Introduction

8 September 2017. The scientific journal *American Journal of Biological Anthropology* publishes an article entitled 'A female Viking warrior confirmed by genomics[4]'. The title is catchy, even provocative. The article reveals that the skeleton buried in Birka's tomb Bj 581 is in fact the skeleton of a woman. The sex was determined by DNA analysis. Since the discovery of this tomb in 1878, archaeologists have believed it to be the final resting place of a Viking chieftain. 'He' had all the appearances of one, buried with a sword, an axe, a spear, piercing arrows, a combat knife, two shields, two horses (a mare and a stallion) and a strategy game.

In the days that followed, the press picked up on the discovery. The magazine *Science* headlined 'DNA proves fearsome Viking warrior was a woman[5]', comparing the deceased to 'a figure from Richard Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*' and suggesting that the discovery proved 'a surprising degree of gender balance in the Vikings' violent social order'. *The Guardian* seems more cautious in its headline, asking: 'Does new DNA evidence prove that there were female viking warlords?' [6]; the photograph that follows the headline shows actress Katheryn Winnick as Lagertha in the series *Vikings*. A few days later, the newspaper emphasised the androcentric nature of archaeology with a new article entitled 'How the female Viking warrior was written out of history[7]'. *The New York Times* also presented the discovery with the following question: 'A female Viking warrior? Tomb study yields clues[8]', but is more circumspect in its presentation of the results. *The Washington Post* takes the prize for sensationalism with its headline 'Wonder Woman lived: Viking warrior skeleton identified as female, 128 years after its discovery[9]'.

Can a single grave call into question 150 years of research into the role of women in society? Can it prove, as the newspapers say, 'a surprising degree of gender balance in the Vikings' violent social order'? Doesn't this kind of announcement tell us more about our own claims about the place of women in our societies than about the women of the past? As we shall see in this book, gender issues are more complex than sensationalist newspaper headlines would have us believe.

1. What is gender?

Before we explore further the links between gender and archaeology, we first need to define what we mean by 'gender', in order to differentiate it from 'sex'. Sociologists Laure Bereni, Sébastien Chauvin, Alexandre Jaunait and Anne Revillard define gender as '**a system of hierarchical bicategorisation between the sexes (male/female) and between the values and representations associated with them (masculine/feminine)**[10]'. This definition is complemented by four analytical dimensions that are important for understanding gender as a concept. We detail these four dimensions in the following lines, following their chronological order of appearance in gender studies.

1.1. Gender is a social construct

The famous quote from Simone de Beauvoir's book, *The Second Sex*, could sum up the idea that gender is socially constructed. It takes on its full meaning when quoted in its entirety: 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female acquires in society; it is civilization as a whole that develops this product, intermediate between female and eunuch, which one calls feminine[11]'. This idea is opposed to that of essentialist theories, for which the immutable and universal characteristics of the feminine and masculine are rooted in the biological difference between the sexes.

Gender, far from being universal and unchanging, varies in time and space. The social perception of colours and clothing in the Western world provide particularly enlightening examples of this phenomenon. Today, certain items, such as pink clothes and high heels, clearly seem to belong to the feminine world. But these associations have not always been obvious. Since Antiquity, red and pink have often been symbolically associated with power and violence. They have therefore often been associated with men, particularly from the upper classes, even if this association tended to decline from the 16th century onwards[12]. From the mid-19th century onwards, the colour blue, through the wearing of sailor suits, gradually became associated with little boys, and it was not until the 1950s that the association pink/girls and blue/boys really took hold[13]. Similarly, the heeled shoe was not a gender symbol but a class symbol before the French Revolution, since it was worn by an aristocracy wishing to rise above the plebs.

[4] Hedenstierna-Jonsson *et al.* 2017.
[5] Price 2017.
[6] Cocozza 2017.
[7] Norton 2017.
[8] Anderson 2017.
[9] Nutt 2017.

[10] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 5–8, 8 for the quote ('un système de bicatégorisation hiérarchisé entre les sexes (hommes/femmes) et entre les valeurs et représentations qui leur sont associées (masculin/féminin)'). All foreign language quotations have been translated into English; the original can be found in the footnotes.
[11] De Beauvoir 1949, 13 ('On ne naît pas femme, on le devient. Aucun destin biologique, psychique, économique ne définit la figure que revêt au sein de la société la femelle humaine ; c'est l'ensemble de la civilisation qui élabore ce produit intermédiaire entre le mâle et le castrat qu'on qualifie de féminin').
[12] Beauvalet-Boutouyrie & Berthiaud 2015, 202; Bereni *et al.* 2020, 120.
[13] Beauvalet-Boutouyrie & Berthiaud 2015, 229; Paoletti 2012, 89.

When the heeled shoe reappeared at the end of the 19th century, it became a feminine attribute[14]. The expression of gender can therefore vary greatly over time.

Similarly, the variability of gender among certain populations such as the Inuit is expressed by the idea that sex and gender are not necessarily linked. An individual can be male and have a female gender identity, as Françoise Héritier tells us:

> 'Among the Inuit, identity and gender are not a function of anatomical sex but of the gender of the reincarnated name-soul. Nevertheless, when the time comes, the individual must engage in the activities and aptitudes of his or her apparent sex (tasks and reproduction), even though his or her identity and gender will always be a function of his or her soul-name. A boy can be raised and considered as a girl until puberty because of his feminine soul-name, fulfil his role as a male reproducer in adulthood and then carry out masculine tasks within the family group, while retaining his soul-name, i.e. his feminine identity, throughout his life[15]'.

In concrete terms, this means that interpersonal relationships are more important than a child's biological sex in the construction of his or her social identity[16].

More generally, these examples show us that being a man or a woman was not the same in Antiquity, in the Middle Ages or today, in Asia, Europe or other parts of the world.

1.2. Gender is a relational process

A common mistake is to link gender studies exclusively to the study of women. However, 'the characteristics associated with each sex are socially constructed in a relationship of opposition. It is therefore impossible to study women and the feminine without linking the analysis to men and the masculine[17]'. As we shall see, the introduction of gender into the various branches of the humanities and social sciences has made it possible to go beyond the first feminist approaches and theories, which felt the need, in archaeology, history and sociology alike, to re-establish a balance and compensate for a certain 'invisibility' of women.

> **Feminism**: Elsa Dorlin defines feminism as 'the tradition of thought, and consequently the historical movements, which, at least since the 17th century, have posited the equality of men and women according to various demonstrative logics, hunting down prejudices relating to the inferiority of women or denouncing the iniquity of their condition[18]'.

