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## The Vocabulary of Gender

STANLEY M. ARONSON, MD

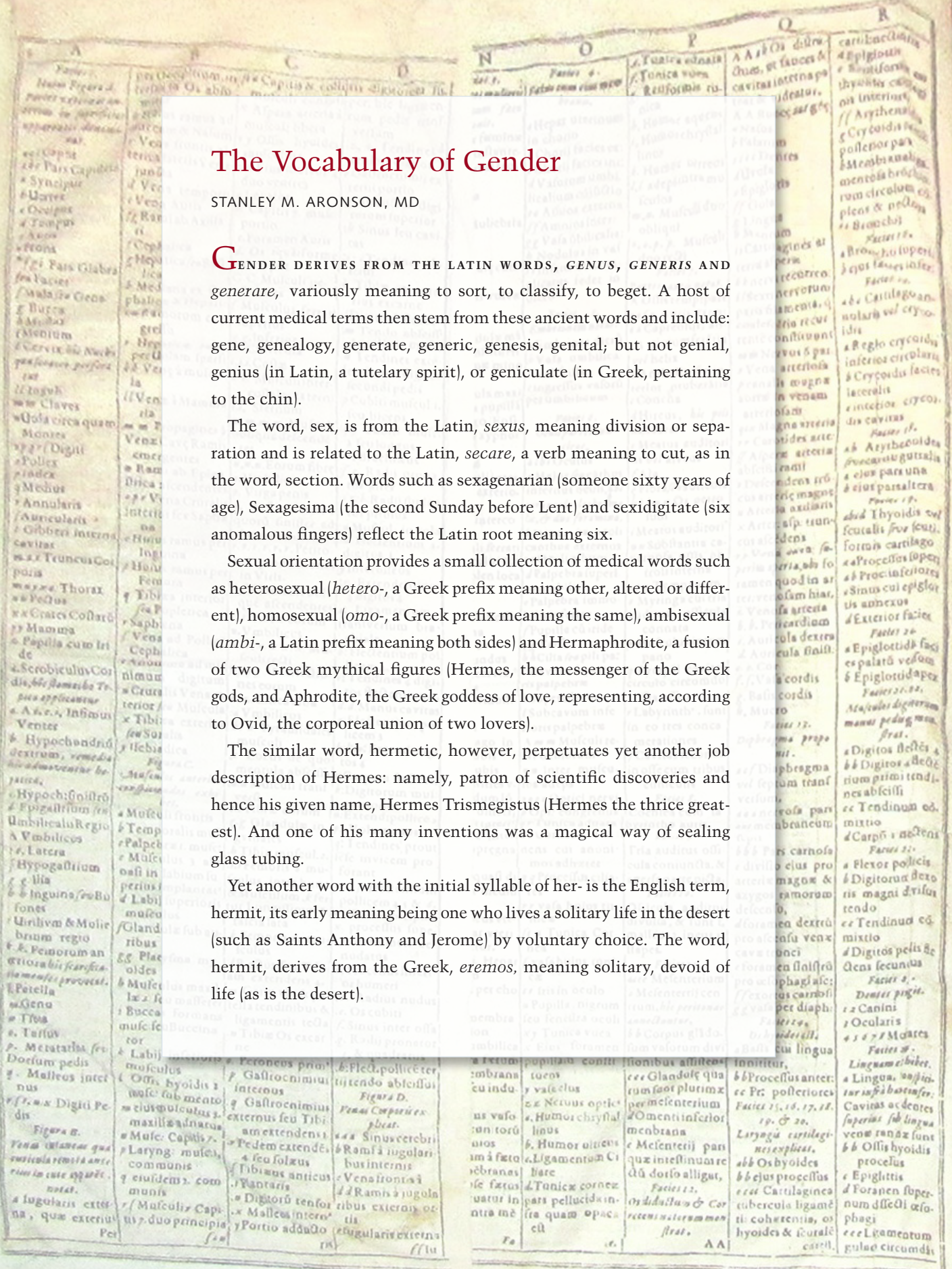
**G**ENDER DERIVES FROM THE LATIN WORDS, *GENUS*, *GENERIS* AND *generare*, variously meaning to sort, to classify, to beget. A host of current medical terms then stem from these ancient words and include: gene, genealogy, generate, generic, genesis, genital; but not genial, genius (in Latin, a tutelary spirit), or geniculate (in Greek, pertaining to the chin).

The word, sex, is from the Latin, *sexus*, meaning division or separation and is related to the Latin, *secare*, a verb meaning to cut, as in the word, section. Words such as sexagenarian (someone sixty years of age), Sexagesima (the second Sunday before Lent) and sexidigitate (six anomalous fingers) reflect the Latin root meaning six.

