

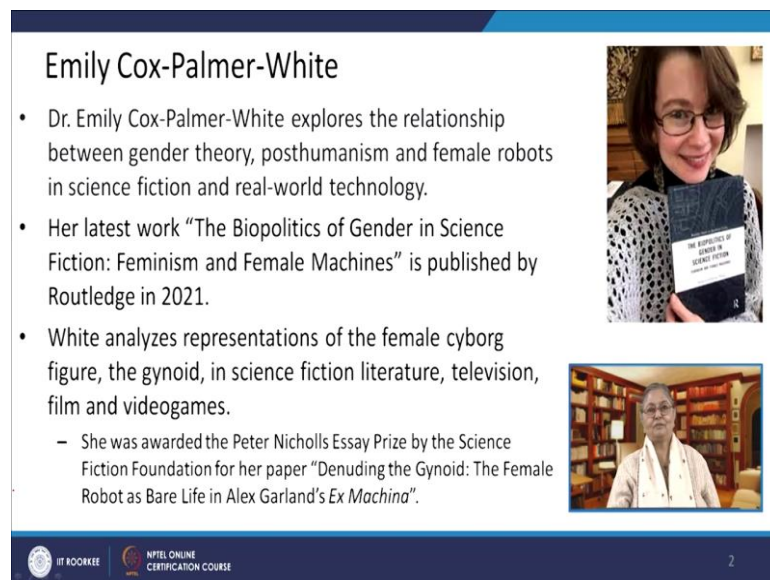
Contextualizing Gender
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Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee

Lecture - 52

“Women or Womankind? Signatures, Suspension and Bare Life in Feminism and Science Fiction” by Emily Cox- Palmer White I

Welcome dear participants. In today’s module we shall discuss a young scholar Emily Cox-Palmer-White specializing in gender theory, science fiction and philosophy. Response towards latest technological interventions and biopower in terms of gender is still a developing approach. It is in a nascent phase. In continuation with our previous discussions this module will help us to understand gender as a biopolitical phenomenon.

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Emily Cox-Palmer-White

- Dr. Emily Cox-Palmer-White explores the relationship between gender theory, posthumanism and female robots in science fiction and real-world technology.
- Her latest work “The Biopolitics of Gender in Science Fiction: Feminism and Female Machines” is published by Routledge in 2021.
- White analyzes representations of the female cyborg figure, the gynoid, in science fiction literature, television, film and videogames.
 - She was awarded the Peter Nicholls Essay Prize by the Science Fiction Foundation for her paper “Denuding the Gynoid: The Female Robot as Bare Life in Alex Garland’s *Ex Machina*”.

The slide includes two photographs: one of Dr. Emily Cox-Palmer-White holding her book, and another of Prof. Rashmi Gaur. The footer contains the IIT Roorkee and NPTEL Online Certification Course logos, along with the number 2.

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work “The Biopolitics of Gender in Science Fiction” is concerned with developing new avenues in feminist philosophy.

She draws together the work of key feminist and gender theorists such as Judith Butler and Donna Haraway and the biopolitical philosophy of Giorgio Agamben and Gilles Deleuze. White’s work ‘The Biopolitics of Gender in Science Fiction’ is concerned with developing new avenues in feminist philosophy. In her analysis White acknowledges the normative and subversive properties of the gynoid.

She calls for a new feminist politics of selfhood and autonomy implied by the post human qualities of the female machine. In order to understand White’s approach to science fiction, gender and biopower we will be looking at a specific chapter in her book titled as ‘Women or Womankind? Signatures, Suspension and Bare Life in Feminism and Science Fiction’.

This chapter interprets gender as a defining part of one’s identity while foregrounding the concept of biopower and Giorgio Agamben’s concept of “paradigmatic system”.

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“Woman or Womankind? Signatures, Suspension and Bare Life in Feminism and Science Fiction” (Part I)

- The author outlines ‘new’ conceptualization of gender as a category, discourse, and knowledge, while contextualizing ideas of “biopower”.
- White reworks Giorgio Agamben’s concept of “paradigmatic system”, to approach the structures of “gender as a biopolitical phenomenon”.
- She uses accounts by Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam and Monique Wittig to explicate the power structures embedded within the discourse/s of gender and sex.

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The author outlines ‘new’ conceptualization of gender as a category, as a discourse and also as a knowledge, while contextualizing ideas of “biopower”. White reworks Giorgio Agamben’s concept of “paradigmatic system” to approach the structures of “gender as a biopolitical phenomenon”.

She uses accounts by Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, Monique Wittig to explicate the power structures embedded within the discourses of gender and sex. To begin her account White refers to the concept of “paradigmatic system” proposed by the famous Italian critic Giorgio Agamben.

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Giorgio Agamben (1942-)

- Agamben, an Italian critic, is one of the leading and innovative figures in philosophy and political theory.
- Agamben’s work does not follow a straightforward chronological path of development either conceptually or thematically. However, his central focus is on questions of language and representation, politics of the spectacle, and the *ethos* of humanity.
- He is particularly known for his *Homo Sacer* project, which begins with the book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995). The project is a response to questions surrounding totalitarianism and bio-politics.