Studying a society, an archaeological context or an object through the prism of gender is a complex task that is not limited to highlighting the women of the past. Gender helps to explore the relationships between individuals or groups of individuals, the relationships of domination exercised by one group over another, the strategies of expression of subaltern groups, the way in which an object can be used to assert an identity, and the organisation and gendered division of labour and tasks. Since the 1990s, following the work of Raewyn Connell, there has been a growing body of work on masculinities, contributing to a renewal of research[19].

1.3. Gender is a power relationship

In the human species there is a biological binarity, i.e. males and females with clearly marked anatomical differences. Françoise Héritier has clearly shown that the biological difference between women and men serves as the basis for conceptualising the difference between the feminine and the masculine, and that this difference is always thought of in hierarchical terms[20]. The value placed on the difference between the sexes, and therefore on each sex, is eminently social and not biological. At the root of this power relationship between the masculine and the feminine, she argues, is the 'differential valence of the sexes' (*valence différentielle des sexes*), which constitutes one of the major social invariants in addition to those identified by Claude Lévi-Strauss (the incest taboo, the institution of a legal or recognised form of stable union and the gendered division of tasks)[21]:

> 'The differential valence of the sexes reflects the different place that is universally given to the two sexes on a table of values, and signals the dominance of the masculine principle over the feminine principle. The male/female relationship is constructed on the same

[14] Persson 2015.
[15] Héritier 1996, 21–22 ('Chez les Inuits, l'identité et le genre ne sont pas fonction du sexe anatomique mais du genre de l'âme-nom réincarnée. Néanmoins, l'individu doit s'inscrire dans les activités et aptitudes qui sont celles de son sexe apparent (tâches et reproduction) le moment venu, même si son identité et son genre seront toujours fonction de son âme-nom. Un garçon peut être, de par son âme-nom féminine, élevé et considéré comme une fille jusqu'à la puberté, remplir son rôle d'homme reproducteur à l'âge adulte et se livrer dès lors à des tâches masculines au sein du groupe familial, tout en conservant sa vie durant, son âme-nom, c'est-à-dire son identité féminine').
[16] Walley 2020, 25.
[17] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 6 ('les caractéristiques associées à chaque sexe sont socialement construites dans une relation d'opposition. Dès lors, on ne peut étudier ce qui relève des femmes et du féminin sans articuler l'analyse avec les hommes et le masculin').
[18] Dorlin 2008, 9 ('Tradition de pensée, et par voie de conséquence les mouvements historiques, qui, au moins depuis le XVIIe s., ont posé selon des logiques démonstratives diverses l'égalité des hommes et des femmes, traquant les préjugés relatifs à l'infériorité des femmes ou dénonçant l'iniquité de leur condition.').
[19] On masculinities, see Connell 2014 (1995).
[20] Héritier 1996.
[21] Structuralism has been criticised by feminists, in particular by Rubin 1998 (1975), 5 because, while the theory of invariant structures clearly shows the process of subordination and the mechanisms presiding over the production of gendered individuals, it fails to take into account the social and political dimension of gendered division, which is embodied in compulsory heterosexuality (see Dorlin 2008, 58).

> model as the parent/child relationship, the elder/cadet relationship and, more generally, the anterior/posterior relationship, with anteriority signifying superiority[22]'.

The idea of an asymmetrical and hierarchical relationship between women and men has been theorised since the 1970s, notably by French materialist feminists. Christine Delphy, Nicole-Claude Mathieu and Colette Guillaumin articulate this power relationship around the notion of 'patriarchy', which Pierre Bourdieu studied under the name of 'male domination[23]' and which, for Delphy, constitutes the 'main enemy' that needs to be dismantled[24]. In their view, patriarchy is the system by which men appropriate women's productive work (economy and domestic production) and reproductive work (their body).

Gender is thus a 'social, cultural and political construction [...] of hierarchical norms of femininity, masculinity and heterosexuality[25]'. Norms specify what is authorised, tolerated or prohibited according to the sex to which an individual belongs, and are materialised both in appearance, behaviour, practices and objects, and in social relations between women and men. For example, it is 'normal' for a boy to play football and a girl to dance, for a woman to have long hair and a man short hair, for a woman to wear a skirt and a man trousers, for a woman to study literature and a man mathematics. All this has very little to do with biology and everything to do with learning 'feminine' and 'masculine' behaviour.

As well as imposing behaviours that are specific to each sex, gender also imposes a hierarchy of norms, the most important of which is heteronormativity. This concept, popularised in particular by Adrienne Rich's work on compulsory heterosexuality, highlights the existence of a normative dimension in terms of sex, gender, sexual orientation and gender roles[26]. Behaviour that deviates from the norm is seen as a social transgression.

1.4. Gender is interwoven with other relations of power

Intersectionality was defined and popularised by Kimberlé Crenshaw in a 1989 article on the dual oppression of African-American women as women *and* as Black people[27]. According to Sirma Bilge and Patricia Hill Collins:

> 'Intersectionality examines the way in which interlocking relations of power influence social relations in different societies, as well as the experience of individuals in everyday life. As an analytical tool, intersectionality considers the categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, ability, ethnicity and age – among others – to be interdependent and shaped by each other. Intersectionality is a way of understanding and explaining the complexity of the world, of people and of human experience[28].'

In other words, this concept makes it possible to study the interweaving of different power relationships by considering that the categories 'women' and 'men' are not homogenous. For example, patriarchal oppression will be experienced differently by a White or racialised woman (i.e. a victim of racist discrimination), by a heterosexual or lesbian woman, by a cisgender or transgender woman, by a manager or a cleaner. Relationships of power are therefore interwoven to produce specific relationships of domination.

2. Sex or gender?

Once the contours of the concept of gender have been defined, the question arises of the relationship between gender and sex. Early definitions of gender put forward the idea of a 'social sex' including all the non-biological differences between women and men, as opposed to a strictly biological sex. But what is really the case? What are the links between sex and gender? Is sex strictly linked to biology or is it also constructed? The delimitation of these two concepts is all the more important given that, in many human societies, they have been and/or still are used indiscriminately. Before the concept of gender was created, they were mostly considered to be one and the same thing: sex, determined solely by biology. This representation of the sex/gender system[29] explains why we used to attribute a biological origin to socially and culturally constructed behaviours. The idea that gender roles are intrinsically linked to biology is not new. The biological destiny of women and men has been the subject of 'research' since Antiquity. Philosophers such as Aristotle and doctors such as Galen wrote extensively on the subject and had a lasting influence on the way the West conceived of the sexes and their differences. In order to gain a better understanding of these concepts, we will briefly retrace the theoretical

