different” (Ahmed 2000, 107).

However, not all racialized subjects are assimilable in this way. Those whose strangeness is a matter of “being” rather than simply “appearing” different—those whose difference is cast as an incommensurable difference in “being,” rather than as a difference that can be alienated from “diverse” subjects and selectively co-opted—are quickly ejected from the embrace of the “multicultural nation”: “Their strangeness is represented as a matter of being, and hence betrays the very appearance of difference within the discourse of multiculturalism itself” (113). We see this, for example, in the rhetoric around what kinds of racialized subjects can be “integrated” into the nation, juxtaposed against a foil of unassimilable others who are simply “too different.”

If, for some, “being” different means being excluded from the multicultural nation, then the multicultural nation itself has to “be” different in a way that is distinctive from the “being different” of the unassimilable racialized subjects within its realm. Therefore, in addition to “being” different, the multicultural nation claims to “have” difference (107). For the multicultural nation, it is crucial to “be” different and to “have” difference at one and the same time because the potential instability associated with being a “diverse nation” is assuaged by a propertied relationship of “having” that firmly stipulates who the difference is *for*: the white nation and its multicultural aspirations. In other words, the multicultural nation wants to *be itself and be different* (107); in this way, the danger of being transformed in the process of becoming “different” is attenuated by a concurrent dynamic of “having” that grants the white majoritarian “we” the upper hand in all matters of “difference.”

In the remainder of this section, I want to suggest that we read Haslanger’s analytic distinction between “mixed-ness” as “mixed ancestry” and “mixed-ness” as “fragmentation” (Haslanger 2012a) in terms of Ahmed’s distinction between “being” and “having” difference, in order to expose the unchecked power relation at its heart. In a nutshell, I will argue that, in an important sense, Haslanger’s description of the transracial parent–child relationship is structurally similar to the relationship between the white multicultural “we” and racialized minorities. Therefore, it obscures and reproduces racist power relations, rather than unsettling them.

I want to begin by considering how Haslanger describes her interaction with her adopted Black children. She reports undergoing an emotional process whereby “the experience of holding and physically cherishing one’s child can bring the Black body into one’s intimate home space—that space where the boundaries of intimacy expand to encompass others” (Haslanger 2012a, 277). Note here the ways in which she mobilizes the image of the “home space” as that which is unmarked, already given—the space that racialized bodies are “brought into.” Although Haslanger is quick to emphasize that the “boundaries of intimacy” that govern this space have to “expand” in order to “encompass” racialized “others,” this kind of expansion is not necessarily a transformative one. With the incorporation of “the Black body,” Haslanger’s home space—like the “multicultural nation”—can remain, at one and the same time, different and the same as before.

To make this clear, let us refer back to the theoretical reflections that she derives from these personal anecdotes: the analytic distinction between “mixed-ness” as “mixed ancestry” and “mixed-ness” as “fragmentation” or “aggregation.” In brief, what I want to suggest is that this distinction is structurally similar to the differentiation between racialized others who simply “are” different and the white multicultural nation that professes to both “be” different and “have” difference. I develop this thought more substantially in the remainder of this section by showing that the “fragmentation” of Haslanger’s “transracial” identity is comparable to the “diversity” of the multicultural nation that wants to be at once different and the same.

In the previous section, I interrogated what might be some of the problematic political implications of Haslanger’s analytic definition of “race.” Here, I want to emphasize a different, more hidden issue with Haslanger’s claim to a “fragmented” racial identity: one that applies directly to the issue of “transracialism.” She herself acknowledges that, despite now being “mixed,” she *also* continues to be white:

But it is also the case that there is much of my life in which I continue to rely on old (White) maps, and in which I work to contest and challenge the realities of my Whiteness from the position of being White. As a result, I’m tempted to conclude that my racial identity, in at least the specific sense I’ve outlined, should count as “mixed.” (Haslanger 2012a, 285)

What stands out in this quote is that Haslanger derives her “mixed” identity from the fact that, in addition to experiencing a “fragmented” racial identity, she *also* continues to be white. And this is exactly what Ahmed means when she argues that the multicultural nation, by claiming both to “be” different and to “have” difference, can be at once different and the same: the “difference” of racialized subjects is incorporated into the realm of the nation, in order that it can claim to be “different” and “diverse”—but without destabilizing the whiteness at its core. Experiencing feelings of dissonance with your white identity does not amount to having a “mixed” or “fragmented” racial identity, as long as this whiteness is always there to fall back on—to reassure you that you are still yourself in spite of all the “difference” around you.

