

Welcome friends.

I would like to use first names if you will permit me.

Thanks Sarah and colleagues for organising this wonderful event to celebrate the publication of Marilyn's new, old book, *Before and After Gender*, written in the early seventies for a series which was to be edited by Jean La Fontaine but sadly fell through.

The aim of the series was to deal with everyday topics in an anthropological way while drawing on a wide range of diverse sources, introducing readers to ethnography presented alongside popular political works and literary fiction. The power of this format in such capable hands is plain to see. Who knows what impact it might have had if it had been published at the time.

Perhaps, as Judith Butler suggests in the afterword, a relational framing of gender would have been adopted sooner.

Of course, what we gain by having it published now is an extraordinary insight into a particular moment in feminism, anthropology and in the development of Marilyn's work.

Like all of the works discussed in the Feminist Classics series, this is a book which is not only of its time, but also offers an enduring contribution to an ongoing intellectual project. But in this case, it may also cause us to rethink our feminist chronology. This book is both of gender, and also, crucially, *after* gender. It is prescient, to say the least.

It begins with a simple point. 'Relations between men and women may stand for other things'.

It goes on to show that gender is a relation that models all relations. 'Models' in the dual sense of both representing and shaping, of course.

Then we are introduced to old ideas, ideas that keep reappearing, including model housewives, women as grown up children and mute informants. We are shown how worlds are made by sixteenth century Russian priests, eighteenth century Scottish advocates, nineteenth century English novelists and twentieth century anthropologists.

And then comes ethnography.

Which shows us first, that 'there is no one type of behaviour which characterizes male-female relations' and secondly, that ideas about, 'Relations between "men" and "women can only make sense in the context of other social relations. Gender is not just about men and women.

A hypothetical question is then posed. If we were to frame this representational issue as a 'problem', how might we seek to overcome it?

One potential solution, to distinguish between sex and gender, is, anticipating Nature, Culture and Gender, to miss the point.

'we should remember that creating distinctions of this kind is part of our own cultural apparatus' writes Marilyn.

Before and After Gender lays bare the stereotypes and assumptions that backfill our actions. But it goes much further.

It warns against the dangerous appeal of swapping models rather than attending to the act of modelling itself. Do we want a more egalitarian division of labour? Or a different way of imagining

work? Do we want equal rights for women? Or to expose the particularity of conceiving of personhood in this way? Do we want to talk about women? Or about society?

Here we are encouraged to contemplate interdependency, especially in contexts where opposition or contrast would usually be emphasised. I would like to say that this is root and branch feminism, but of course my suspicion of arboreal metaphors forbids me from doing so.

Written before gender, but with an argument which was already After Gender, this book is filled with the wisdom we find in all of Marilyn's work.

The knack of arranging material so that it provides its own critique.

The distinctive economical style...

I wish that I had had it in hand when I went down the road to Newmarket, to start fieldwork with gamblers and racehorse breeders.

I had studied with Marilyn as an undergraduate and I was reticent about genealogies.

However, my research participants **forced** me to record their family trees at the same time as they related the pedigrees of their biggest winners.

Mostly, they wanted to tell me about great racehorses and how they are made.

I was taught about racehorse reproduction by stud men and bloodstock agents. The conflation of human animal, economy and society in these titles is in itself suggestive. What of gender?

'The female is by nature weaker', wrote the Italian thoroughbred breeder Frederico Tesio, known in Newmarket as The Wizard of Dormello.

The purpose of her existence is the state of pregnancy. As soon as she becomes pregnant the nervous - almost neurotic - symptoms of virginity disappear...the mare is like a sack which gives back what has been put into it (Tesio 1958: 10)

At the time, the line between nature and artifice, or nature and culture, was being redrawn by what were then called New Reproductive Technologies, basically AI and cloning, which were banned by the laws of racing.

The most sustained opposition to AI that I experienced came from a thoroughbred breeder who had ridden in races until she was 73. She told me the story of the conception of a great racehorse that was the result of two horses, 'falling in love':

The stallion was being led along the road, and passed a mare on her way to something else, I mean, she wasn't even going to this horse. And they looked at each other and that was it. They overcame their handlers and made love on the Cambridge road. The best winners I have ever bred have been by sires whose legs really pump away like pistons during copulation – I'm sure that some transfer of energy is capable of improving the chances of getting a good energetic foal. What will fulfil that criteria in AI? A vet and a long sleeved glove? I'm very worried about it.

Here, then, are the old stories, this time told against the backdrop of the racecourse, where Queens, Sheikhs and Malaysian property millionaires collide with disgraced bankers, WAGs, and gamblers.

What do we gain by having this book now rather than when it was first written? There is a freshness here, a double pleasure, firstly, we have *more*. Secondly, we gain an insight into Marilyn's thinking in the early seventies, and some context which can help to increase our appreciation of her later work.

Many of the themes which she develops are anticipated here, if not made explicit – the particularities of distinctions between nature and culture, the idea of the 'individual' and its impact on how we imagine life to be created, valued and made purposeful, the challenge of comparison in anthropology and its rewards, the value of connecting apparently disparate material in order to create new patterns of thought.

It is a book which encourages us to connect, and to share. Like all of Marilyn's work it opens up rather than closes down. I love Sarah's description of it as 'an outstretched hand' and I can't think of a better note on which to end.

So, thank you Giovanni and Sarah for the opportunity to celebrate this wonderful achievement, and thank you Marilyn for sharing this gift with us.