[22] Héritier 1996, 127 ('La valence différentielle des sexes traduit la place différente qui est faite universellement aux deux sexes sur une table des valeurs, et signe la dominance du principe masculin sur le principe féminin. Le rapport homme/femme est construit sur le même modèle que le rapport parents/enfants, que le rapport aîné/cadet, et plus généralement, que le rapport antérieur/postérieur, l'antériorité signifiant la supériorité').
[23] Bourdieu 1998.
[24] Delphy 1998; Mathieu 1991; Guillaumin 1992.
[25] Pavard *et al.* 2020, 7–8 ('construction sociale, culturelle et politique (…) des normes hiérarchisées de féminité, de masculinité et d'hétérosexualité').
[26] Rich 1980, 631–660.
[27] Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991.
[28] Bilge & Hill Collins 2023, 24 ('L'intersectionnalité examine la façon dont les rapports de pouvoir imbriqués influent sur les rapports sociaux dans diverses sociétés, ainsi que sur l'expérience des individu·e·s dans la vie quotidienne. En tant qu'instrument d'analyse, l'intersectionnalité considère que les catégories de race, de classe, de genre, de sexualité, de nationalité, de capacité, d'ethnicité et d'âge – entre autres – sont interdépendantes et façonnées les unes par les autres. L'intersectionnalité est une manière de comprendre et d'expliquer la complexité du monde, des personnes et des expériences humaines.').
[29] The sex/gender system is defined by Gayle Rubin as the system within which gender is produced in relation to biological sex and sexuality cf. Rubin 1998 (1975), 13–14: 'Every society […] has a sex/gender system – a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner, no matter how bizarre some of the conventions may be'. On the basis of Judith Butler's work, we will consider the sex/gender system as the system that socially constructs not only gender, but also sex cf. Butler 2005 (1990).

development of 'sex' and 'gender', bearing in mind that it is important to avoid using the word gender 'as a synonym for sex or women[30]'.

2.1. History of 'sex' and 'gender'

Even before the term 'gender' appeared, Margaret Mead was one of the first researchers to separate sex from what she called 'temperament'. As an anthropologist, she travelled to New Guinea between 1931 and 1933 to study traditional cultures. In *Sex and temperament in three primitive societies* et *Coming of Age in Samoa*, she noted the existence of different temperaments depending on the groups studied (gentleness, sensitivity, aggressiveness)[31]. She concluded that these temperaments were the consequence of 'social conditioning', which varied from one society to another, and that they did not depend on biological sex[32]. Despite this, Mead did not question the hierarchy of the sexes or the gendered division of tasks, which were considered to be specific to each sex[33].

From the 1950s onwards, American psychology began to describe the discrepancies between anatomy (biological sex) and 'gender identity', a term coined by the psychiatrist Robert Stoller[34]. The term 'gender role' was coined by the psychologist and sexologist John Money as part of his work with other researchers on intersex variations and 'transexuality' (a term used at the time and which will be replaced by 'transidentity' in this book) in the 1950s and 1960s. These psychologists developed the concept of 'gender role' as a reference to an individual's social interactions and public behaviour, and 'gender identity' as a reference to the psychological construction of the self[35]. Far from seeking to explain the construction of difference between women and men or to denounce inequalities between the sexes, Stoller and Money considered gender as a psychological construction of the self, and used it in the very specific context of research and medical interventions on intersex and transgender people. Because of the 'success' of sex assignments performed on intersex children who needed to be given the 'right' sex – i.e. a functional sex that allows for 'natural' and expected sexual behaviour – they were convinced that sexual behaviour, and development towards male or female sex, is not innate but can be constructed through surgical intervention. The most extreme and high-profile case of Money's experiments is David Reimer, a Canadian born in 1965, who underwent vaginoplasty and was raised as a girl following a botched circumcision. Despite surgery and hormone treatments, Reimer struggled with his gender identity at puberty and, having learned the truth about his biological sex, decided to live as a man. The plasticity of biological sex put forward by Money turned out to be wrong; the use of the terms 'sex' and 'gender', on the other hand, has had a long life.

Drawing on the research of these psychologists, Ann Oakley in 1972 put forward an interpretation of sex and gender that was in turn taken up by feminists: while sex refers to the biological difference between women and men, gender refers to the social, cultural and psychological construction of female and male identities[36]. This interpretation allowed feminists to highlight the constructed and cultural nature of inequalities that have no basis in biology. Anthropology, sociology and history then took up this theme to explore the different ways in which the sex/gender relationship exists in human societies[37]. To oversimplify things, before gender was defined, the modern West assumed that the social roles of men and women were biologically inscribed in individuals. A woman brought up children and did domestic chores because she was biologically programmed to do so, just as a man was the breadwinner of his family and went off to war because he was biologically programmed to do so. The arrival of the notion of gender disrupted this cleverly constructed binarity.

However, feminists soon came up against a theoretical stumbling block: if gender is the social and constructed part of two sexes conceived as invariant, natural and immutable, does this not reinforce and naturalise the difference between women and men? In 1990, the idea emerged that sex is just as constructed as gender, thanks in particular to the work of Judith Butler[38]. In 1990, the historian Thomas Laqueur published *Making Sex*, which reinforced this idea of the construction and historicity of sex or, more precisely, of discourses on sex[39]. In his book, he proposed to retrace the evolution of the conceptualisation of biological sex in the West since Antiquity. He showed that the difference between the sexes and the idea of a distinct nature specific to each sex, as it is explained to us today, became established in the 18th century. Earlier conceptions would have favoured another explanation, a unisex model, according to which the female genitalia were in fact an imperfect and unfinished version of the male genitalia. This would imply that 'sexual difference is not inscribed in bodies but is socially instituted[40]'. While the notion of sex is indeed constructed and subject to historical evolution, the existence of this unisex model has been rightly called into question, particularly by specialists in Antiquity, the history of science and the philosopher Elsa Dorlin: it is clear to ancient authors that there are two biological sexes[41]. The whole point of Laqueur's approach

[30] Thébaud 2004, 62.
[31] Mead 1963.
[32] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 27.
[33] Delphy 2001, 244–245.
[34] Fausto-Sterling 2000, 46; Dorlin 2008, 33–37; Bereni *et al.* 2020, 27–28.
[35] *Ibid*.
[36] Oakley 1972.
[37] Sørensen 2000.
[38] Butler 2005 (1990).
[39] Laqueur 1992 (1990).
[40] Dorlin 2006, 21 ('la différence sexuelle n'est pas inscrite dans les corps mais qu'elle est socialement instituée').
[41] Critics have pointed out that the exclusive existence of this unisex model is far from being proven or demonstrable. For Antiquity in particular, the texts mobilised by Laqueur do not constitute the whole body of theories on biological sex and its division, and a competing model in which the two sexes were considered as distinct entities

was to demonstrate that the way in which we talk about the sexes and the way in which they are hierarchised is constructed.