PERFORMING RACIAL(IZED) IDENTITIES

At the same time, far away from the more glamorous stagings of “racial transgression,” those who merely “are” different, silently, incessantly perform racialized difference. It is their labor that the multicultural nation requires for its grand act of dressing up dominant whiteness as difference. I now turn to this imposition of a regime of “coercive mimeticism” (Chow 2002) on (nonwhite) racialized subjectivities. The point of departure for my analysis is that only those who merely “are” different, without “having” difference, carry the performative burden of reproducing difference. What it means for people of color to have a racialized identity under liberal diversity is that they can always be called upon to perform it; this does not apply to people positioned as white.

Chow identifies a politics of coercive self-mimeticism at work in the reproduction of racialized identities. Borrowing from Homi Bhabha’s reflections on colonial mimicry, Chow defines coercive mimeticism as “the level at which the ethnic person is expected to come to resemble what is recognizably ethnic” (Chow 2002, 107).⁸ In line with Slavoj Žižek’s notion of “lack” at the heart of the ontological condition of the subject, she expands Louis Althusser’s notion of interpellation to account for the ways in which racialized subjects become that which they are hailed as—how, on Haslanger’s terminology, they come to adopt the “internal map” assigned to them by ideology. Whereas Haslanger mobilizes this gap (what she describes as the “fragmentation” of racialized subjectivities) to defend her individualized claim to a “mixed” or “transracial” identity, Chow’s approach can explain how the lack of a final suture of racialized identities might, paradoxically, serve to limit—not expand—the grid of intelligible identifications. To illustrate this point, I quote at some length Chow’s succinct reformulation of Žižek’s original theory:

The point of interest—for him, at least—is not whether there exists a resistive subject who may or may not answer the call; rather, it is that only by answering such a call, only by more or less allowing one’s self to be articulated in advance by this other, symbolic realm, can one avoid and postpone the terror of a radically open field of signifiatory possibilities. From this, it follows that identity—be it civic, religious, institutional, or cultural—is the result not exactly only of an imposition of rules from the outside or only of a resistance against such imposition; it is also the result of a kind of unconscious automatization, impersonation, or mimicking, in behavior as much as in psychology, of certain beliefs, practices, and rituals. (110)

This means that racialized subjectivities are stabilized only to the extent that they can “be seen to own their racial identity and to exhibit it repeatedly” (112).⁹ For the purposes of my argument, I want to deviate from Chow’s interventions into confessional cultures and modes of self-representation and instead mobilize her approach to demonstrate that regimes of coercive mimeticism disproportionately affect racialized subjects’ ability to “transgress” the racialized boundaries that circumscribe their

position in society. As Chow rightly points out, white people who situate themselves in proximity to other cultural or racial identities will not be accused of “betraying” their communities. Even where there is in white-supremacist communities a discourse around “betraying whiteness,” this discourse, I would argue, does not compel whites to perform whiteness *qua* whiteness, but whiteness as a marker of (racial) superiority. These performances are, *in the first instance*, re-enactments of power relations indexed to “race”—not to “racial identity.” The point here is not to deny that there is, either historically or at present, such a thing as intelligibly “performing whiteness”; it is rather to mobilize the notion of “performance” to make visible what is distinctive about performances of nonwhite racialized identities in the context of “liberal diversity” regimes. In other words, the aim of this section is not to address all the complexities of “performing racial identity” in different contexts, but to reveal the liberal diversity ideology that goes unexamined in both Haslanger’s analytic rendering of “race” and in much of the “Transracialism” controversy. In this way, I also hope to draw attention to the continuities between a “liberal diversity rhetoric” that often passes as benign and the—more widely condemned—arguments in favor of “transracialism.”¹⁰