Giorgio Agamben
Source: d-dean.medium.com

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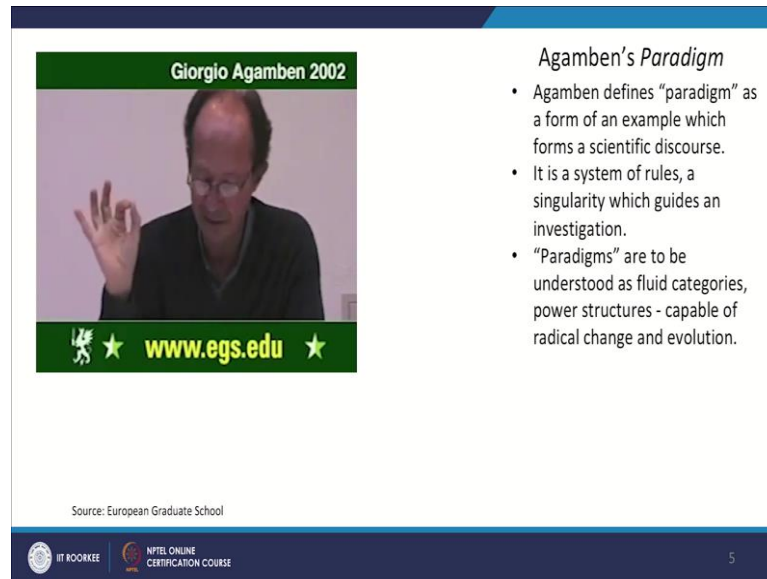
Agamben is particularly known for his ‘Homo Sacer’ project, which begins with the book ‘Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life’ published in 1995. The project is a response to questions surrounding totalitarianism and biopolitics. The term Agamben has used for power structures is “paradigms”.

“Paradigms”, according to him are fluid categories constructed both socially and politically. They are recognized in the real as well as virtual world and therefore, are capable of radical change, as a result of their unstable nature. The paradigm is a part of fragment of the whole excluded from the whole, in order to show its belonging to it.

In a way the fragment could be as a kind of paradigm for the whole. The paradigm is a singular object that is standing equally for all others of the same class defines the

intelligibility of the group of which it is a part and which it is same time it constitutes. In the next slide we have an explanation of the term “paradigms” by Agamben.

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The slide features a video frame on the left showing Giorgio Agamben speaking, with a green banner at the top reading "Giorgio Agamben 2002" and another at the bottom with "www.egs.edu" and two stars. To the right, under the heading "Agamben's Paradigm", are three bullet points. At the bottom of the slide, there are logos for IIT ROORKEE and NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE, along with the number "5".

Agamben's Paradigm

- Agamben defines “paradigm” as a form of an example which forms a scientific discourse.
- It is a system of rules, a singularity which guides an investigation.
- “Paradigms” are to be understood as fluid categories, power structures - capable of radical change and evolution.

Source: European Graduate School

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He defines paradigm as a form of an example which forms a scientific discourse. “It is a system of rules, a singularity which guides an investigation. In the second sense the ‘paradigm’ is a single element of the whole let us say for instance Newton’s “Principia” which acting as a common model or an example paradigm means just example as you know.

Stands for the explicit rules and thus defines a coherent tradition of investigation thus the question is for Kuhn, to investigate by means of the paradigm what make possible the constitution of what he calls a normal science, that is to say a science which can decide if a certain problem will be considered scientific or not.

And, a normal science does not mean at all and this sense a science guided by a coherent system of rules on the contrary the rules can be derived from the paradigms, but the paradigms can guide (Refer Time: 06:50) can guide the investigation also in absence of rules.

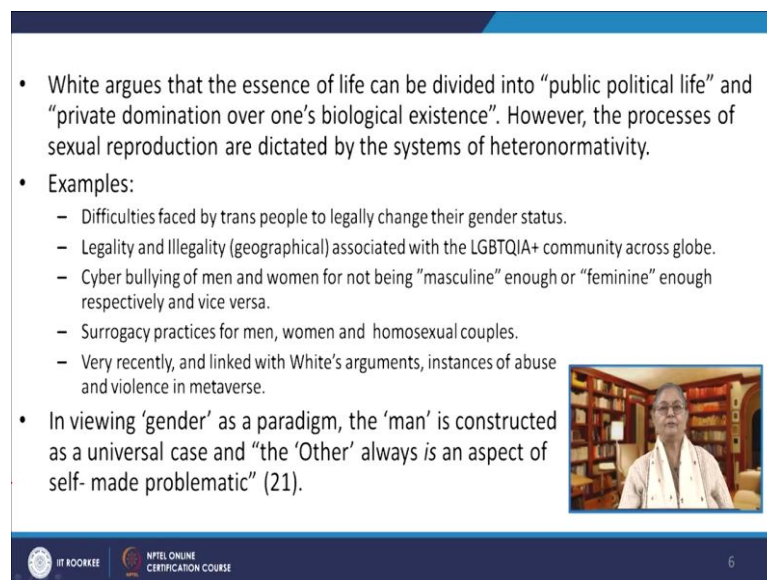
And, this is precisely the second meaning of the term paradigm which Kuhn consider the most new and profound, though it is the oldest and truth. The paradigm is in this sense

just an example a single phenomenon, a singularity which can be repeated and thus acquires the capability of tacitly modelling the behaviour and the practice of scientists”.

White uses this concept to approach the structure of gender as a biopolitical phenomenon. The paradigm is composed of an opposition one of Agamben’s most famous examples is the opposition of politics and biology in the paradigm of life. He traces it back to the ancient Greek concept of ‘bio’s’ and ‘zoe’.

However, the implications of biopolitics in the context of sex and gender have not been at all taken up by Agamben. White marries the two to outline the engagement of gender and sexuality, self and the other, power and knowledge and for her biopolitics and gender are closely related to each other.

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The slide contains the following text:

- White argues that the essence of life can be divided into “public political life” and “private domination over one’s biological existence”. However, the processes of sexual reproduction are dictated by the systems of heteronormativity.
- Examples:
 - Difficulties faced by trans people to legally change their gender status.
 - Legality and Illegality (geographical) associated with the LGBTQIA+ community across globe.
 - Cyber bullying of men and women for not being “masculine” enough or “feminine” enough respectively and vice versa.
 - Surrogacy practices for men, women and homosexual couples.
 - Very recently, and linked with White’s arguments, instances of abuse and violence in metaverse.
- In viewing ‘gender’ as a paradigm, the ‘man’ is constructed as a universal case and “the ‘Other’ always is an aspect of self- made problematic” (21).