From then on, gender as a system produces the sexes and posits them as antagonists:

> '[…] gender in turn creates anatomical sex in the sense that this hierarchical division of humanity into two transforms an anatomical difference that is itself devoid of social implications into a distinction relevant to social practice; […] social practice alone transforms a physical fact that is itself devoid of meaning like all physical facts into a category of thought[42].'

The relationship between gender and sex is therefore not one of opposition, but of interdependence:

> 'Gender refers to the system that produces a hierarchical bipartition between men and women, and sex refers to the groups and categories produced and organised by this system. This rule of usage also makes it possible to assert the social dimension of the sexual division itself, breaking with conceptions that oppose 'gender' (social, acquired, variable) and 'sex' (biological, innate, invariant)[43]'.

This system implies a hierarchy defined by materialist feminists in the 1970s as 'patriarchy', 'oppression of women' or the French term '*sexage*'[44].

2.2. Biological variability of sex

The idea that sex is constructed, in the same way as gender, can be supported by medical research into determining the sex of individuals. Until very recently in history, it was only possible to determine the sex of an individual by examining their external genitalia: the individual was either male or female. In some cases, visual examination revealed an ambiguity, known as intersex variations, in the appearance of the genitals, which did not correspond to the prevailing norms. From the 19th century onwards, the development of research and surgery made it possible to extend the range of criteria used to determine an individual's sex: internal genitalia (for example, the prostate or the uterus), gonads (ovaries and testicles, i.e. the organs that produce gametes), chromosomes (XY for men, XX for women), hormones and even the organisation of the brain[45].

From a biological point of view, there is considerable variability[46]. For example, for the same individual, these last criteria can be discordant. Chromosomal sex defines male sex by the XY combination and female sex by the XX combination. The SRY (Sex-determining Region Y) protein gene on the Y chromosome is responsible for male gonadal sex (development of the testicles). The SRY gene can sometimes be non-functional, implying a female anatomical sex and a male chromosomal sex (XY). Faced with individuals with ambiguous organs, mixed gonads, non-standard sex chromosomes (e.g. X or XXY) or unexpected levels of androgens or oestrogens, research has shown that sex determination is much more complex than it first appeared, and that we cannot be satisfied with a strict male/female bicategorisation to understand how sex is expressed[47]. These phenomena have led Anne Fausto-Sterling to define sex not as a binary category, but as a continuum of sexual characteristics within which individuals are more likely to be male or female, depending on a combination of physical, chromosomal, gonadal and hormonal criteria. For the researcher, 'calling someone a man or a woman is a social decision[48]'. It is estimated that one to two people in a hundred are affected by intersex variations[49].

However, if this variability is identifiable in purely biological terms, its implicit or explicit recognition in society is not self-evident: sexual categorisation is far too deeply rooted in society for it to be easily discarded. The question then arises: what is the relevance of this notion of a 'continuum' if social structures are linked not to this notion but to that of the strict biological man/woman binarity? It is therefore useful for archaeologists to be aware of the debates that are stirring up specialists in these questions and to know that there is a great deal of variability between the sexes, while being aware of the limits of this theoretical approach[50]. In reality, most human societies have inferred the existence of two sexes from the biological data available to them, and it is on the basis of their conception of gender categorisation that we need to work.

2.3. Diversity of gender and genders

To complete the definition of gender, it is important to distinguish, on the one hand, between **gender** as an organisational and hierarchical system, in the singular, and, on the other hand, between **genders**, in the plural, linked to an individual identity characterisation, which could also be called 'gender identities'. Indeed, in

existed cf. King 1998; Dorlin 2006, 20–22. See also Park & Nye 1991; Dorlin 2002. Sellberg 2015 also criticises Laqueur's forced projection of queer onto social phenomena of the Renaissance that are nothing of the sort, and his downplaying of sources from that period that run counter to his unisex model.

[42] Delphy 2001, 231 ('[…] le genre à son tour crée le sexe anatomique dans le sens que cette répartition hiérarchique de l'humanité en deux transforme en distinction pertinente pour la pratique sociale une différence anatomique en elle-même dépourvue d'implications sociales ; […] la pratique sociale et elle seule transforme en catégorie de pensée un fait physique en lui-même dépourvu de sens comme tous les faits physiques.'): Christine Delphy highlights the economic dimension of women's oppression, with the appropriation by men of women's unpaid work, both productive and reproductive, in a domestic context.

[43] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 8.

[44] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 33–34. See below for an explanation on the French term '*sexage*'.

[45] Löwy 2003; Bereni *et al.* 2020, 41–43.

[46] Fausto-Sterling 2000, 30–54.

[47] Kraus 2000.

[48] Fausto-Sterling 2000, 3.

[49] Wiels 2006; Bereni *et al.* 2020, 44–45.

[50] Sørensen 2000.

Definitions

Cisgender person: refers to a person whose gender identity (female or male) corresponds to the sex assigned at birth.

Transgender person: refers to a person whose gender identity does not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.

Gender fluid: refers to a person whose gender is fluid and fluctuates between feminine and masculine.

Non-binary gender: refers to a person whose gender identity does not correspond to either feminine or masculine norms.

Queer: the term queer, both a political movement and a personal identification, refers to the deconstruction of dominant norms, particularly gender and sexuality, by minority identities.

The acronym LGBT, or LGBTQIA+ in one of its variants, refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual people.

contemporary practice, the term has come to be used as an individual identity characteristic, covering a multiplicity of identities: cisgender, transgender, non-binary gender, genderfluid, etc. In this sense, it is opposed to sex, which continues to be defined in biological terms. These notions, which are widely used in queer archaeology, and which we will discuss in parts one and two, are essential in today's world, as they are the basis of claims and everyday definition of individuals in society.

Moreover, the definition given for gender at the beginning of this introduction is valid for contemporary Western and Westernised societies. To complicate matters, we need to realise, as we have already mentioned, that the sex/gender system varies in time and space. In practical terms, this means that the gender norms in force in ancient societies were probably different from those that underpin the current system. Today, this system seems universal and immutable, but numerous historical and ethnographic examples show us the variability of gender. Maria Lugones' work sheds light on the social mechanisms that, during colonisation, led to other gender systems being supplanted or even erased by the colonisers, creating this illusion of the universality and immutability of gender[51].