Sexual orientation provides a small collection of medical words such as heterosexual (*hetero-*, a Greek prefix meaning other, altered or different), homosexual (*omo-*, a Greek prefix meaning the same), ambisexual (*ambi-*, a Latin prefix meaning both sides) and Hermaphrodite, a fusion of two Greek mythical figures (Hermes, the messenger of the Greek gods, and Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, representing, according to Ovid, the corporeal union of two lovers).

The similar word, hermetic, however, perpetuates yet another job description of Hermes: namely, patron of scientific discoveries and hence his given name, Hermes Trismegistus (Hermes the thrice greatest). And one of his many inventions was a magical way of sealing glass tubing.

Yet another word with the initial syllable of her- is the English term, hermit, its early meaning being one who lives a solitary life in the desert (such as Saints Anthony and Jerome) by voluntary choice. The word, hermit, derives from the Greek, *eremos*, meaning solitary, devoid of life (as is the desert).







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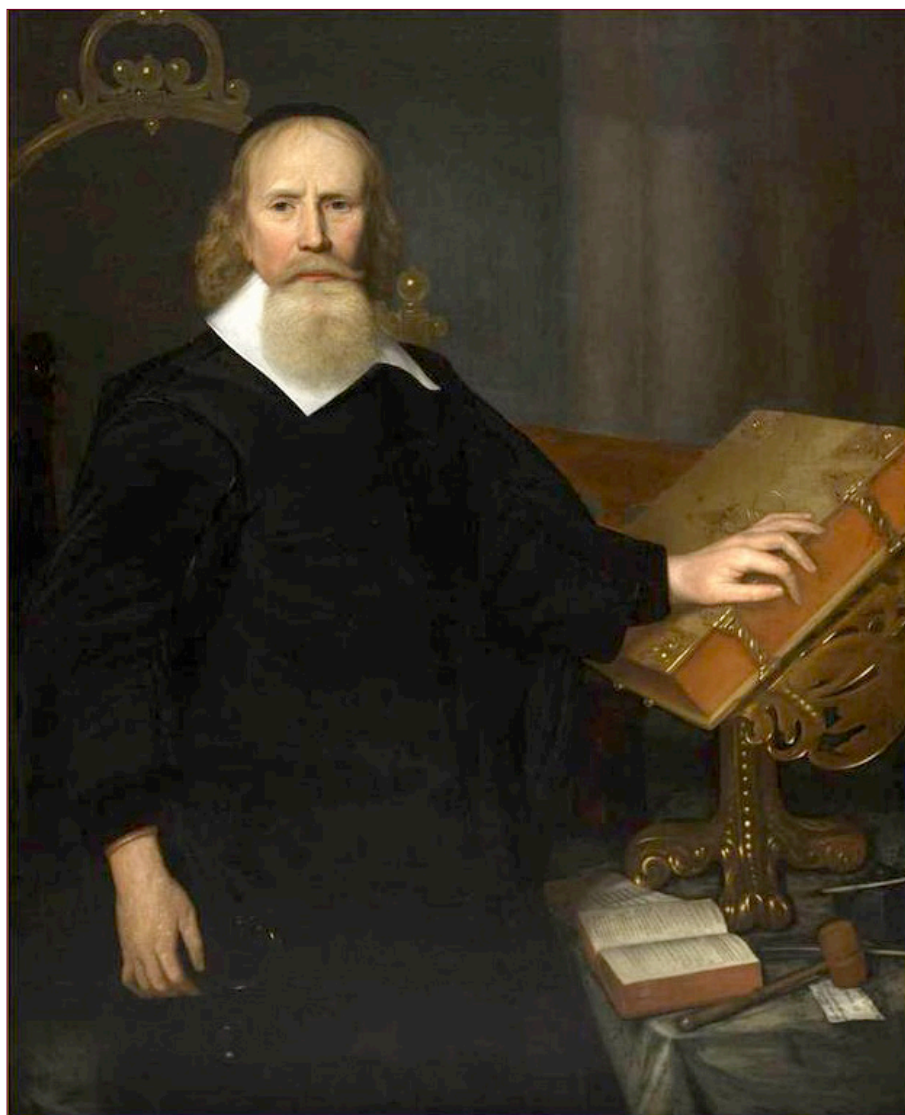
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## 350 Years Ago: Dr. John Clarke's 'livlie experiment'

*Physician, patriot, philanthropist's legacies live on*

MARY KORR

RIMJ MANAGING EDITOR



Portrait believed to be that of Dr. John Clarke and painted by Guiliam de Ville, from the Redwood Library & Athenaeum Painting Collection.

