

Conceptions and Perceptions of Human Difference:
Albinos and Hermaphrodites in the Enlightenment

by

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Prologue

In 1759, Genevieve, an albino girl, was born to two Dominicans, who originally hailed from the Gold Coast in Africa. Her complexion was completely white, though both parents had black skin tones. She was brought to Paris as an exhibition of human variation in 1777 and studied by the naturalist, Georges Leclerc Comte de Buffon. In his observations, he detailed the forms and contours of her body and noted that they appeared to be exactly the same type of features normally exhibited by black Africans, though in Genevieve they were stark white, without the slightest hint of color.¹ Among her other physiological differences were her eyes, which were of a dull blue coloring and seemed to constantly oscillate; and according to Buffon, unlike the typical black African, she did not give off an unpleasant smell nor was there an oily quality to her skin.² Although Buffon noted the superficial beauty of Genevieve, her strange coloring restrained his otherwise voyeuristic description of her. Buffon cited other instances of albinism arising from sexual unions in the Southern Hemisphere, yet his confusion regarding Genevieve's exact constitution and ordering within humanity stood out as a point of tension within his work.

Two decades beforehand, in 1750, Michael-Anne Drouart, a young hermaphrodite had been exhibited in London and later Paris and displayed as a wild curiosity. A surgeon from Brussels, Monsieur Vacherie, examined her and his account of her is of the most widely recognized descriptions of the hermaphrodite in the eighteenth century. Though initially possessing both male and female traits so strong that they warranted her parents giving her both male and female names, yet Michael-Anne matured into a person of the

¹ Georges Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon, "Varieties of Human Species," *Barr's Buffon*.

² *Ibid.*

predilection to assume the female sex.³ Around her there developed a spirit of inquiry regarding her place in society and humanity.

Although Genevieve and Michael-Anne exhibited differences from the human prototype in vastly different ways, their treatment during the eighteenth century was fairly similar. They both exhibited physiological deformities, the albino in her shocking hypopigmentation and curious relationship to the black African and the hermaphrodite in her possession of both male and female sex organs. Taking these physical differences into account, in a society obsessed with categorization, where did those whose phenotypes did not meet the requirements of defined human classifications fit?

In both the philosophical and scientific worlds, these two anomalous humans were treated more as animals and specimens than as actual humans deserving consideration and respect. There were indeed other human physical deformities examined over the course of the eighteenth century, yet the surviving record concerning the albino and the hermaphrodite are the richest. Despite earlier philosophical notions, which claimed that human nature and humanity itself were defined by man's intellect and reasoning skills, much like Aristotle's notion of man being a Rational Animal, both the albino and hermaphrodite were treated and categorized as something other than human due to their physical abnormalities.

In order to tackle this query, I will first examine the definitions and categories of man during this time period, most often in England and France. As the Enlightenment

³ M. Vacherie, *An Account of the Famous Hermaphrodite or Parisian Boy-Girl, Aged Sixteen, Named Michael-Anne Drouart, At this Time (November, 1750), upon Show in Carnaby-Street, London* (London, 1750), 4. Note: There are a few variations of Michael-Anne Drouart's name among the studies published. She is often also referred to as Marie-Anne and or with the surname, Drouard.

began in the early eighteenth century, philosophical thought – freed from religious constraints as a result of the Scientific Revolution – blossomed and addressed what it meant to be human. As philosophy continued to flourish, an era of naturalism came to the forefront of thought. A band of naturalists arrived during the mid-eighteenth century and continued to address the questions that the philosophers had, in addition to creating a variety of organized systems to categorize man. Although the philosophers and naturalists utilized different skill sets and supposedly different techniques to understand nature, the naturalists' conception of humanity did not truly differ from that of the philosophers despite their more experimental and factual foundation. Yet, despite this hopeful objectivity, they actually offered *scientific* proof for preexisting philosophical conceptions. The two disciplines should have arrived at different conclusions, yet as research will demonstrate, the two, in fact, conform to almost exactly the same ideas, which is to say that the humans who differed from the perfect European were animalized and objectified, and those physical forms, which truly diverged, such as the albino and the hermaphrodite were made into specimens, treated as curiosities, and ultimately categorized as monsters.