A number of societies, both modern and ancient, recognise genders other than the bicategorisation we know as feminine and masculine[52]. For example, the Zapotecs of Mexico have a third gender, where *muxe* are men who adopt behaviours associated with the female gender[53]; conversely, in Albania, sworn virgins (*burrnesha*) choose to dress and behave like men to compensate for the absence of a son in the family. In Indonesia, the Bugis recognise five genders: masculine, feminine, transcendent (*bissu*, who are intermediaries with the gods), men who take on the role of heterosexual women (*calabai*), women who take on the role of heterosexual men (*calalai*)[54]. These systems, in which gender is not limited to a strict binarity, are also known in ancient societies. For example, Byzantine authors mention a third gender in the person of eunuchs, a category that broadly includes people who cannot procreate, including monks and sometimes even nuns[55]. Furthermore, in addition to these societies where gender produces not a bicategorisation but a multicategorisation of sexes, genders and sexualities, we find more occasional occurrences of transidentity, non-binary gender or gender fluidity, which escape normative constraints, in societies where gender produces a priori a strict bicategorisation of sexes, genders and sexualities[56].

It is important to bear in mind the variability of sex/gender systems when studying ancient societies. Occasional transgressions of the norm or institutionalised – and socially accepted – differences involving a third gender, for example, are possible in societies of the past. This is all the more important for societies without writing, where archaeological study is the only source of information for reconstructing their social organisation.

3. Gender at the intersection of other power relations

The study of gender in ancient societies often requires taking into account other factors that may influence the way in which gender identities and gender roles are expressed, such as age, social class, (social) race, disability, etc. A brief overview of how these different power relations are articulated is therefore necessary for a better understanding of social relations as a whole. As we have already mentioned, gender is interwoven with power relations other than those linked to patriarchy. As early as the 19th century, there were analogies between the forms of domination highlighted by feminists campaigning for women's rights and other forms of oppression. In the United States, the struggle to obtain the right to vote ran parallel to the struggle to abolish slavery. In France, materialist feminists drew links between class struggles and struggles for women's emancipation.

In the 1980s, the American researcher Kimberlé Crenshaw theorised the concept of intersectionality, going beyond

[51] Lugones 2007.

[52] Journet 2014, 24.
[53] Stephen 2002.
[54] Graham 2001, 16–17.
[55] Ringrose 2003; Maillet 2020.
[56] Algrain 2021a; Algrain 2021b; Mary 2021.

the simple comparison based on the analogy of systems of oppression: we must avoid 'thinking of domination in the form of a simple sum of advantages or handicaps universally perceived as such'. The researcher draws on the contributions of Black feminism, a feminist political movement that emerged in the 1950s in the United States during the civil rights protests. Since then, this tool, originally designed to highlight the specific oppressions suffered by African-American women, both as women and as African-Americans, has been used to study the combined effects of different forms of oppression on groups of individuals[57].

In France, Danièle Kergoat uses the term 'consubstantiality' to define social relations: they 'do not exist independently of one another and cannot be defined without reference to one another[58]'. Consubstantiality makes it possible to account for the fact that each individual is constructed within relations of gender, class, race and other types of social relations, and that these relations are constantly evolving. Consubstantiality therefore concerns everyone and is not limited to certain groups situated at the intersection of different forms of domination and discrimination.

3.1. Gender and race

The first mention of the term 'race' in its modern sense appears in a text from 1684, in which the French philosopher and physician François Bernier divides humanity into four (or even five) major groups according to their size, skin colour, body hair and facial shape[59]. The paradigm shift was radical. While scholars since Antiquity had considered that 'race', linked to temperament, depended on cultural and environmental criteria (climate), and that temperament could be modified by changing latitude, Bernier naturalised race, making it a fixed and immutable criterion. This was the beginning of the scientific racism that culminated in the 19th and 20th centuries (see chapter 2), based on divisions constructed from the phenotype, but which in fact had no basis in biology, as Sarah Mazouz points out: 'There is no hierarchy between human groups that could be founded in nature and would be based on an origin manifested in particular by phenotypic differences[60]. […] Races, as racists understand them, do not exist[61]'. However, this has not prevented many cultures from constructing racial hierarchies, in particular to justify colonisation and slavery, hierarchies that are still manifest today in the discrimination against racialised people[62].

Before the term 'intersectionality' was coined and popularised, there was already work drawing analogies between gender and race[63]. Although this approach, like the analogy between gender and class relations, has revealed similarities between different types of domination, it has sometimes tended to set women up as a homogeneous group and to erase specific relations of domination. For example, the research of the French materialist feminist Colette Guillaumin in *Sexe, race et pratique du pouvoir* led her to coin the neologism '*sexage*', based on the French terms '*servage*' (serfdom) and '*esclavage*' (slavery), to define the unpaid, open-ended appropriation of women's bodies under patriarchy. In the case of slavery, as in that of *sexage*, the production and reproduction work of the dominated groups is appropriated by the dominant group[64]. Guillaumin has also highlighted the constructed nature of 'sex' and 'race', which for her are semantic phenomena, 'showing how sexism and racism function according to the same process of differentiation and naturalisation of power relations[65]'.

In the United States, representatives of Black feminism renewed these approaches by showing the interweaving of relations of domination and the inappropriateness of a monolithic, universal category of 'woman'. In the 1960s and 1970s, they denounced White, bourgeois feminism, from which they felt excluded, and highlighted the fact that there was not one single feminism, but a plurality of feminist approaches and movements corresponding to the different situations and experiences of women. Angela Davis, bell hooks, Audre Lorde and others criticised the specific domination exercised over racialised women and highlighted the existence of other relations of domination, previously invisible[66]. In 1974, Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith founded the Combahee River Collective in Boston, named in homage to Harriet Tubman's action to free a group of 750 slaves at Combahee River (South Carolina) in 1863. In 1977, the collective published a declaration calling for the intersecting nature of different oppressions to be taken into account in the fight for equality, whether racial, gendered, heteronormative or classist. However, the proponents of Black feminism in the United States are not the only ones to have considered the specific oppressions suffered by racialised women. For example, Françoise Vergès highlighted in her work that, while women in mainland France in the 1970s were fighting to win the right to abortion, women on Réunion Island (an overseas French department) were organising to combat the gender, racial and class oppression they suffered, and which resulted in forced sterilisations and abortions[67].