Prior to George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, **DR. JOHN CLARKE**, the first physician of the Rhode Island colony, advanced the idea of the separation of church and state. This year the state is celebrating the 350th anniversary of its Colonial

Charter, secured by Dr. Clarke in 1663 from King Charles II of England. The charter's principles, most noteworthy the provision codifying religious freedom, were subsequently inculcated into the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

An iconic passage is inscribed in stone on the façade of the Statehouse:

*...That it is much on their hearts (if they may be permitted), to hold forth a livlie experiment that a most flourishing civil state may stand and best be maintained... with full libertie in religious concernements...*

A search of the *Rhode Island Medical Journal* archives, as well as other historical accounts, offers glimpses of the man. Rhode Island historian Thomas Bicknell, who wrote a monograph on Dr. Clarke in 1915, described the young physician upon his arrival in Boston in 1637 as "thoroughly inoculated with the spirit of Democracy of the Baptists of Holland. He is in his twenty-eighth year, a strong, stalwart fellow, over six feet in height, magnetic, enthusiastic, having a judicial mind, a calm temper, and a bold and resolute will."

Bicknell related the conditions Dr. Clarke faced in Puritan Boston:

"The town is stirred as never before or since, in a contest for the emancipation of the soul of man from the chains of a spiritual bondage. A freeman himself, he (Dr. Clarke) at once casts in his lot with advocates and disciples of a liberal Democracy, and at once is chosen their new leader and proposes the formation of a new state in a new land."

Dr. Clarke was soon exiled from Massachusetts and arrived with a small band of settlers on Aquidneck Island in 1638. William P. Sheffield, a Rhode Island senator, described the area as "Canonocus's city" in a talk before the American Medical Association in 1889. "Here they lived in caves until they could provide better shelters," he said.

The land was purchased from



Canonicus, chief of the Narragansett tribe, and Pocasset (Portsmouth) was founded. Dr. Clarke would co-found Newport the following year. Sheffield noted that Dr. Clarke was “their preacher as well as their physician.”

Mention of Dr. Clarke again surfaces in the May 1931 *Rhode Island Medical Journal*, which published the remarks on early medicine and surgery in Newport delivered by **WILLIAM S. SHER-**

**MAN, MD**, to the Naval Hospital and the Newport County Medical Society. He recounted that Dr. Clarke studied medicine at the University of Leyden in Holland where “he attained high repute for ability and scholarship in languages, including Latin, Greek and Hebrew, law, medicine and theology.”

Dr. Sherman noted that it was due to Dr. Clarke’s work, after a dozen years in England, that the Royal Charter of 1663 was signed and remained the colony’s form of government for 180 years.



R.I. STATE ARCHIVES

Among the items on display at the Rhode Island State House Charter Room are the remnant sections of the wax and resin seal of King Charles II that was originally appended to the charter, and the charter box.

At the same time that it established the colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, it also squelched a land-grab by neighboring Connecticut.

Dr. Sherman mentioned in his talk that the Newport Medical Society erected a tablet at the city’s Historical Society in 1885, which stated:

*To John Clarke, Physician,  
1609–1676  
Founder of Newport,  
And of the Civil Polity  
of Rhode Island.*

Dr. Sherman also remarked that one of the first acts under the Royal Charter “is of more than passing interest as it is believed to be the first medical degree conferred in any of the colonies, March 1st, 1664 in Newport.”

The decree read:

*Wheras the Court have taken notice of the good endeavors of Captayne John Cranston of Newport, both in phissicke, and chirurgery, to the great comfort of such as had occation to improve his skill and practice... The Court doe therefore unanimously enacte and declare that the said Captayne John Cranston is lycenced and commistioned to adminester phissicke, and practice chirurgery throughout this whole Collony... by the Authority of the Generall Assembly of this Collony.*

Dr. Clarke returned to Newport after securing the charter and remained a physician and a Baptist minister until his death in 1676. He was married three times; his first and second wives and one child preceded him in death.

His will created a trust “for the relief of the poor and the bringing up of children unto learning from time to time forever.” The John Clarke Trust remains the oldest charitable trust in the country and is administered by the Bank of America. ♦



NATALIA KENT

The Royal Charter, granted By King Charles II on July 8, 1663, is on display in the new Charter Room at the Rhode Island State House, where a charter museum opened this year to celebrate the document’s 350th anniversary.