The idea of human monsters was not a novel concept during this century. Natural anomalies were treated as curiosities and paraded around Europe as amazing happenings that excited society. In *Imagining Monsters*, Dennis Todd details the case of Mary Toft, an English woman, who claimed to giving birth to seventeen rabbits. Her “monstrous” status brings to life two concepts that will become important in studying the albino and hermaphrodite during this period. The first of which is the eighteenth century obsession with strangeness. The idea of a woman giving birth to rabbits was a fantastical notion too

imaginative for a society that had come a long way from blind subscription to superstition, yet according to Dennis Todd, there was a unique fascination with monsters at this time.⁴ A century before P.T. Barnum began parading his circus folks, major European cities like London and Paris boasted freak shows, where “giants, midgets, dwarfs, bearded ladies, hermaphrodites, and Siamese twins” amused Londoners.⁵ Humans, manipulated into and portrayed as odd deformities such as the boneless girl, who measured eighteen inches tall with seven sets of teeth, were extremely profitable.⁶ Therefore, it was the combination of a willingly gullible society and the eagerness of man to assume physical oddity, which helped to widen the parameters by which monsters were defined. The classification of man as monster rather than human was more than a recognition of physiological difference, but a weightier casting of individuals or groups into a category of eccentricity. Monstrous was a term, which formed an encompassing category that intended to reshape itself to accommodate physiological differences. Therefore, Mary Toft was paraded as a curious specimen around Europe just as Genevieve and Michael-Anne were. Although the monstrous category was diminutive to the human existence, there was a willingness to classify those who diverged from the normal form, as defined by the European prototype because of this alacrity toward human curiosities.

The second idea that the case of Mary Toft brings to light is the lack of scientific objectivity and correctness during this period. Mary Toft did not give birth to seventeen rabbits, and after getting the attention of Dr. Joshua Howard, a physician in Guildford,

⁴ Dennis Todd, *Imagining Monsters: Miscreations of the Self in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1-5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*

she inserted parts of a dead cat into herself to give the impression that she was continuing to give birth to animals.⁷ As there was a bevy of evidence to suggest the births were staged, Dennis Todd argued that the Dr. Howard sought out fame in supporting this fantastical notion.⁸ After all, during this period, the medical profession's conduct was fairly unreliable, though was widely respected. Society longed for scientific or medical authentication of phenomenon, yet in reality these processes that physicians took were often flawed, corrupt and quite unscientific – and fundamentally motivated by a wish to attain fame.

Todd's account also brought into question the importance of imagination to human physiology and creation during this period. Aristotle first emphasized imagination and this concept persisted throughout the eighteenth century when it was not uncommon for monstrous births to be attributed to wild imaginations of mothers. In the case of Mary Toft, she explained her rabbit births as a result of seeing a rabbit in the field one day, which ran from her as she chased it, from that moment forward, she longed for a rabbit.⁹ She was convinced that this longing had impregnated her with rabbits. Society believed her. Eighteenth century Europeans believed in the unknowable importance of the imagination, which exercised a seemingly infinite authority in man's development, and as a result questioned human free will and self-control. According to Todd, this led to an expansion of the body and thereby the dwindling of the self into unclassifiable ambiguity.¹⁰ Although this may have been true in a few select cases, Todd, here, underscores the importance of medical and scientific perspective, as they were almost

⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁸ Ibid., 8-9.

⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰ Ibid., 136.

equally – and soon to be even more—influential as the imagination was to the classification and understanding of man’s development.

The fashioning of man into monster for profit was a common enough practice, yet for those whose natural physical form diverged from the normal and were not parading themselves as aberrant creatures as a trade, their physiological differences must be examined in relation to their humanity. To attend to this problem, I will investigate the philosophical and scientific examination and subsequent categorization of both the albino and hermaphrodite during the eighteenth century. I have examined the philosophical and scientific record, aiming to understand how thinkers theorized about the nature of those with physical differences and how scientists explained physiological developments so different from the expected norm. Pulling from both of these disciplines, I hope to create a complete understanding about the treatment and categorization of the albino and hermaphrodite.

Chapter One examines the eighteenth century philosophical discussion concerning what constituted humanity. Chapter Two, in turn, looks into a similar notion of humanness, but through the lens of the emergent field of naturalism and initiates the dichotomy of philosophy and science that characterize the rest of the study. As philosophy had dominated thought up until this time, science had a newfound influence and authority on thought; therefore, Chapter Three explores how the eighteenth century scientific experiments implemented improper techniques or falsified information to fit into the existing discourse surrounding society. Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven examine the relationship between philosophy and science and the albino and the hermaphrodite; and how these humans were categorized and understood during the

Enlightenment. These chapters conclude that rather than redefining man or opening up preexisting human categories for the albino and the hermaphrodite, much like Mary Toft's monstrous classification, this category welcomed the albino and the hermaphrodite.