In Haslanger’s discussion of transracial adoption, white parents who adopt non-white children are—at least under liberal diversity—regarded as exceptionally tolerant, open-minded, and generous. For racialized people, by contrast, mimeticism is often a zero-sum game: either we perform our identity in ways that have “already been endorsed and approved by the specialists of [our] culture” (Chow 2002, 117), or we ditch our community and try to “become white.” In any case, people of color can never have both: inhabit our racialized identity and be white at one and the same time. Our identitarian predicament is thus fundamentally different from Haslanger’s “fragmentation”: it is not so much a slipping in and out of different identities as it is a struggle to constantly perform our racialized identities in order that we appear recognizably “different”—to the multicultural nation that prides itself on our difference, and to the racialized communities that we consider ourselves part of. On Ahmed’s account, this means that people of color can never “be” and “have” difference at the same time; this privilege is reserved for the white majority for whom “diversity” is performed (Ahmed 2000).

As Jin Haritaworn shows, these regimes of “coercive mimeticism” apply to multiracialized people in similar ways (Haritaworn 2012). Our racialized difference, too, needs to be available at any given time: Why do you not speak Chinese? Why do you not look more Chinese? Do you use chopsticks to eat cereal?—these are just some of the ways in which I am “invited” to perform racialized difference in everyday situations. Haslanger and her “fragmented” racial identity, however, are exempt from such coerced rehearsals. For her, deviating from dominant scripts of whiteness—for instance, by seeking out the company of people of color and not feeling “comfortable” in all-white settings—means making identitarian gains; she could never lose out on “authenticity.” Even where such discourses of “authenticity” prevail in white-supremacist settings, compliance with white racial scripts has accoutrements beyond

merely being expressions of some putatively essential racial identity, accoutrements that benefit white supremacists themselves.

Overall, in this section, I have developed more fully some of the arguments against “transracialism” as they apply specifically to white liberal “multicultural” nations. Under liberal multiculturalism, racialized difference carries enormous cultural capital, but this capital is not available to those who simply “are” different. Rather, it is consumed by the dominant white majority who claims to “be” different and “have” difference at one and the same time—a convenient claim that enables them to make hegemonic whiteness look different, without carrying any of the concomitant burden of sustaining and performing this difference. This labor is performed exclusively by people of color. Therefore, we can say that, at least in white “multicultural” nations, white and nonwhite identities do not exist within the same conceptual plane; whiteness is *not* racialized. Any white person’s claim to a nonwhite racial identity is therefore politically insidious at least insofar as it obscures and distorts these power relations.

III. FINALLY: WHY SOME ANALOGIES ARE PROBLEMATIC—AND BORING

In sections I and II of this article, I explored ways of conceptualizing the relationship between “race” and “racial identity” and advocated for a view of racial identities as conceptually distinctive sociohistorical phenomena and political locations. In this section, I want to extend this discussion to argue that complex categories like “race,” “gender,” “racial identity,” and “gender identity” do not exist within the same conceptual plane. Therefore, they are not, as Botts has rightly argued (Botts 2018a), amenable to being posited as analogies, simply in virtue of sharing certain properties—for instance, the fact that all of them can be thought of as “socially constructed.” Sociopolitical reality, as I tentatively suggest in this section, does not consist in a single, all-encompassing plane with neat conceptual boundaries; rather, it is made up of complex phenomena that can overlap, interact, and contradict one another. On the view I defend here, we can take the conceptual distinctness that maps to complex phenomena like “race” or gender as a point of departure for interrogating their constitutive interdependencies.

In what follows, I draw out some of the insights that taking such a perspective can yield for debates around “racial transgression.” Specifically, I want to cast a different light on the “transracialism” controversy by highlighting the ways in which racial identities, being complex and distinctive phenomena that are reproduced under regimes of coercive mimeticism, become intelligible only in interaction with gendered, hetero-, and repronormative power relations. Bringing into view these interactions avoids setting up racialized and gendered oppression as similar, and parallel, systems; it also avoids thinking about their relationship only in terms of whether one can tell us something about the “permissibility” of the other.

This issue has been at the heart of the “transracialism” controversy, whose advocates have attempted to derive the legitimacy of “transracial” identities from the “permissibility” of transgender identities. Haslanger adopts a similar perspective when she

says that “systems of racial and sexual oppression are alike (in spite of their many differences)” (Haslanger 2012a, 269). Here, the issue is not merely one of foregrounding likeness, accompanied by a merely perfunctory acknowledgment of differences; more fundamentally perhaps, the analytic perspective required to search for, and find, likeness operates like a homogenizing umbrella that fails to engage social phenomena in the complexity they deserve.