[57] Boussahba *et al.* 2021.
[58] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 366; Kergoat 2000, 42 ('ils n'existent pas indépendamment les uns des autres et ne peuvent être définis sans références les uns aux autres').
[59] Dorlin 2006, 210–215.
[60] Mazouz 2020, 24 ('Il n'y a pas de hiérarchie entre les groupes humains, qui pourrait être fondée en nature et reposerait sur une origine manifestée notamment par des différences phénotypiques.').
[61] Mazouz 2020, 50 ('Les races, au sens où les racistes les entendent, n'existent pas.').
[62] The frequent analogies between sex and race found in 'scientific' texts in the late 18th and 19th centuries were used to explain the 'naturally inferior' position of women, racialised people, the poor and so on. See Stepan 1986.
[63] Dorlin 2008, 79–80.
[64] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 341–342.
[65] Guillaumin 2002; Dorlin 2006, 11 for the quote ('montrant comment sexisme et racisme fonctionnaient selon un même processus de différenciation et de naturalisation des rapports de pouvoir').
[66] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 339.
[67] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 351; Pavard *et al.* 2020, 300–303, 330–333; Vergès 2017. The same applies in the United States, where African-

When Kimberlé Crenshaw took up this subject in 1989 and 1991, she studied it through the prism of her own research in law [68]. She noted that 'in discrimination cases, American judges have refused to consider Black women as legitimately representative of one of the two groups of victims concerned (women and racial minorities), thus failing to qualify the discrimination of which they were victims[69]'. The interweaving of different types of domination is not simply an additional effect, but depends on factors specific to each era and each context. In fact, the intersection of different types of domination sometimes tends to attenuate one of them. In the case of slavery, for example, Céline Bessière notes that 'slavery and gender domination appear at first sight to be mutually reinforcing, but it can also *to some extent* be shown that slavery moderates the domination of enslaved men over enslaved women, or that gender *partially* mitigates the pressure of slavery on Black women[70]'.

3.2. Gender and class

In the 1970s, materialist feminists developed a model based on the analogy between social relations of gender, class and race, as these were the most politicised[71]. Drawing on the Marxist framework of analysis, French materialists saw women as a class dominated by patriarchy in the same way as the proletarian class was dominated and oppressed by the capitalist system and the bourgeois class. The only difference was that materialist feminists included bourgeois women in the class of women, unlike Marxist theories which radically opposed the proletarian and the bourgeois. They considered that all women were oppressed in the same way by patriarchy, which sets up 'husbands and wives as antagonistic classes (one deriving material profit from the exploitation of the other)[72]'. The work of Silvia Federici, an Italian researcher and advocate of Marxist feminism, demonstrated the gradual appropriation of women's labour and bodies. At the end of the 19th century, this appropriation led to the model of the full-time housewife who provides free labour for her husband. In this way, the housewife enabled the 'production' of a worker detached from any obligation to do domestic work, and the reproduction of the working-class body. According to Federici, capitalism is therefore inseparable from gender[73].

3.3. Gender and sexuality

Sexuality is also one of the places where power relations are expressed, and this has been amply demonstrated by feminist and gender studies. Materialist feminists consider that the male class appropriates women's bodies – this is Colette Guillaumin's '*sexage*'. Following on from this work, Paola Tabet calls this appropriation of the work of production and reproduction 'a continuum of economic-sexual exchange[74]'. For Tabet, from courtship to prostitution and legal marriage, the division of reproductive and non-reproductive sexual labour is asymmetrical, turning women into a class forced to exchange sexual 'labour' for payment. Ownership of women's bodies, in particular through legal heterosexuality (marriage), and control over their sexuality, through access to contraception, abortion and a form of sex education, remain major issues today[75].

Elsa Dorlin also uses the intersection of gender, sexuality and race to explain the making of gendered and racialised bodies[76]. The notion of 'temperament', used since Antiquity in the Hippocratic-Galenic corpus with the theory of humours, opposed men, characterised by hot and dry, and women, characterised by cold and wet. On the basis of these ancient theories, doctors in the Early Modern Age turned men and women into two irreconcilable groups, according to their respective temperaments, which were supposedly rooted in nature. According to them, the very nature and temperament of women made them prudish and frigid, setting them up above all as wives and mothers. The existence of groups of women whose sexuality was outside the norm was therefore paradoxical according to these theories. The exclusion of prostitutes from the group of women was based on the theory of temperaments, since their hot and dry nature brought them closer to the temperament of men and explained their supposed sterility, thus excluding them from reproductive sexual work. Similarly, African women were said to have a hot temperament and an unbridled, even bestial sexuality, which also excluded them from the group of women and prevented them from reaping the social benefits of any reproductive sexual work.

When studying ancient societies, archaeologists need to understand the sexual norms in force in the society they are studying in order to gain a nuanced view of gender relations. For example, the sources on Archaic and Classical Athens show that sexuality was not considered in terms of the identity and gender of the partner. What mattered was the dominant/dominated relationship based on gender, age, socio-economic class and whether or not the person belonged to the group of citizens. A male citizen could therefore have sexual relations with his wife, a concubine, a slave or a younger lover, but never with another adult citizen[77].

American women underwent forced sterilisations while abortion was prohibited for White women cf. Davis 1982 (1981), 255–278.

[68] Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991; Dorlin 2008, 81–88.

[69] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 347 ('dans des procès pour discrimination, des juges américains ont refusé de considérer des femmes noires comme légitimement représentatives de l'un des deux groupes de victimes concernées (les femmes et les minorités raciales), échouant ainsi à qualifier la discrimination dont elles étaient victimes').

[70] Bessière 2003, 244–245 ('esclavage et domination de genre semblent à première vue se renforcer mutuellement, mais on peut aussi *dans une certaine mesure* montrer que l'esclavage tempère la domination des hommes sur les femmes esclaves, ou que le genre atténue *en partie* la pression de l'esclavage sur les femmes noires').

[71] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 340–341.

[72] Delphy 1998, 51 ('maris et femmes en classes antagoniques (les uns retirant un profit matériel de l'exploitation des autres)').

[73] Federici 2014; Federici 2019.

[74] Tabet 2001, 139 ('un continuum de l'échange économico-sexuel').

[75] Dorlin 2008, 66.

[76] Dorlin 2006.

[77] Algrain 2022.

3.4. Gender and disability

The French word 'handicap' was first used in the horse-racing world in the 18th century, when it referred to the extra weight carried by the best horses in order to level the playing field between competitors[78]. It was not until the 1970s that the term became widely used to describe the physical damage caused to individuals and the resulting inequalities in treatment. Depending on the institution, the very definition of disability may differ, and in some cases remains open to debate[79]. The WHO defines disability as a 'result from the interaction between individuals with a health condition, such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and depression, with personal and environmental factors including negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social support[80]'. But while today disability is essentially defined from a medical perspective, this has not always been the case in the past. Perhaps this is why the definition of disability continues to have unclear contours. The social consequences of disability have often been a heavier burden on individuals than the physical limitations imposed on them in everyday life.

Disability studies emerged in the 1970s as a result of social movements led by people with disabilities, mainly in the United States and the United Kingdom. The work in this field shows that people with disabilities are systemically made inferior. In the case of women, stereotypes portray them as sexless, unable to reproduce and devoid of femininity. Similarly, disability calls into question the virility of men[81]. We shall see later, through the prism of archaeology, that the attitude of ancient populations towards physical ailments differed greatly from that of our contemporaries.