Before actually delving into the matter at hand, I would like to explain the lexicon in use. I intend to use the following words in their original eighteenth century sense, without any implications beyond their exact definition:

The first of these is monster. I intend to use "monster" in the way Voltaire best defines it in his *Philosophical Dictionary*. Voltaire describes monsters as humans bearing defects in one or more of the following ways: excess organs or appendages, body parts of another animal, or a deformity so extreme or strange as to stimulate horror in other human beings.¹¹ I mean to use monster as a term to describe physique; and to refer to a somewhat "valid" human category, which naturalists created during the Enlightenment.

Additionally, I also use a variety of words for the albino human: *blafard*, *dondo*, and *négre blanc*. During the Enlightenment, these terms were labels that most accurately described certain pigmentless humans in their minds. I do not intend to imply here that all Enlightenment writers were innocent or free of racial or irrational hatred; but I wish to maintain the vocabulary originally used to avoid altering the original meaning of certain texts or theories. Additionally, using "albino" over and over again would be repetitive and would hinder the natural literary flow of this work.

Finally, over the past 150 years, the field of gender and sex has expanded immensely. Once unrecognized, modern minds have created a gender and sex vocabulary

¹¹ Francois-Marie Arrouet de Voltaire, *A Philosophical Dictionary (volume II)*, (New York: New York Coventry House, 1932), 228.

to appropriately describe people and to have people describe themselves. Of this vocabulary is the word “ze,” which is a genderless pronoun, purposefully neither male nor female. Although this word may have been appropriate for hermaphrodites in either sexual transition or their normal state of sex organ duality, it did not yet exist during the eighteenth century and applying this modern word to this study would mistreat the subject, as during that time being “ze” was not an option. The word “hermaphrodite” also poses a modern issue. In 1916, hermaphroditism was officially changed to “intersex” by the Berlin biologist Richard Goldschmidt. He claimed that hermaphroditism was an “ancient” word, which “literally constructed [hermaphrodites] as mythical monsters,” and as a result, Dr. Goldschmidt claimed that hermaphroditism had since been perceived a mythological creation.¹² Although “intersex” may now be a more applicable and correct label for hermaphrodites, it was not yet a term at the time of study; therefore I will not use it. The original term has a history, which directly pertains to this study and using a different word would prevent the inclusion of that background.

¹² Paola Ferruta, “The Hermaphrodite as a Monster: the Photographical Genesis of the Scientific Discourse on Intersexuality since the Nineteenth Century,” (paper presented at Inter-Disciplinary.net: a Global Network for Dynamic Research and Publishing at “Monsters of Sexuality Global Conference,” 2008), 1.

Chapter One: The Eighteenth Century Human

Before the Age of Enlightenment, religious doctrines often codified the understandings of the world and systems of beliefs that humans held. Yet during the Hellenic Age in Greece, Aristotle's teachings dominated thought in topics ranging from biology to aesthetics. Although many of his theories came to influence nearly all Western philosophy, his work on the nature and definition of man not only outlasted other theories but was the most influential to eighteenth century thought—among these are *Virtue Ethics*, *Theory of Nature*, *Category of Being*, the *Rational Animal*. *Virtue Ethics* proposed that morality of a character drove man's behavior, rather than imposed rules, in the name of religion or law. This argued that no general truth could be concluded and instead necessitated case-by-case studies to understand moral dilemmas. This concept came to influence understanding of physical deformities and divergences especially in the case of the albino and the hermaphrodite. Additionally, Aristotle defined the modern conception of what nature is and the laws of it in his *Theory of Nature*. Generally, this came to indicate that nature was the state of being unaltered in its original state. This concept became applicable to the eighteenth century philosophers obsessed with understanding and defining the natural order and groups of living things, as what was natural was permissible whereas unnatural developments were scorned. The *Category of Being* theory proposed different ways of categorizing man, especially by their values. Aristotle's *Rational Animal* defined the classical image of man and noted similarities between man and animal as it proposed that man is a living being just as an animal is, yet rational and sentient. These two mere adjectives separated man from animal. The *Rational Animal* became important in understanding differences between man and animal

as later it would appear that man's shortcomings would make him more akin to animal than other humans without misgivings.