The slide also features a small video inset of a woman with glasses speaking, and a footer with logos for IIT ROORKEE and NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE, along with the number 6.

White argues that the essence of life can be divided into public, political life and private domination over one’s biological existence. However, the processes of sexual reproduction are dictated by the systems of heteronormativity. We can look at certain examples to further understand this concept.

The trans people face difficulty to legally change their gender status in several countries . There are legalities and illegalities related with the geographical location and associated with the LGBTQIA plus community across globe. Cyber bullying of men and women for not being masculine or feminine respectively and vice versa.

Surrogacy practices for men, women and homosexual couples and very recently linked with Whites arguments, we can also refer to instances of abuse and violence in metaverse. In viewing gender as a paradigm, the man is constructed as a universal case and ‘the other’ always is an aspect of self-made problematic.

White points out that in his discussions, Agamben leaves out these significant implications of biopolitics, in relation to state regulations of sex and gender and she attempts to utilize this theoretical gap using Agamben’s concept of paradigmatic system to understand the relation between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ as discursive constructs, embedded in the domain of biopolitics and power relations.


We may imagine that life has two independent parts public and personal and that we may control our choices in terms of biological processes, but in reality, the state is invested in regulating our biological processes namely sexual reproduction through phallogocentric ideals and homosocial norms. We have already its examples for example, difficulties faced by the transgender people in changing their gender status in certain countries.

In order to understand the intertwined nature of biopolitics and gender relations, White chooses to situate the two concepts into the fantastical realm of the science fiction writing.

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Introducing the role of Science Fiction writing

- According to White, science fiction writing contributes heavily to the discourses of ‘gender’. Therefore SF can be categorized as “biopolitical fiction”.
- This cross-sectional engagement between biopolitics, science fiction and gender theory is part of many works of science fiction literature. It is often seen that in the conceptualisation of human subjectivity, woman is constructed as the inferior and in service of male supremacy.
- The categories of male and female can also be mapped onto the binary of *zoe* and *bios* within the paradigm of life, and referred to by Agamben in his illustration of paradigm – with Man seen as constituting political, public life while Woman is associated with the sphere of the domestic, private life and crucially, biological life (in a dystopic reading, violence against women).



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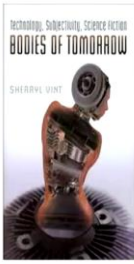
White opines that science fiction writing contributes heavily to the discourses of gender and therefore, science fiction can be categorized as biopolitical fiction. This cross-sectional engagement between biopolitics, science fiction and gender theory is part of many works of science fiction literature.

It is often seen that in the conceptualisation of human subjectivity ‘woman’ is constructed as the inferior and in service of male supremacy. The categories of male and female can also be mapped onto the binary of zoe and bios within the paradigm of life, and referred by Agamben in his illustration of ‘paradigm’.


With men seen as constituting political public life while ‘Woman’ is associated with the sphere of the domestic, private life and crucially, biological life in a dystopian reading we can also think of violence against women. White also quotes Sherryl Vint’s ‘Bodies of Tomorrow’ to elaborate on the relevance of the science fiction universe.

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- Similar to the concept of life, gender is truly suspended between the categories of male and female, so that the distinctions between the two become blurred. Sf deals with aliens, zombies, animals and more to mark the discourse of the self/the Other.
- Sherryl Vint, Professor of SF Media Studies at University of California, argues in her work *Bodies of Tomorrow* (2007) that SF is particularly suited to “exploring the question of the post-human because it is a discourse that allows us to concretely imagine bodies and selves other-wise, a discourse defined by its ability to estrange our commonplace perception of reality” (19).
- Science fiction, particularly when it deals explicitly with concepts of sex and gender, is biopolitical fiction.



Source: utorontopress.com



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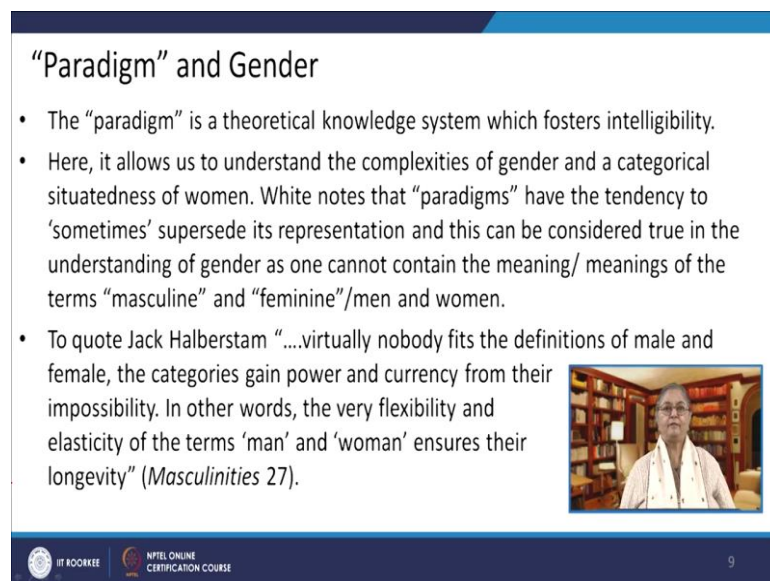
Gender is truly suspended between the categories of male and female very much like the concept of life and the distinctions between the two become blurred. Science fiction deals with aliens, zombies, animals, and more to mark the discourse of the self and the other. Sherryl Vint, Professor of Science Fiction Media Studies at University of California, argues in her 2007 work ‘Bodies of Tomorrow’ that science fiction is particularly suited to and I quote “exploring the question of the post-human because it is

a discourse that allows us to concretely imagine bodies and selves otherwise, a discourse defined by its ability to estrange our commonplace perception of reality” unquote.