For example, in Haslanger’s discussion of what she calls the “normativity” problem and “commonality” problem, she first discusses these problems vis-à-vis analytic definitions of “woman” and then does not even bother attending separately to “race”:

I won’t defend here my account of racialized groups against an extension of the normativity and commonality complaints, for I would simply repeat the strategy just employed. Although there are interesting nuances in adapting the arguments to apply to racialized groups, I don’t see anything peculiar to race that would present an obstacle to developing the same sort of response. (Haslanger 2012b, 240).

Elsewhere, she qualifies this rather quick move by suggesting that one important difference between gender and “race” is their respective rootedness in “biology”: whereas gender is linked to bodily reproduction—at least insofar as genders are ascribed different roles in the reproductive process—“color” . . . does not seem to correlate with any feature that carries significant biological weight that must be socially addressed” (Haslanger 2012c, 255).

In discussing gender and “race” alongside each other, Alcoff makes similar moves. For example, she argues that “race” and gender are at least analogous in the sense that they are particularly implicated in “regimes of visibility”—in her view, “race and gender operate as our penultimate visible identities” (Alcoff 2006, 6). With this analytic set-up in mind, Alcoff cannot help but make implicit comparisons between racial and gender identities:

The truth of one’s gender and race, then, are widely thought to be visibly manifest, and if there is no visible manifestation of one’s declared racial or gendered identity, one encounters an insistent skepticism and an anxiety. Those of us who are of *mixed race* or *ambiguous gender* know these reactions all too well. (7; my emphasis)

Here, gender and “race” are similar insofar as they are both governed by coercive regimes of visibility. Later in her work, Alcoff qualifies this assumption with a more detailed acknowledgment that “sex” and “race,” while both being our “penultimate visible identities,” are also distinct from each other in important ways. This, she argues—like Haslanger resorting to “biology”—is because the biological reality of “race” has become “empirically insupportable,” whereas the biological reality of “sex” is not:

Sexism has more to work with, one might say. The role one plays in the biological division of reproduction, the capacity to sustain an infant

entirely on the production of one's own body, to give birth, to nurse, are much more significant attributes. (164)

Although Alcoff's theory of racial identity is in many ways more complex and nuanced than Haslanger's, it suffers from the same problem: it takes the distinctiveness of complex social phenomena like gender or "race" as a point of departure for simplistic comparisons thereof. If differences between the two are acknowledged at all, it is only at the cost of reproducing repronormative, transphobic, and biologically essentialist views of gender or "sex," as well as downplaying the ongoing (colonial) legacy of biological racisms.¹¹ On Alcoff's account, it is the distinctiveness of gender and "race" that makes them amenable to comparative searches for similarity; it is because we can take as given that gender and "race" are irreducible to each other that we can compare them without thereby running the risk of collapsing one into the other. In the remainder of this section, I propose that we turn this reasoning on its head: how can the distinctiveness of phenomena like "race" and gender be put to work as a lens for making visible their interdependence, rather than for detecting similarities?

In this endeavor, I draw inspiration from Lena Gunnarsson's critical realist approach to theorizing "intersectionality" (Gunnarsson 2017). On her view, concepts like gender or "race" make sense because they trace ontological distinctions—that is, they enable us to track real differences in the world. But in order for two entities to be distinct from each other, they need not be fully autonomous; they can be irreducible to each other, and yet come into existence only through interaction with each other. For the purposes of my argument, I take this to mean that a concept like gender or "race" can map onto a distinct reality, even if this reality is, to a large extent, made possible and constituted by its relationship with other entities. These constitutive interdependencies can be made visible only on the basis of distinctiveness; otherwise, any demonstration of interdependence would be merely a further step toward collapsing one phenomenon into the other.

I propose engaging these insights to revisit recent debates around "racial transgression." In order to ground my reflections theoretically, as well as empirically, I make a brief historical detour into early twentieth-century China. As I demonstrate below, this example will also enable me to contextualize historically the "transracialism" debate and to show that white people's performances of racial otherness can take a different shape in contexts beyond contemporary "Western" liberal societies. Crucially, I argue, we can make sense of this performance only in the interaction of racializing regimes with gendered and heteronormative power relations.