The Roman Catholic Church in fact later adopted Aristotelian philosophy as official Christian doctrine as Scholasticism so that Aristotelian logic became a Western pillar of thought. The Church's fusion of inalterable Christian theology and Aristotelian teachings steadfastly maintained Aristotle's theories. As the influence of the Catholic Church grew, new scientific inquiries, which contrasted with existing axioms, were halted or punished in the name of heresy – which is to say philosophy and science made little progress.

Saint Thomas Aquinas studied Aristotelian logic and referred to Aristotle as “The Philosopher” in his writings. Aquinas was a proponent of scholasticism and a pious man. He viewed the creation of new things as a result of abiogenesis, which claimed that new generations resulted from the corruption of others. To him, man was Aristotle's Rational Animal and was a lively organism with a soul, which was unrelated to the physical body. He believed God to be ultimately the source and cause of all things. Therefore, any creation, divergence, or difference in living things, was divinely ordained and purposeful. This denied accidental or spontaneous generation and though not definitively, was a type of preformationism, in which the sex act had nothing to do with actual development, and humans did not actually control their own procreation.

Although the Church's ordained truths dominated societal thought, the power of theological influence during the Renaissance waned and there emerged a vibrant, scientific discourse on almost everything. Among the debated systems and beliefs were the two different conceptions of the universe: geocentric, which proposed that the earth

was at the center of the universe, and heliocentric, which claimed the sun to be the center of universe.¹³ It was at this time that scientific discourse heated up, as controversy and discussion delved deeper and information spread (thanks to the printing press, then just a century old). Yet, it was not until the development of the Scientific Revolution throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which allowed real schisms from bulky and antiquated, church-bolstered logic. Until the Scientific Revolution and even the Enlightenment, theology, science, and philosophy were categorized into a singular discipline. Though, as scientists came to refine techniques and make discoveries, the earlier “scientized” philosophy eventually crumbled, making way for the flourishing of the Scientific Revolution and later development of the Enlightenment.

As previously stated, the Church and consequently Western society held Aristotelian philosophy as truth until Galileo Galilee published *The Starry Messenger*, in 1610, which opposed Scholastic holdings and therefore the Church. Isaac Newton’s work came shortly thereafter in 1687 with the publication of *Principia* and *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. The English mathematician and physicist developed calculus and the Law of Gravitation and three laws of motion published in 1687. He also conceived the World-Machine, which was the belief that the universe was a singular, immense, regulated and uniform machine that operated according to time, space, and motion. These novel notions not only indicated that there was much more knowledge to

¹³ Nicolaus Copernicus argued on behalf of the heliocentricity in *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, published in 1543, which countered the preexisting Ptolemaic system that the Church had supported. More than a minute discovery in astronomy, Copernicus’s theory directly challenged existing philosophy, which had guided thought for centuries. Provoking as it was, Copernicus’s theory reignited a debate centered on the scientific inner-workings of the universe, so that other scientists such as Tycho Brahe engaged in discussion with Johannes Kepler, not only to doubt Copernicus’s theory, but to uncover the three basic laws of planetary motion.

be acquired than had previously been thought, but also perhaps that the universe was not human-centric, as previously contrived. Although Renaissance thought had settled on the importance of the individual, Galileo and Newton's conceptions fractured from this notion and alluded to a more complex natural world where humans were not the central figures. This was a rather unorthodox concept that truly allowed a divergence between theology and philosophy. Existing theology inherently proposed human or divine centrality, whereas Galilean and Newtonian theory pointed toward the importance of Aristotle's natural, untouched world. They had attempted to remove the theological ties and had invoked Aristotle in a purely philosophical and scientific sense. Perhaps an oversimplification, but this indicated a substantial divide between theology and philosophy and science. These monumental shifts of mentality did not meet immediate success; in fact, Galileo and Newton's discoveries ignited a debate filled with confusion and suppositions, but contrary to early systems of thought, an argumentative discourse developed. The European mind was changed. Scientists like Galileo and Newton were instrumental in the break from traditional philosophy and science at the end of the Renaissance at which point scientists questioned traditional beliefs through a new, objective lens that became the Scientific Revolution.