Science fiction, particularly when it deals explicitly with concepts of sex and gender, is biopolitical fiction. Agamben’s understanding of the paradigm reflects the existence of the binaries, the dichotomy of the biological self and the universal public persona or digital avatar that is the ‘self’ and the ‘other’.

White also quotes Jack Halberstam’s understanding of gender paradigms from her work ‘Female Masculinities’, while foregrounding the fluidity of the paradigms as proposed by Agamben.

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The slide is titled "Paradigm" and Gender. It contains three bullet points. The first bullet point states: "The 'paradigm' is a theoretical knowledge system which fosters intelligibility." The second bullet point states: "Here, it allows us to understand the complexities of gender and a categorical situatedness of women. White notes that 'paradigms' have the tendency to 'sometimes' supersede its representation and this can be considered true in the understanding of gender as one cannot contain the meaning/ meanings of the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine'/men and women." The third bullet point states: "To quote Jack Halberstam '...virtually nobody fits the definitions of male and female, the categories gain power and currency from their impossibility. In other words, the very flexibility and elasticity of the terms 'man' and 'woman' ensures their longevity" (Masculinities 27)." To the right of the text is a small video inset showing a woman with glasses and a white shirt speaking. At the bottom of the slide, there are logos for IIT ROORKEE and NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE, and the number 9.

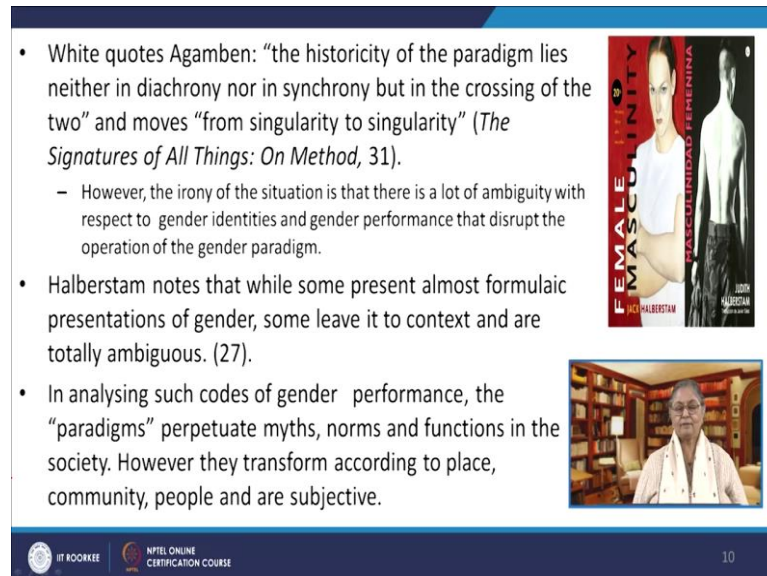
The “paradigm” is a theoretical knowledge system which fosters intelligibility. Here, it allows us to understand the complexities of gender and a categorical situatedness of women.

White notes that paradigms have the tendency to sometimes supersede its representation and this can be considered true in the understanding of gender as one cannot contain the meaning or the meanings of the term’s “masculine” and “feminine” or men and women.

To quote Jack Halberstam “virtually nobody fits the definitions of male and female, the categories gain power and currency from their impossibility. In other words, the very flexibility and elasticity of the terms man and woman ensures their longevity”.

Interestingly, Agamben observes that paradigms are fluid, malleable and ever self-evolving. They constitute culture and the individual as a whole and a collective.

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- White quotes Agamben: “the historicity of the paradigm lies neither in diachrony nor in synchrony but in the crossing of the two” and moves “from singularity to singularity” (*The Signatures of All Things: On Method*, 31).
 - However, the irony of the situation is that there is a lot of ambiguity with respect to gender identities and gender performance that disrupt the operation of the gender paradigm.
- Halberstam notes that while some present almost formulaic presentations of gender, some leave it to context and are totally ambiguous. (27).
- In analysing such codes of gender performance, the “paradigms” perpetuate myths, norms and functions in the society. However they transform according to place, community, people and are subjective.

White quotes Agamben that, “the historicity of the paradigm lies neither in diachrony nor in synchrony but in the crossing of the two and moves from singularity to singularity”. However, the irony of the situation is that there is a lot of ambiguity with respect to gender identities and gender performance that disrupt the operation of the gender paradigm. Halberstam notes that while some present almost formulaic presentations of gender, some leave it to context and are totally ambiguous.

In analysing such codes of gender performance, the paradigms perpetuate myths, norms and functions in the society. They also transform according to place, community, and people and are absolutely subjective. To substantiate her argument further White quotes the example of Mnemosyne named after the Greek goddess of memory.

It is a visual art atlas by the German art historian Aby Warburg. It contains almost 1000 images from books, magazines, newspaper articles and other daily life sources. They are arranged thematically on 40 wooden panels covered with black cloth. Agamben has analysed it to elaborate on the concept of the paradigm in operation is a marker of dynamism, subjectivity and evolution.

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- In order to elaborate that the particulars of the process of building are re-building 'paradigms', Agamben quotes the example of Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne*.
 - It is a visual art atlas containing almost 1,000 images from books, magazines, newspaper articles and other daily life sources.
- Plate 46 in particular contained various visual representations of the "nymph" which is neither singular nor multiple, neither archaic nor contemporary.
- As one continues to read this representation and will continue to do so, the image becomes 'the paradigm-in-operation'. It evolves due to continuous reading.





Plate 46
Source: Warburg.library.cornell.edu




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Agamben quotes the example of Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne*, in order to elaborate the particulars of the process of building or rebuilding paradigms. Plate 46 of this atlas in particular contained various visual representations of the nymph which is neither singular nor multiple, neither archaic nor contemporary.


As one continues to read this representation and will continue to do so, the image becomes 'the paradigm-in-operation'. It evolves due to continuous reading.