3.5. Gender and age groups

Age class is an important factor in categorising individuals in both ancient and modern societies. In some societies, it can be at least as important as gender. 'The Nigerian anthropologist Oyeronke Oyewumi shows how, in Yoruba society, seniority forms a principle of division of the social world that is at least as significant as gender, and that it is necessary to cross-reference with gender in order to understand this society in all its complexity[82]'. For example, Yoruba pronouns do not indicate gender but the age (younger or older) of the person being addressed[83].

Although age seems to be a given, the age group to which a person belongs can vary according to place and time. It depends largely on two factors: life expectancy and healthy life expectancy. Gender is obviously a factor in calculating an individual's relative 'old age'. For example, in Western societies, women age while men mature. The latter are less denigrated when the signs of age appear, such as grey hair: from a social point of view, 'old age comes earlier for women than for men[84]'. In the same way, the stigma of age taints love relationships between an older woman and a younger man, which are subject to a persistent taboo. As illustrated very recently in the book *Le jeune homme* by Nobel Prize winner Annie Ernaux, in which she recounts her love affair with a 25-year-old student at the age of 54, the discomfort aroused by relationships of this kind stems, among other things, from the impossibility of thinking about the sexuality of older women beyond the menopause – whereas this is not the case when the woman is the younger partner[85].

The question of age group also implies taking into consideration the group of children. Once again, leaving childhood is a variable factor in time and space, unrelated to the age of puberty. For example, in fifth-century Athens, it was normal for a 14-year-old girl to marry a 30-year-old man, reinforcing patriarchal domination through domination by age. In our modern societies, an age difference between (older) men and (younger) women still exists and often implies a difference in the capital accumulated at the time of marriage, an economic domination/dependence of wives in relation to their husbands that culminates in divorce, leaving the woman poorer than when she entered into the marriage[86]. Unrelated to actual age, social age is also important to consider, for example in a colonial context where colonised populations are considered to be 'grown-up children', which justifies the maintenance of domination and inequality of rights between colonists and the colonised[87].

4. Defining gender archaeology

4.1. Gender archaeology: a militant and subjective science?

Before we come to the definition of gender archaeoology, we need to clarify the criticisms levelled at gender studies.

> "Feminist' research, 'gender research' or 'gender studies' are three expressions that refer to the same area of research, that of inequalities and power relations between men and women. The first formulation is the oldest, but it should be noted that the researchers who helped forge the concept of gender were precisely those who considered themselves feminists. It was feminist research that forged gender research or gender studies.

[78] 'Handicap', in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, sur *Centre national de ressources textuelles et lexicales*, [Retrieved October 1, 2023, from https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/academie9/handicap]; Delattre 2018.
[79] Husquin 2020, 12–13; Delattre 2021.
[80] World Health Organization, *Disability* [Retrieved November 7, 2024, from, https://www.who.int/health-topics/disability#tab=tab_1].
[81] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 363–364.
[82] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 340 ('L'anthropologue nigériane Oyeronke Oyewumi montre ainsi comment la séniorité, dans la société yoruba, forme un principe de division du monde social au moins aussi conséquent que le genre, et qu'il est nécessaire de croiser avec ce dernier pour comprendre cette société dans sa complexité.').
[83] Oyewumi 1997; Id. 1998.
[84] Beauvalet-Boutouyrie & Berthiaud 2015, 187 ('la vieillesse est plus précoce chez les femmes que chez les hommes').
[85] Sontag 1972; Froidevaux-Metterie 2021, 23, 345–364.
[86] Bessière & Gollac 2020.
[87] Bereni *et al.* 2020, 365.

> These expressions should therefore be considered as equivalent to 'gender studies'[88].'

Because of their feminist roots, gender studies in general have often been accused of being militant and subjective. While it is true that the sociological research conducted in France in the 1970s and 1980s was often carried out by figures associated with the Mouvement de Libération des Femmes – MLF (Women's Liberation Movement), they were nonetheless critical researchers who applied the most rigorous methodologies. The same is true of gender archaeology. Although this is a cross-disciplinary theoretical approach, there is still a certain 'sense of marginality' among these researchers and a form of suspicion on the part of their peers. Yet social movements, such as the workers' movement or the anti-racist movement, have often contributed to the development of science, not just through their desire to understand and deconstruct social phenomena, but through the scientific treatment and method used, based on arguments and data that can be verified by peers[89].

Furthermore, sciences, including exact sciences, are not necessarily objective. On the contrary, the affirmation of the researcher's subjectivity lies at the heart of the post-processual archaeology approach and can be put forward in other disciplines. As Claude Gautier and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel point out in relation to the humanities and social sciences, which have been widely criticised and attacked in France in recent years, 'what we are inevitably affects what we do[90]'. We need to be aware that a researcher adopts a point of view from which he or she describes his or her subject of study, and that this point of view is never neutral: 'it would be naïve to believe that it is possible to cut ourselves off from the present in order to write a neutral and objective history of the past; that would be to want to detach ourselves from everything that makes us who we are: social and cultural affiliations, values, etc.[91]'. To this we can add Max Weber's remark: 'Nowhere is the interest of science more denied in the long run than where we refuse to see the unpleasant facts and the reality of life in all its harshness[92]'.

One of the best-known examples is the article by anthropologist Emily Martin, 'The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles[93]'. In this work, Martin analyses the metaphors used in biology teaching and argues that these metaphors reflect 'our cultural definitions of male and female'. For example, the words 'debris' and 'dying' associated with the egg are contrasted with the words 'remarkable', 'strong' and 'produce' associated with spermatozoa, resulting in a hierarchy of female and male biological processes. The spermatozoon is thus conceived as a knight who comes to the rescue of a damsel in distress and saves it from destruction. Martin also analyses the reversal of language used by biologists when they realised that the ovum was less passive than it appeared and was in fact capturing the spermatozoon on its surface. The egg then becomes 'dangerous', a veritable spider which 'captures and tethers' its 'victim', the spermatozoon. Stereotypes tend to influence researchers, whether consciously or not, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to claim total objectivity.

Feminist epistemologies have thus endeavoured to account for the biased and situated position of the sciences, both in exact sciences and humanities, especially when they put forward the idea of objectivity and neutrality inherent in the scientific approach. But no scientific approach is neutral: in the same way that the personal is political, science is also political, because no theory and no scientific approach is 'outside the social world'[94]. With regard to the work of the American philosopher Sandra G. Harding, who has taken an interest in this notion of scientific objectivity, Elsa Dorlin says:

> 'Harding bases scientific objectivity on a definition of democracy that is genuinely anti-sexist and anti-racist, considering that the routine functioning of science is based on a status quo maintained by an elite, on 'a matrix of privileges' based on class, gender and 'race'. *Those who are subject to this status quo, and want to shake it, are the most likely to produce highly objective points of view and knowledge*[95].'