Among the discoveries and developments of this period of breakthroughs was the codification of the Scientific Method. Before this time, there had not yet existed a methodic way of performing quantitative research; but the Scientific Method systematized the observation and experimentation process so that they were regulated and utilized to explain theories on the functioning of the universe. Robert Boyle was the first scientist to conduct controlled experiments using this standardized technique. This period

of pedantic inquiry marked a substantial break with theological customs that had dominated previous thought. This allowed for the development of thought, and the Scientific Revolution, therefore, set the stage for *philosophes* to continue this tradition of inquiry, which existed at the base of the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment sprung out of the Scientific Revolution under René Descartes and Francis Bacon, who emerged as the philosophical counterparts to the previously discussed scientists. Descartes sought to define a strict division between theology and science in his *Discourse on Method* (1641), in which he elucidated the differences between the spiritual and physical in the material world. He founded modern scientific practices in Cartesian Dualism, a theory of the separation of mind and body, which states that the mind is a nonphysical element in control of awareness, consciousness, and intellect. He emphasized man's soul and distrusted teleological explanations, preferring understanding causality over the study of purpose.¹⁴ Descartes was searching for certainty; in turn, he also defined the theory of Rationalism: the use of reason to comprehend universal thought in a new method, in which doubting reality was first to understand truths. Somewhat a derivative of the Scientific Revolution, Rationalism represented a link that transformed the previously technological movement into a philosophical advance bolstered by hard fact and logic. Similar to Descartes, Bacon advocated for a distinct field of philosophy and defended the Scientific Revolution. He contributed his theory of Empiricism, which held that experience was the ultimate source of knowledge. Between Descartes and Bacon, Rationalism and Empiricism created a

¹⁴ Virginia Parker Dawson, *Nature's Enigma: The Problem of the Polyp in the Letters of Bonnet, Tremblay, and Réamur*, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1987), 27.

stable and solid foundation for Enlightenment thought to evolve as a distinctly different movement from previous eras. Skepticism encouraged questioning and experience forced experimentation, which were key concepts in the Enlightenment. Descartes and Bacon made the connection that allowed the Enlightenment to flourish. These new ideas were important to later philosophers in the process of defining man in terms of his intellectual capacity.

Although inquiry and experimentation had existed for centuries, the Scientific Revolution and the early development of the Enlightenment marked the refining of techniques and debates concerning the overarching questions about the universe and humanity. Toward the end of the Scientific Revolution, Descartes and Bacon's theories evolved to be the most tangible division, yet between theology and philosophy and science, where there was no overlap or combination between the disciplines, rather they founded themselves on separate doctrines and practices. As previously discussed, these three disciplines had originally existed as one field, yet as Galileo and Newton and Descartes and Bacon made discoveries and developed new views of the universe, the three slowly diverged into distinct categories, and eventually into unique species of scope.

The combination of the application of the Scientific Method, rationalism and empiricism to universal understanding ushered in an era of French philosophers, otherwise known as the *philosophes*, who wrote as the voice of the Enlightenment. Similar to the Scientific Revolution's opposition to theology and superstition, the *philosophes* sought to harness reason and scientific proof in order to reform society. Although the Enlightenment may be most known for its contributions to refashioning

government systems, specifically enlightened despotism and the revival of democracy, the *philosophes* also tackled the question of human nature and reason in relation to human physicality.

Although the French *philosophes* were at the focus of the Enlightenment, in the mid-seventeenth century, John Locke initiated a dialogue, which continued throughout the eighteenth century in France. Locke was a proto-Enlightenment British philosopher during the late seventeenth century, who evoked Bacon's empiricism and eventually contributed to epistemology. Locke asserted nascent human equality and that the human mind at birth was a *tabula rasa*. This notion of a "blank slate" indicated that the future for human development was somewhat unrestricted and at birth, all humans were endowed with innocent ignorance.