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- Another way to read Aby Warburg's work is to see that the image of the "nymph" is both an individual representation and is being represented and read within the paradigms of the virtual art atlas created.
- The image represents a collective and at the same time a singularity.
- White observes that Agamben's analysis of the "nymph" implies "an inherent instability within our method of organising knowledge; whereby general and specific instances within the paradigmatic become blurred so that there can be no origin" (22).



Aby Warburg
Source: en.Wikipedia.org



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Another way to read Aby Warburg's work is to see that the image of the nymph is both an individual representation and is being represented and read within the paradigms of the virtual art atlas which has been created.

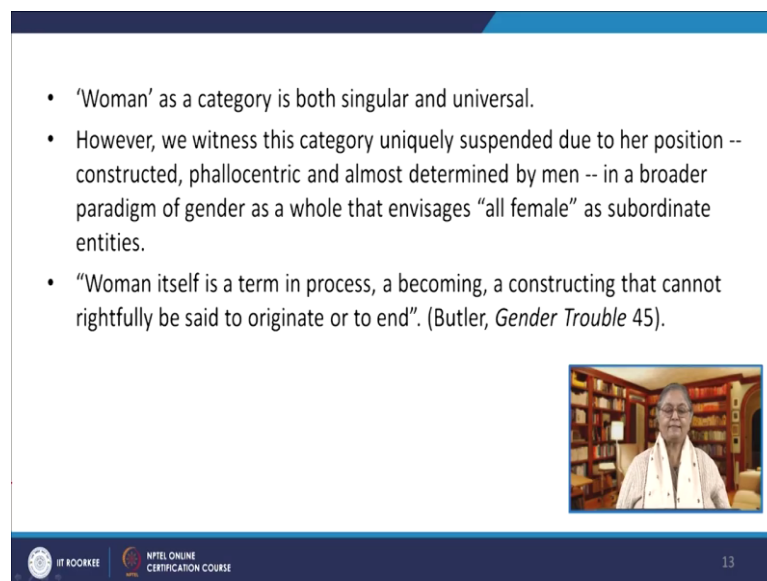
The image represents a collective and at the same time a singularity. White observes that Agamben's analysis of the nymph implies an inherent instability within our method of organising knowledge; whereby general and specific instances within the paradigmatic become blurred so that there can be no origin.

The existence of the nymph is predicated on a fluctuation of collated concepts that all oscillate between the general and particular in that, the common that is the general contains properties of the proper that is a single instance in vice versa producing an indistinction within the paradigm of nymph.

White reads a fluidity of the image of the nymph within and across the discourse of gender. In considering Agamben's nymph paradigm one can also understand gender and its function in a similar fashion.

For Butler the repeated stylization of the body a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance.

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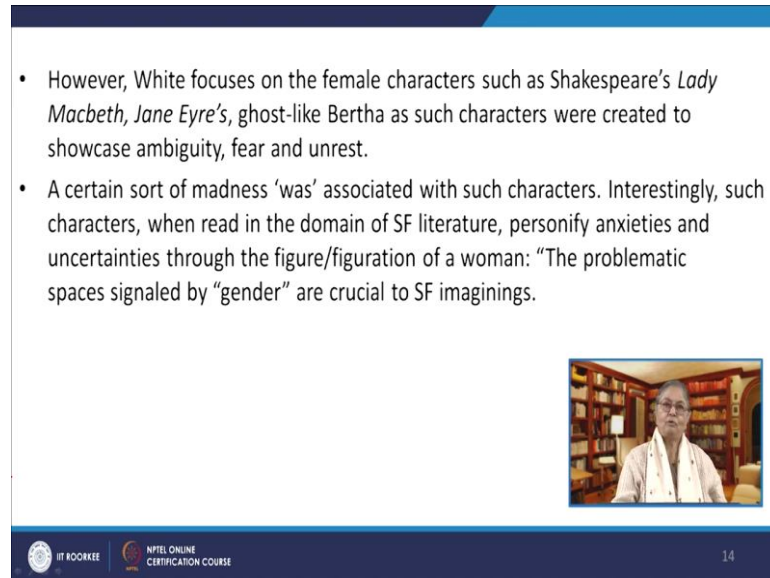


- 'Woman' as a category is both singular and universal.
- However, we witness this category uniquely suspended due to her position -- constructed, phallogentric and almost determined by men -- in a broader paradigm of gender as a whole that envisages "all female" as subordinate entities.
- "Woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end". (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 45).

'Woman' as a category is both singular and universal. However, we witness this category uniquely suspended due to her position that is constructed, phallogentric and almost

determined by men in a broader paradigm of gender as a whole that envisages all female as subordinate entities. 'Woman' itself is a term in process, a becoming a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end.

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- However, White focuses on the female characters such as Shakespeare's *Lady Macbeth*, *Jane Eyre's*, ghost-like Bertha as such characters were created to showcase ambiguity, fear and unrest.
- A certain sort of madness 'was' associated with such characters. Interestingly, such characters, when read in the domain of SF literature, personify anxieties and uncertainties through the figure/figuration of a woman: "The problematic spaces signalled by "gender" are crucial to SF imaginings.

White focuses on the female characters such as Shakespeare's *Lady Macbeth*, *Jane Eyre's* ghost-like Bertha as such characters were created to showcase ambiguity, fear and unrest. A certain sort of madness was associated with such characters. Interestingly, such characters, when read in the domain of science fiction literature, personify anxieties and uncertainties through the figure or the figuration of a woman: "The problematic spaces signalled by gender are crucial to the imaginings of the science fiction".

White asserts that the fluid female characters have always threatened our socio-cultural norms. However, within the paradigm of the science fiction they experience either extreme marginalisation in the context of a dystopia or complete freedom in the context of a utopia.