In 1912, the US state of Michigan saw an unusual wedding take place: Tiam Hock Franking (or Huang Tianfu), Chinese immigrant to the US, married Mae Watkins, a white American. Two years later, Tiam, still an "alien" citizen in the US and thus with few opportunities to find work, decided to relocate back to China; his wife and their child follow him soon after. During her trip, Watkins traveled in accommodation reserved for "Asiatic travelers only"—a first indication of the fact that, by marrying a Chinese husband, she had lost some of the privileges associated with

whiteness and US citizenship. Indeed, the Marital Expropriation Act of 1907 stipulated that all female citizens married to “aliens” would automatically lose their citizenship (Teng 2013)—a provision that aligns gendered to racial inferiority. Watkins’s whiteness was taken to be compromised at the very moment she became the wife of a nonwhite man; her white US citizenship privileges had to give way to her gendered status as the wife of a Chinese.

We can gain insight into their life as an interracial couple in China through Watkins’s notes from the time—a memoir entitled “My Chinese Marriage,” which Teng reads as an illustration of “Orientalist Antifeminism”:

Gender ideology is indeed central to the text, for even as it traces the narrator’s changing attitude toward China and Chinese people, it simultaneously traces a transformation in her understanding of Chinese women’s roles, which she initially views as degraded and subservient and later comes to respect. The intercultural story cannot be separated from the narrator’s stance on gender roles: that is, her firm conviction, as “conservative West,” that her highest calling is to be a “genuinely old-fashioned wife,” thus resisting the burgeoning American feminist ideology of the age. (Teng 2013, 91)

What quickly becomes evident from this quote is how norms of racial “transgression” are deeply interwoven with heteronormative relationship norms and gendered Orientalisms. Watkins reconciles her Orientalist ideas about “subservient Chinese women” with her role as a “Chinese wife” by embracing Chinese “backwardness” as a matter of healthy American conservatism. This enables her to adopt an inferior position within the Chinese household that she becomes part of once moving to China, while simultaneously continuing to locate herself on a “Western” grid of normative intelligibility. She becomes a “subservient Chinese wife” not because she is Chinese, but because she performs “Chineseness” within a Western (antifeminist) imaginary of traditional gender roles. This shows that whiteness can continue to be a source of normativity, even outside of white-dominant contexts—and crucially, even where it does not signify as an intelligible racial identity. As Watkins’s case demonstrates, whiteness need not be performed *qua* whiteness in order to accrue some of the benefits of whiteness.

In her memoir, Watkins consciously and repeatedly mobilizes this metaphor of performance: “I had to put on China, to wear it always, in my heart and mind, and thought only of my husband, his work and his people” (cited in Teng 2013, 92). Here, we can see how Watkins’s “racial transgression” is rendered possible by her complying with a regime of “coercive mimeticism” (Chow 2002), whereby “China” stands in as a signifier for racialized difference. It is only by “putting on, and always wearing, China” that Watkins’s racial identity can transform from an unmarked white identity into a racialized one. Crucially, adopting a Chinese identity is not a single act of “transgression,” prompted by a change in personal circumstances; it is, rather, an ongoing and laborious performance.

Furthermore, this quote illustrates how regimes of coercive mimeticism articulate themselves through heteronormative and gendered norms. Indeed, it seems as if Watkins could make sense of “wearing China” only in terms of her relationship with her Chinese husband. In other words, her “Chinese” racial identity nourishes itself from the meanings derived from her gendered positionality as a woman within a heteronormative relationship matrix. For Watkins, “China” and her “Chinese husband” have become inseparable from each other. On the one hand, her “Chinese husband” positions Watkins in a particular relationship to “China”; on the other hand, her role as the wife in a heterosexual relationship makes particular demands on her racial identity, insofar as norms of gendered inferiority dictate that the wife has to adopt the racial identity of the husband.