In *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, first circulating in 1690, Locke separated animal from man, stating that while both shared a "body with life, sense, and [spontaneity]," man had reasoning faculties and rationality, which the animal lacked.¹⁵ Locke's belief in a fundamental psychological difference between man and animal marked the substantive break between the two groups, evidenced by man's mouth—although both animal and man shared analogous organs, the mechanical capabilities were insufficient for animal to effectively communicate.¹⁶ Locke maintained an early definition of humanity, which focused on man's cognitive abilities. This visible evidence functioned as certainty that God had specifically fashioned man.¹⁷ The designed rhyme

¹⁵ John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding and a Treatise on the Conduct of the Understanding* (1690), (Philadelphia: Hayes and Zell, 1856), 18-20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷ Andrew Curran, "Rethinking Race History: the Role of the Albino in the French Enlightenment Life Sciences," *History and Theory* 48 (October 2009): 159.

and reason to man's modeling, however, raised the questions: what of humans who do not function as these models of humanity? For a man who is incapable of reasoning, is he no longer human? And more outwardly, what comes of humans whose bodies do not function as Locke's template? These questions probed at the exact depth of human nature, what indicated humanity, and what it meant to be human.

Montesquieu also attended to Locke's queries, writing nearly thirty years after Dubos. Although his works touched on both philosophy and naturalism, he did not write from a scientific base, rather he theorized from a philosophical point of view. Initially known for his work, *Persian Letters*, Montesquieu published *The Spirit of the Laws* in 1748. In the wake of the Newtonian and Lockean revolutions, Montesquieu wrote during a period when philosophers applied scientific methodology to the study of the characteristics of man. He wrote in a style of satirical relativism before the wave of other eighteenth century naturalists arrived to define scientific philosophy and understanding. Throughout his work, Montesquieu applied the notion of Newtonian legality, which asserted that laws operated differently in respective societies, so that republics created virtuous societies, monarchies instilled a sense of honor in its subjects and despots created a system of fear.¹⁸ In his *Spirit* Montesquieu claimed that there were natural laws, which governed everything: nature, beasts, and man.¹⁹ Although Montesquieu's vision of natural laws was fundamental and unchanging in his rhetoric, he believed human nature to be ever evolving in response to climate. Air temperature and quality were more than circumstantial environmental characteristics; these factors altered man's very essence so

¹⁸ Charles de Secondat Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), ed. and trans. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller and Harold Samuel Stone, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 232.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 5.

that man became biologically different based on his climate of origin. Montesquieu claimed that if one

put a man in a hot, enclosed spot, and he will suffer, for the reasons just stated, a great slackening of heart. If, in the circumstance, one proposes a bold action to him, I believe one will find him little disposed toward it; his present weakness will induce discouragement in his soul; he will fear everything, because he will feel he can do nothing. The peoples in hot countries are timid like old men; those in cold countries are courageous like young men.²⁰

This version of climate theory proposed that men who lived in different environments had different fundamental qualities, which altered the ways in which they functioned (down to their ability to hold their alcohol) on a scientific level, so much so that those accustomed to hot climates were incapable of controlling their conduct.²¹ Climate caused inhabitants of the southern hemisphere not to function as well as those who occupied more temperate climates. As much as Montesquieu correlated man's character and climate, he denied a direct relationship between skin color and human worth; though he failed to completely dispel that notion.

As Montesquieu conceded physiological differences between races of man, he created a link between race, humanity, and slavery. As anti-slavery as Montesquieu was, he apologetically confirmed the existence of slavery based on physicality. In fact, throughout his argument for the universality of human worth and natural laws, he maintained that there was a "natural slavery," which spontaneously evolved.²²

Montesquieu invoked Aristotle's Theory of Nature to validate this system of slavery, yet he also made an adequate case against slavery and even how, though slavery existed, it could be changed so that legitimate labor replaced exploitation. Although initially

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 234.

²² Ibid., 252.

Montesquieu offered a fluid definition of human nature's universality, in the case of the black African, he muddled his case when it turned to slavery as a result of his climate theory and natural slavery. At the same time anti-slavery, believing the institution of enslaving men to be an inhuman travesty and subscribing to a notion of a "natural slavery" existing, Montesquieu trapped the black African, allowing its *natural* subjugation and oppression in his self-refutation. Ultimately, he resisted creating a hierarchy of climates or peoples so man remained equal in nature and reason despite their obvious differences. Montesquieu's self-refutation highlighted a great tension at the time of the Enlightenment, which continued with many of his contemporaries. Though intending to introduce new theories and greater elaboration on the nature of man, Montesquieu was constrained by the discourse of the eighteenth century, and therefore unable to actually conceive of a world without slavery.