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- The presence of “Woman” – whether actual, threatened or symbolically represented (through the alien, or “mother earth” for example) – reflects cultural anxieties about a range of “Others” immanent in even the most scientifically pure, technically focused SF.
- The categories of self/other dichotomies presented within the discourse of gender, are presented/represented, produced/reproduced by the figure of the female character in many SF narratives.
- Women represented the unknown, mystical, which can be deeply “internal to the human psyche and yet utterly divorced from the anthropocentric; it is the extra-terrestrial or the extra-human, the alien both literally and figuratively, the monstrous other, that is both central to human understanding and yet also probably outside the limits of human comprehension”. (23)



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The presence of women whether actual threatened or symbolically represented through the alien, or mother earth for example, reflects cultural anxieties about a range of others immanent in even the most scientifically pure, and technically focused science fiction. The categories of self and other dichotomies presented within the discourse of gender, are presented and represented, produced and reproduced by the figure of the female character in several science fiction narratives.

Women represented the unknown, the mystical, which can be deeply internal to the human psyche and yet utterly divorced from the anthropocentric; it is the extra-terrestrial or the extra-human, the alien both literally and figuratively, the monstrous other, that is both central to human understanding and yet also probably outside the limits of human comprehension.


So, White has made this statement to clarify how the presence of a woman can have a gendered existence even in the domain of science fiction. Further White quotes Irigaray’s ‘Speculum’ of the other woman to showcase the redundancy experienced by the female self with respect to the male narrative.

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- Irigaray describes woman as : “... pure mimicry. Which is always the case for inferior species, of course. Needed to define essences, her function requires that she herself have no definition” (Irigaray, *Speculum* 307).
- Irigaray’s analysis is essential to deconstruct the stigmatization associated with women’s entire being and existence. Further, such an understanding of women marginalizes queer and trans identities even further the theoretical- literary hierarchy.



Luce Irigaray
Source:cristofairphoto.photos
helter.com




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Irigaray describes woman as, “a ‘pure mimicry’ which is always the case for inferior species, as she has commented and I quote needed to define essences, her function requires that she herself have no definition unquote. Irigaray’s analysis is essential to deconstruct the stigmatization associated with women’s entire being and existence”. Further, such an understanding of women marginalizes queer and trans identities even further the theoretical and literary hierarchy.

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- On the other hand, Jack Halberstam observes that “female masculinity is generally received by hetero- and homo-normative cultures as a pathological sign of misidentification and maladjustment, as a longing to be and to have a power that is always just out of reach” (*Masculinities* 9).
- White unifies Irigaray’s and Halberstam’s approach to state that we need to demolish the essentialist approach to gender, the woman, the trans, the queer and more to produce a variety of cultural narratives, associations and identities.
- According to White, ‘woman’ is not a fixity, it is a *paradigm* which take into account the experiences of being a woman and becoming a woman.



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On the other hand, Jack Halberstam observes that and I quote “female masculinity is generally received by hetero and homonormative cultures as a pathological sign of misidentification and maladjustment, as a longing to be and to have a power that is always just out of reach” unquote.

White unifies Irigaray’s and Halberstam’s approach to state that we need to demolish the essentialist approach to gender, the woman, the trans, the queer and more to produce a variety of cultural narratives, associations and identities. According to White, “woman is not a fixity, it is a paradigm which take into account the experiences of being a woman and becoming a woman”.

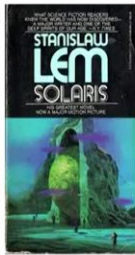
White reads Jack Halberstam and Irigaray in an intertwined fashion to propose that the category woman is a fluid category and therefore, can be categorized as an Agamben “paradigm”. She also illustrates this point with an analysis of a science fiction novel ‘Solaris’ by Stanislaw Lam in this novel the female character Rheya or Harry’s supernatural presence is dictated by her former partner Kelvin’s memory of her.

The novel is set in an extra-terrestrial space and White analyses it as a narrative of otherness, loneliness, misery experienced by the female self being attached to the male self as a naturalized binary opposition.


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The Suspended Woman

- White presents the case of Stanislaw Lam’s *Solaris* to foreground the portrayal of “otherness” experienced by the female in a SF setup of the mysterious planet of “Solaris”.
- In an attempt to communicate with extra- terrestrial life, Dr. Kelvin (psychologist, protagonist) bombards the land with high-energy X rays.
- The experiment fails. But afterwards everyone begins to experience certain hauntings and visitations.
- Kelvin’s visitor is a look- alike of his dead partner ‘Rheya’ who had committed suicide. She is the only real thing that Kelvin remembers.



Source: Amazon.in



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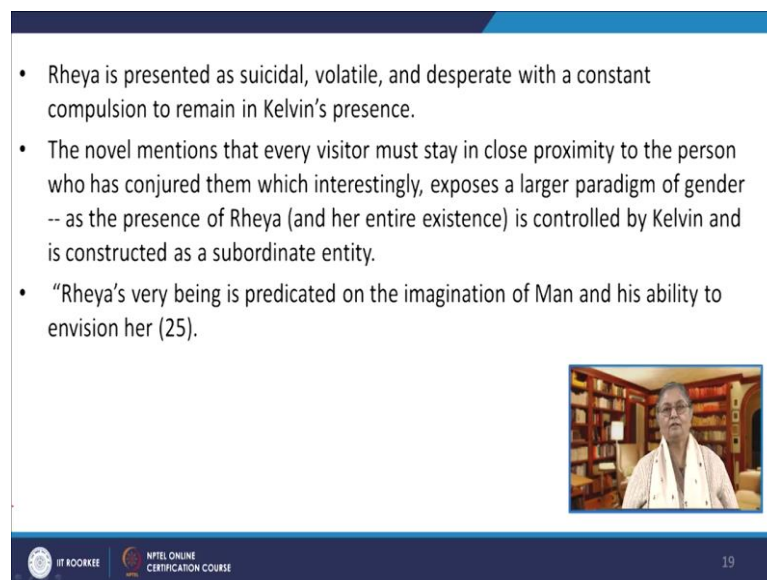
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White presents the case of Stanislaw Lam's 'Solaris' to foreground the portrayal of otherness experienced by the female in a science fiction set up of a mysterious planet with the name of Solaris. In an attempt to communicate with extra-terrestrial life, Doctor Kelvin who is a psychologist and also a protagonist of the novel bombards a land with high energy X rays. The experiment fails. But afterwards everyone begins to experience certain hauntings and visitations.