As Céline Bessière and Sylvie Gollac point out more generally in relation to gender studies: 'Like all critical knowledge that sets out to describe relations of power, gender studies in the social sciences propose a vision of scientific objectivity based not on feigned neutrality, but on a reflexive process of taking into account the researcher's social and political position, while at the same time implementing objectivity criteria (making hypotheses and methods explicit, criticising sources, coherence of

[88] ANEF (Association nationale des études féministes), 'Plaidoyer pour l'institutionnalisation des études sur le genre dans les orientations stratégiques de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur', October 2012, [Accessed 11 March 2022, https://m.centre-hubertine-auclert.fr/sites/default/files/fichiers/1-plaidoyer-anef-octobre-2012–19p.pdf]. ('Les recherches "féministes", "recherches sur le genre" ou "études de genre" sont trois expressions qui renvoient à une même aire de recherche, celle portant sur les inégalités et rapports de pouvoir entre hommes et femmes. La première formulation est la plus ancienne, mais il faut noter que les chercheuses qui ont contribué à forger le concept de genre sont précisément des chercheuses se considérant comme féministes. Ce sont les recherches féministes qui ont forgé les recherches sur le genre ou études de genre. Aussi, faut-il considérer ces expressions comme des équivalents.')

[89] Sebillote-Cuchet 2022, 9.

[90] Gautier & Zancarini-Fournel 2022, 10.

[91] Gautier & Zancarini-Fournel 2022, 140.

[92] Weber 1965, 130–131.

[93] Martin 1991.

[94] Dorlin 2008, 24–31.

[95] Dorlin 2008, 29 (emphasis addes).

the demonstration, etc.)[96].' The critical approach and methodology developed in gender archaeology studies is therefore essential and must be clearly explained. Reappraisal and questioning of one's work is also an integral part of the approach, as it is impossible to escape a form of anachronism: research into the past remains a product of a given present and its political and social concerns[97].

4.2. Vocabulary

The term 'gender', whether in archaeology or other disciplines, has sometimes been used in different ways. Depending on who is using it, it can be used to mean anything from a system of domination, to an individual characteristic, to an equivalence with the word 'sex'. It is therefore important to define precisely what we are talking about each time we use one of these terms[98].

In archaeology, 'biological sex' is often difficult to determine since it depends on knowledge of the conformation of the genital organs, of the gonads in the more precise case of 'anatomical sex', or of the chromosomes and DNA in the case of 'genetic sex'. These elements are inaccessible to us in archaeology, except in the case of mummies or via DNA analysis. However, part of the population (around 1.7%) is intersex and cannot be categorised in a binary way, either by anatomy or genetics[99].

'Anthropological sex' is linked to the study of the skeleton. Various measurements on the long bones, skull, pelvic bones and inner ear can be used to define on a scale of 1 to 5 the probability of an individual belonging to the male sex, the female sex or an undetermined category. The poor state of preservation of bones is one of the obstacles to this identification. When measurements are reliable, the anthropological sex is the same as the biological sex[100].

Finally, 'archaeological sex' is a misnomer, as it does not refer to sex at all, but to the objects that archaeologists describe as 'feminine' or 'masculine'. It is the expression of the gender identity of the deceased, as expressed by the people who buried them. It is a social sex, assigned to an individual by society, which does not always correspond to his or her biological sex (e.g. two-spirit individuals in North America), but may also not reflect the way in which the deceased perceived him or herself (e.g. trans-identity).

The objects associated with an individual can therefore express both gender as an individual identity characteristic as perceived by society (*genders*) and gender as a power relationship manifested through material culture.

The term '*rapports sociaux de sexe*', widely used by French-speaking feminists before the word 'gender' spread, can help to distinguish between 'gender' and 'genders' in French. It reminds us that gender is not constructed individually but in relation to others. This expression is extremely difficult to translate into English. It uses the term '*rapports sociaux*' to refer to relationships that take place not at the interpersonal level but in the social fabric as a whole. '*Rapports sociaux de sexe*' are therefore synonymous with 'gender' as a system of domination.

In this book, we will use the term 'sex' only in reference to biology, with the adjective 'sexed' also referring to biology, while the adjective 'sexual' will be used in relation to sexuality. The word 'gender' will refer to the system of domination and, when it refers to an individual identity characteristic, we will make this clear.

Similarly, we will use the adjectives 'feminine' and 'masculine' in inverted commas when referring to objects or graves, as an object does not have a gender of its own. The idea of gendering objects stems from concepts that were already in vogue in the 19th century, but to be valid it needs to be based on an in-depth and exhaustive study of the raw data[101] – as is the case with some recent work in the French-speaking world – and not on the preconceptions of archaeologists.

4.3. Definition of gender archaeology

Gender archaeology is a discipline that contributes to the understanding of gender norms in past societies. It highlights the variations in these norms (particularly with regard to the construction of femininity and masculinity), both in different regions and in different social groups within the same society, as well as their evolution over time, through practices and objects. It also informs us about how gender influences material living conditions, ideological structures and participation in community life[102]. In this way, it aims to denaturalise the social and show how human societies unconsciously construct and maintain the domination of one group over another on the basis of an irrelevant biological criterion (the question to be asked is: why are sex and skin colour so important in the construction of our society, and not the fact of having or not having flat feet?). By denaturalising the social, it highlights the stereotypes projected onto the past by archaeologists. It also highlights the stereotypes of ancient societies themselves, stereotypes rooted in the belief that social norms and hierarchies are a product of nature.

[96] Bessière & Gollac 2020, 271–272.
[97] Cryle 2015.
[98] The following definitions are based on those used by Trémeaud 2018, 7–8.
[99] Fausto-Sterling 2000, 51–54; Blackless *et al.* 2000; Geller 2005, 601.
[100] Boucherie 2020; Boucherie *et al.* 2021.
[101] For such thorough studies, see Belard 2017a; Trémeaud 2018; Augereau 2021.
[102] Sørensen 2000, 70–73.

As such, gender archaeology, in its interpretative dimension of the past, can be defined as an **archaeology that analyses social relations and the social construction of identities, by studying the way in which gender – as a hierarchical system that produces the bicategorisation of the sexes – produces a material culture in which both the values and the representations associated with the feminine and the masculine are embodied**.

Research into gender archaeology is based on rigorous methodologies and borrows theoretical tools from sociology, social anthropology, ethnology, women's studies and gender studies. We will have the opportunity to present many examples of this type of research in the second part of the book.

Where to start?

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