Shortly after *The Spirit of the Laws*, Denis Diderot sought to compile all available knowledge into what became the *Encyclopédie*, first published in 1751, and continued to address the question of human nature. Although the project initially began as a translation of Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia, or a Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, Diderot expanded this work to the realm of knowledge to include contemporary authors and thought. Many of the articles in the *Encyclopédie* were pilfered and incompletely attributed to their original author, however, Diderot himself authored several hundred throughout the process as his collaborators pulled out of the project when it met political controversy with France's First and Second Estate. The *Encyclopédie* followed a traditional layout: a term followed by a description and definition. Under the term "Natural Law" Diderot awarded man with "the most sacred *natural right* to

everything.”²³ In other words, man most deserved the first of nature’s offerings and was most entitled above all other creatures. In agreement with Lockean philosophy, Diderot made a distinction between man and animal, which centered on the man’s ability to reason along with animal’s lack of cognitive skills. Additionally, man was also measured on a spectrum of good and evil.²⁴

Diderot’s next point, however, broke with Locke: “Whoever refuses to look for the truth renounces human status and must be treated by the rest of his species like a ferocious beast; once the truth is discovered whoever refuses to conform to it is either mad or bad in a moral sense.”²⁵ Here, denial of truth was not a principle difference between man and animal; however, it was a characteristic that had the power to degenerate man to animal. Likening man to animal made him somewhat monstrous, which was not a novel concept, as often cultures used monsters to represent “stereotyped perceptions of other cultures,” so that they were “misshapen, absurdly skinny, or comically fat” to dehumanize or animal certain cultures’ enemies.²⁶ For example, the French exhibited animosity to the English by claiming that they had tails and the English said the same of the Cornish.²⁷ However, like in this example, monstrous humans were usually categorized as such because of their physical attributes, yet here, intellectual capabilities qualified certain men as monsters. By that definition, Diderot tied truth and

²³ Denis Diderot, “Natural Law,” *Encyclopedia (1755), The French Revolutions and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. and trans. Lynn Hunt, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1996), 37. Note: My italics here.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Peter Burke, “Frontiers of the Monstrous: Perceiving National Characters in Early Modern Europe,” *Monstrous Bodies/ Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 26.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

morality to one's humanity and human nature. In that respect, Diderot's conception of human nature was founded on man's intellectual capabilities and will—personality attributes unrelated to man's physique—which were supposedly intrinsic, interior qualities uncontrollable by man. Consequently, here man was a cognitive being, only defined by that capacity.

While the *Encyclopédie* project unfolded, Jean Jacques Rousseau published *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1754). Although the early *philosophes* made a point of distinguishing man from animal in terms of their ability to reason, Rousseau argued that *natural laws* did not actually govern animal behavior and animals were “devoid of free will and intellect.”²⁸ Man had acquired instinct from animals and as a result of human progress, this brute sense developed into free will.²⁹ Reason was insufficient for men, who were unarguably more advanced in every capacity than animal. Again, this marked a distinction between the theological and philosophical disciplines and echoed Aristotle's conception of man as the Rational Animal – defined by his ability to reason and act from an informed base, rather than a purely reactionary instinct. A century before Charles Darwin's theory of evolution came to the forefront of scientific debate, Rousseau suggested an evolution of mind so that, similar to Locke's *tabula rasa*, man had developed from a brute to a civilized person.

Rousseau also differed from the early *philosophes* in his admittance that there existed a “natural hierarchy among men” where there existed a “greater difference

²⁸ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* trans. Franklin, ed. Patrick Coleman, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 71.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

between a savage and normal man than a tame and wild animal.”³⁰ This claimed there were more degrees of humanity than animal, indicating a unique complexity to man. Rousseau harnessed the question of reasoning ability to distinguish savage man from normal man— the savage man was familiar only with his immediate physical needs so instinct guided him, whereas the civilized man thought freely and reasoned in a much broader and knowledgeable context.³¹ In this respect, humanity came from man’s capability to judge—therefore, not a somatic sense, but a mentality. Once again similar to Diderot, one’s humanness was somewhat behavioral, though unconnected to his physicality.

Similar to Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* and in tune with Rousseau’s concept of man’s rationality, Voltaire published his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* in 1764. Marie Francois Arrouet de Voltaire, often proclaimed as the father of the Enlightenment, extensively defined “human” and what it meant to be man in his *Dictionnaire*. He equalized all men at the most basic level as human – regardless of skin color, country of origin, or habit, similar to Montesquieu.³² And in a fashion akin to Locke’s *tabula rasa*, Voltaire claimed that man was not born wicked, because “if such was his nature, he would commit enormous crimes and barbarities as soon as he could walk.”³³ As he stressed similarities, he noted differences concerning climate, its effects on the body and its consequences. Therefore, for Voltaire, physiognomic differences visible to others did not decrease their

³⁰ Ibid., 86-89.