Kelvin's visitor is a look- alike of his dead partner Rheya who had committed suicide. She is the only real thing that Kelvin remembers. As a memory Rheya is only as real as Kelvin remembers her to be. She is a figment of his imagination and the readers are never given adequate information about the relationship between Rheya and Kelvin.

She holds the in between transitional space between being a woman that is the universal and her individual distinct self which is the specific the categorical like the 'nymph' we have mentioned previously.

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- Rheya is presented as suicidal, volatile, and desperate with a constant compulsion to remain in Kelvin's presence.
- The novel mentions that every visitor must stay in close proximity to the person who has conjured them which interestingly, exposes a larger paradigm of gender -- as the presence of Rheya (and her entire existence) is controlled by Kelvin and is constructed as a subordinate entity.
- "Rheya's very being is predicated on the imagination of Man and his ability to envision her (25).

Rheya is presented as a suicidal, and volatile person and desperate with the constant compulsion to remain in Kelvin's presence. The novel mentions that every visitor must stay in close proximity to the person who has conjured them which interestingly, also exposes a larger paradigm of gender. As a presence of Rheya and her entire existence is controlled by Kelvin and is constructed as a subordinated entity. Her very being is predicated on the imagination of man and his ability to envision her.

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- Composed of moments of identity (common) and difference (proper), “the founding principal and the specific instance which arises from it (and can therefore be seen as subordinate to it), the paradigm can be said to consist of both the example and the exclusion”(25).
- She is constructed as a floating example, a kind of non-being devoid of any kind of literal depth.
- She eventually finds she is unable to live as she is a mere shadow of a deceased woman and, just like the original Rheya, she ends her life.



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Composed of moments of identity and difference that is the dichotomy between the common and the proper, the founding principle as white commends and the specific instance which arises from it and can therefore, also be seen as a subordinate to it.


The paradigm can be said to consist of both the example and the exclusion. Rheya is constructed as a floating example, a kind of non-being devoid of any kind of literal depth, and she eventually finds that she is unable to live as she is a mere shadow of a deceased woman and, just like the original Rheya, she also ends her life.

The novel has been subjected to various retellings and adaptations, audio as well as video, it has been adapted in radio, in theatres, operas and cinemas. In the next slide we have a video clipping, it is an excerpt from the 2002 film adaptation of the novel which is also titled as Solaris, this film is directed by Steven Soderbergh and it stars George Clooney as Doctor Kelvin and Natascha McElhone as Rheya.

In this excerpt Kelvin claims that he does not remember Rheya, and what he remembered her wrong these words echo throughout White’s analysis as she observes that since this relationship is based on Kelvin’s non remembrance, Rheya will never become whole a complete signifier or an individual capable of asserting agency and choice.

She is a floating suspended signifier somewhere in between existing only in Kelvin's memory and the nonexistence as she dies in the text. It suggests a sense of loss of the female self in the novel as well as in the movie.

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Solaris (2002):
"I Remembered her wrong"

- This excerpt is from 2002 film *Solaris* by Steven Soderbergh: an adaptation of Lem's SF *Solaris*.
- Here Kelvin accepts that he remembered (her) Rhexya wrong.

Source: 20th Century Fox

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Solaris (2002):
"I Remembered her wrong"

- This excerpt is from 2002 film *Solaris* by Steven Soderbergh: an adaptation of Lem's SF *Solaris*.
- Here Kelvin accepts that he remembered (her) Rhexya wrong.

Source: 20th Century Fox

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(Refer Slide Time: 28:54)



*Solaris (2002):
"I Remembered her wrong"*

- This excerpt is from 2002 film *Solaris* by Steven Soderbergh: an adaptation of Lem's SF *Solaris*.
- Here Kelvin accepts that he remembered (her) Rhexya wrong.


Source: 20th Century Fox

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“Earth even the word sounded strange to me now unfamiliar how long had I been gone.

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*Solaris (2002):
"I Remembered her wrong"*


- This excerpt is from 2002 film *Solaris* by Steven Soderbergh: an adaptation of Lem's SF *Solaris*.
- Here Kelvin accepts that he remembered (her) Rhexya wrong.

Source: 20th Century Fox

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(Refer Slide Time: 29:33)



Solaris (2002):
"I Remembered her wrong"

- This excerpt is from 2002 film *Solaris* by Steven Soderbergh: an adaptation of Lem's SF *Solaris*.
- Here Kelvin accepts that he remembered (her) Rhexya wrong.

Source: 20th Century Fox

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How long had I been back did it matter? I tried to find the rhythm of the world where I used to live, I followed the current, I was silent attentive, I made a conscious effort to smile nod stand and perform the millions of gestures that constitute life on earth. I studied these gestures until they became reflexes again, but I was haunted by the idea that I remembered her wrong, somehow, I was wrong about everything”.


After establishing the socio-cultural marginalisation of the female subject. White now shifts to Monique Wittig’s essay ‘Homo Sum’ to assert the aforementioned in the linguistic domain as a holistic understanding of the violence experienced by the ‘she’ as it amounts to a better understanding of the biopolitics of the gendered beings and bodies.

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- After establishing the notions of “otherness” experienced by women bodies and complexities of gender in SF, Palmer-White moves to the work of Monique Wittig as it is close to Agamben’s work on biopolitics.
- In her essay *Homo Sum*, she analyzes language as it has ingrained assumptions of the supremacy of Man over Woman.
- Wittig’s understanding of gender as primarily a linguistic apparatus is exemplified by the common phrase “mankind,” where the exemplar of Man stands for all humans, obscuring the very existence of Woman through blunt absence (Wittig, “Homo Sum” 55).