In Watkins’s particular case, “racial transgression” was very much a zero-sum game, whereby conforming with the demands placed upon her as the wife of a Chinese husband required giving up the privileges that she enjoyed as a white US citizen. For her, “becoming Chinese” was conditional upon her migration to China as an “Asiatic traveler,” and, concurrently, her renunciation of US citizenship privileges. As a result, going back to “being white” was not an option available to her. In terms of Chinese gender roles (and to prove wrong her Chinese-in-laws’ prejudices), Watkins had to compensate for her whiteness by diligently—and perhaps excessively—performing the role of the dutiful Chinese wife: taking care of her mother-in-law and the household; raising her children as Chinese; observing the customs of Chinese ancestor worship; and wearing Chinese dress.

Therefore, we can say that Watkins’s access to “Chineseness” was made possible via the performance of a particular gender role within a heteronormative and repronormative matrix: that of the patriotic, dutiful, and family-oriented Chinese wife and mother. In other words, her “Chineseness” is the racialized expression of her subordinate status as the marital dependent and primary caregiver. Although Watkins’s whiteness enabled her to make sense of her “Chineseness” as part of an antifeminist—and here the audience is “Western” feminism—performance of subordinate femininity, her status as the subordinate wife also shaped the conditions in which this “Chineseness” could become intelligible to herself and her Chinese family. Indeed, her subordinate status as the marital dependent carved out for her a path of “racial transgression” toward “becoming Chinese” that followed, from the gendered and heteronormative norm that a wife’s racial identity had to match that of her husband and her children.

The aim of engaging with this particular case of “racial transgression” was to shift the focus of the debate around “transracialism” from problematic, and simplistic, assumptions regarding the “similarity” of racializing and gendering systems of oppression toward more interesting interrogations into the dynamic and complex interaction of different power relations. With respect to Watkins’s case, we have seen how gendering and heteronormative power regimes fundamentally shape the possibilities for racial identification—how they structure the horizon in which racial identities become intelligible. In this way, I have demonstrated that we can take the

distinctiveness of complex social phenomena like “race” and gender as a point of departure for making visible their constitutive interdependencies.

Crucially, the issues raised in this section can speak back to questions about the limitations of certain analytic accounts of “race,” which have arisen in the context of the “transracialism” debate and its publication in a feminist philosophy journal (for example, Botts 2018a). I believe that an approach as I have demonstrated here, if only briefly, can provide further avenues for thinking through the relationship between complex sociopolitical phenomena like “race” and gender, without thereby reifying an “analytic” versus “continental” divide. As Gunnarsson’s article highlights, metaphysical questions about “race” and gender—questions likely to be asked by analytic philosophers—do not necessarily have to yield homogenizing taxonomies that foreground analogies at the expense of interdependencies; they may well turn out to be fruitful points of departure for the kind of analysis that seeks the proliferation of its objects—rather than seeking to delimit and contain them in advance.

IV. CONCLUSION: ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY AND CRITIQUE

This article began by wanting to make sense of the vehement reactions from marginalized, queer/trans, and racialized communities to Tuvel’s defense of “transracialism.” To this end, I have interrogated its underlying, analytic understanding of “race,” as it emerges from Haslanger’s work, focusing specifically on the political implications that follow from it. Specifically, I have argued against Haslanger’s view that racial identities are homologous instantiations of a single social kind called “race.” Instead, I have called for understanding them as complex, sociohistorical phenomena and political locations that mark differential positions in the grid of racist power relations. Taking this view has enabled me to show that, at least under regimes of liberal diversity, white and nonwhite identities do not exist in the same conceptual plane. This is because of the way in which marginalized racial(ized) identities—those that “are” different without “having” difference—are reproduced according to a regime of coercive mimeticism.

There is a tendency within feminist analytic philosophy to set up “race” and gender as parallel systems of oppression; the “transracialism” controversy was only the culmination of many prior attempts to treat gender and “race” analogously, and to establish differences only by resorting to dubious gender essentialisms and/or by denying the ongoing colonial legacy of biological racisms. I have shown that we can mobilize the distinctiveness of “race” and gender to make visible their constitutive interdependencies. This opens up promising avenues for further interrogations into the ways in which regimes of racism, sexism, and heteronormativity interact to structure the conditions in which racialized and gendered identities become intelligible.