Monique Wittig
Source: moniquewittig.com




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In her essay ‘Homo Sum’, Wittig analyses language as it has ingrained assumptions of the supremacy of man over woman. Wittig’s understanding of gender as primarily a linguistic apparatus is exemplified by the common phrase mankind, where the exemplar of man stands for all humans, obscuring the very existence of woman through blunt absence.

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- Wittig posits that the first table of opposites which history has handed down to us, has been recorded by Aristotle.” (Metaphysics, Book I, 5, 6).
- Examples: Limited/Unlimited, Rest/Motion, Odd/Even, Light/Dark, Good/Bad, Right/Left, Male/Female, One/Many.
- Under the series of the ‘One’ -- the absolute being non-divided, divinity itself -- we have ‘male’ and ‘light’; that were from then on never dislodged from their dominant position. Under the other series appear the unrestful: the common people, the females, the slaves, all reduced to the parameter of non-Being.
- For Being is being good, male, straight, in other words, godlike; “while non-Being is being anything else, female: it means discord, unrest, dark, and bad.” (Wittig 5–6)



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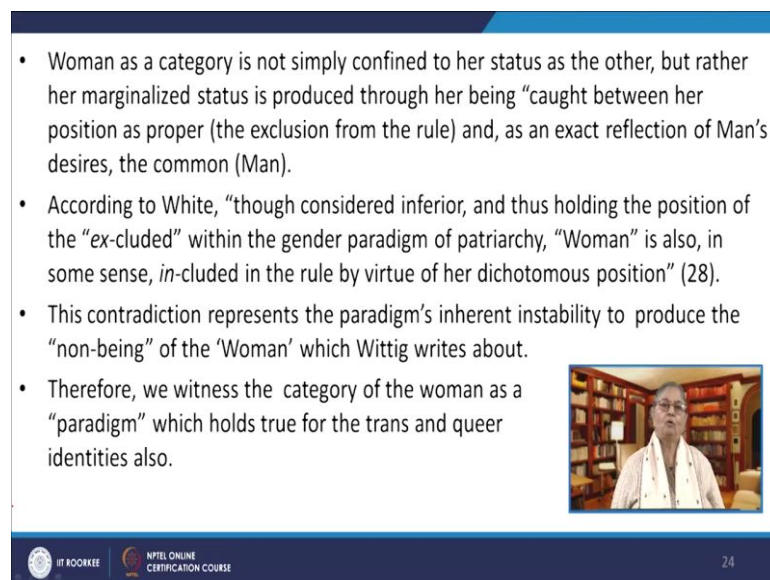
Wittig posits that the first table of opposites which history has handed down to us, has been recorded by Aristotle in his ‘Metaphysics’.

She refers to certain examples also for example, Limited/Unlimited, Rest/Motion, Odd/Even, Light/Dark, Good/Bad, Male/Female, One and Many. Under the series of the one the absolute being, non divided divinity itself, we have male and light; that were from then onwards never dislodged from their dominant position. Under the other series appear the unrestful: the common people, the females, the slaves, all reduced to the parameter of non-Being.

For 'being' is being good, male, straight, in other words, godlike; while non-Being is being anything else, female: it may mean discord, unrest, dark, and bad. Monique's work provides a more constructionist position with respect to gender.

Language plays a key role in constructing an imbalance between sexes and produces a gendered hierarchy. White suggests that as women are constructed in relation to men through language, categories do not exist outside of the heteronormative patriarchal order that has been founded on the fiction of oppositional discourse.

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- Woman as a category is not simply confined to her status as the other, but rather her marginalized status is produced through her being “caught between her position as proper (the exclusion from the rule) and, as an exact reflection of Man’s desires, the common (Man).
- According to White, “though considered inferior, and thus holding the position of the “ex-cluded” within the gender paradigm of patriarchy, “Woman” is also, in some sense, *in*-cluded in the rule by virtue of her dichotomous position” (28).
- This contradiction represents the paradigm’s inherent instability to produce the “non-being” of the ‘Woman’ which Wittig writes about.
- Therefore, we witness the category of the woman as a “paradigm” which holds true for the trans and queer identities also.

Woman as a category is not simply confined to her status as the other, but rather her marginalized status is produced through her being “caught between her position as proper and, as an exact reflection of men’s desire the common’. According to White, “though considered inferior, and thus holding the position of the excluded within the gender paradigm of patriarchy, woman is also, in some sense, included in the rule by virtue of her dichotomous position”.

The contradiction represents the paradigm's inherent instability to produce the nonbeing of the 'woman' which Wittig has written about. Therefore, we witness the category of the 'woman' as a paradigm which holds true for the trans as well as for the queer identities too. In this segment we discussed White's analysis of the being and becoming of the woman and the womankind.

While explaining the intricacies of the 'paradigm' as a literary concept, White asserts that gender should be categorized as a 'paradigm' due to its dynamic characterization. To explicate this assertion further she uses a discourse of science fiction as it contributes heavily to the understanding of both a general neutral future in the context of a utopia and violence based on gender in the context of dystopia.

White's intersectional approach alludes to science fiction as a literary apparatus for experimentation. Her analysis of 'Solaris' demonstrates that gender as a construct is a paradigm capable of accommodating the diversity of beings and becoming's and prone to the biopolitics of ideology and repression. White explores gender as a biopolitical tool through language by referring to Monique Wittig expounding that language is an essential part of the process of othering.

In the next segment we will discuss how White explores the socio-political othering of women and gendering of bodies by foregrounding the TV series 'The Handmaid's Tale'. The TV series is based on the famous novel of the same name by Margaret Atwood. This analysis will help us to have a more cohesive understanding of gender as a biopolitical phenomenon.

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Thank you.