Analytic philosophy can assist in this endeavor by providing us with the conceptual tools to track real power relations in the world. However, as the “transracialism” controversy has shown, it can also—unwittingly or not—reproduce politically insidious assumptions that obscure and distort the very power relations it professes to track.

This does not mean that there cannot be an analytic philosophy that self-reflectively pursues metaphysical questions into the nature of sociopolitical phenomena that interest “feminists”; or that “feminists” should do away with analytic philosophy altogether. Rather, it means simply that there is always something politically at stake in these questions, and that these political stakes need to be made visible—not merely as that which motivates a “feminist” metaphysics, but as that which keeps a check on it and keeps it in its place. In short: analytic accounts of “race” and gender need to be able to take themselves as objects of a politically charged critique. Such a critique would ultimately be in service of—without being subordinated to—contemporary struggles against racism and sexism.

NOTES

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1. I have chosen to put “race”, but not in gender, in scare quotes throughout this paper, in order to highlight that these categories, whilst both contested, are *differently* contested, with irreducible histories.

2. This definition is contested. For an overview of relevant debates in feminist metaphysics see, for instance, Mikkola 2017.

3. Later in the essay, Haslanger includes a nonbinary account of gender, where she defines gender as the umbrella category “under which the previous definitions of *man* and *woman* fall” (Haslanger 2012b, 244; emphasis original). This reformulation is intended to facilitate a “non-hierarchical” account of gender; one that is consistent not with things as they are now, but with how things ought to be “in a just world” (243). Nevertheless, Haslanger remains ambivalent in her stance against the gender binary. She proposes “that we use the definitions of *man* and *woman* offered above” (244), for “it is clear that these dominant nodes of our gender structures are hierarchical” (244).

4. The problem I formulate here is clearly reflected in Haslanger’s conclusion to the “Gender and Race” essay: “Within the framework I’ve sketched, there is room for theoretical categories such as *man*, *woman*, and *race* (and particular racial groups), that take hierarchy to be a constitutive element, and those such as *gender* and *ethnicity* that do not” (Haslanger 2012b, 246; emphasis original). Here, too, white and nonwhite identities figure only as derivatives of “race.”

5. Crucially, this move is not born out of Haslanger’s realist and constructivist commitments: it simply does not follow from the fact that racial identity is a real social kind that particular racial identities are structurally the same.

6. Haslanger takes the idea of racial identity as an “internal map” from William E. Cross’s work on African American identity: “In a generic sense, one’s identity is a maze or map that functions in a multitude of ways to guide and direct exchanges with one’s social and material realities” (Cross 1991, 214; cited in Haslanger 2012a, 290). It is, in other words, a tool to enable us to function as intelligible identities in the world, and to respond

to the world in ways that make sense, given our material and social positioning in the world.

7. This section speaks to Botts's response to "transracialism," wherein she uses insights from the hermeneutic tradition to argue that "transracialism" does not exist in the context of the contemporary United States (Botts 2018b). In her view, a context-sensitive response to "transracialism" can show that, as long as "race" is understood in terms of "ancestry" and as long as this meaning is shared by those who identify with racialized identities, "transracialism" is not an intelligible notion. Overall, I am sympathetic to her reading, but I think that a critical—and contextually situated—analysis of power relations in dominant white societies need not be limited to a particular national context. As Ahmed's work on liberal multicultural societies testifies, it is possible to formulate a transnational critique of dominant racisms, without thereby losing grip on contextual specificities (Ahmed 2000).

8. In her work, Chow uses the term *ethnic*; I have chosen to keep to the term *racialized* instead. As outlined previously, I believe that it better highlights the ways in which racialized subjects are implicated in a complex grid of racializing power regimes. Although I am aware of the debates around the differences between *race* and *ethnicity*, in this article I cannot attend to them in as much detail as they deserve. Haslanger sketches schematically the differences between ethnicity and "race" in Haslanger 2012d, chapter 7. For alternative perspectives on this distinction, see also Alcoff 2000.

9. This chimes with José Muñoz's work on the affective performance of racial normativities (Muñoz 2000).

10. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for directing me to this issue.

11. For important work on this see, for instance Gilroy 1993; McClintock 1995; Gilroy 2000; 2004; Lugones 2010; El-Tayeb 2011; Shohat and Stam 2012; Ware 2015; and Wekker 2016.

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