³¹ Ibid., 89.

³² Voltaire, *A Philosophical Dictionary* (1932), 179. In this passage, Voltaire wrote: “All [Albinos, Darrians, Americans, and Africans] are equally men, but only as a fir, an oak, and a pear tree are equally trees, the pear tree comes not from the fir, nor the fir from the oak.”

³³ Ibid., 181.

human status rather; they indicated internal biological differences, which substantiated their inferiority to a more perfect human that was the European prototype. Voltaire was one of the first here to relate physical nature to humanity, as it was connected to man's biological inner-workings, which phenotypically manifested themselves as a marking of their internal quality. In this vein, Voltaire characterized the European as different from the African, who was "possessed of the devil" and therefore, hierarchically inferior.³⁴ Yet ultimately, all mankind shared a "prevailing instinct" to love their children and a common essence.³⁵ In light of this universality, however, mankind did not share a common nature, for though signified by man's physical attributes, it depended more on internal biological dispositions and intellectual capabilities beyond an individual's control. Human nature was inconsistent across different types of people.

As the discussion surrounding human nature and reason evolved, philosophers probed French society, specifically in the case of race and human species. For example, Abbé Raynal took on the debate and argued on behalf of the status of black slaves and French colonies in the East and West Indies. Unlike earlier *philosophes*, Raynal interacted with the colonized and offered a presentist view, in which he, though under biases and lenses of the time, was subject to a moral rather than factual perception of his subject of study. Although the *philosophes* had previously somewhat constrained their discussion of human reasoning to just that, Raynal argued for the right of natural liberties to man in the context of rights. He distinguished between natural and civil liberties:

³⁴ Ibid., 180.

³⁵ Ibid.

Natural liberty is the right granted by nature to every man to dispose of himself at pleasure. Civil liberty is the right, which is insured by society to every citizen, of doing everything, which is not contrary to the laws.³⁶

In this context, Raynal attributed natural rights as something that every man intrinsically possessed. Yet once contextualized within society and politics, natural rights were constrained by societal definitions and perceptions in the form of laws, so natural liberties were subject to become civil liberties. Although civil and political rights were malleable by time and context in a society, human nature was permanent and natural liberties were indestructible, not to be changed regardless of a society's stance.³⁷ However, intellectual capacities demonstrated some humans as brutes, with a different type of nature than those possessing other cognitive capabilities. Raynal stated, "If there be not any power under the heavens, which can change my nature and reduce me to the state of brutes, there is none which can dispose of my liberty"³⁸ In this passage, Raynal disconnected human nature and brutes, thereby arguing that the non-intellectual nature of the brute would disqualify men with lower intellectual capabilities from natural liberties. This notion raised the question: in Raynal's world, was there a threshold of intelligence which man had to pass in order to deserve natural liberties or even status as man? If so, what was to become of those psychologically deficient? In this concession of differing intellectual qualities dictating human nature, Raynal alluded to an existence of a hierarchy of man, where those with deficient mental abilities were lesser humans. Though perhaps in a modern context this type of differentiation could be performed through quantitative

³⁶ Abbé Raynal, "Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies," (1770), *The French Revolutions and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. and trans. Lynn Hunt, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 52.

³⁷ Ibid., 52.

³⁸ Ibid.

analysis, at this time this was indeed a subjective process of evaluating an individual's cognitive abilities. This theory argued that those who society (or in actuality philosophers) had defined as intellectually inferior were less human, and consequently deserving of different treatment and perhaps even different laws similar to what Montesquieu had prescribed.

Although Raynal coalesced intelligence and humanity in the debate of natural rights, he denied there to be a physical limitation regarding humanity. In the case of the black African, Raynal named the only difference between whites and blacks in their racially bifurcated world to be that “we [whites] can break one chain to put on another.”³⁹ To this extent, his understanding of human reason was internally vested in a person, regardless of phenotype. Through a process of Europeanization, that is an introduction to European “laws and manners,” in the slaves’ own country they could be afforded “interests to study, productions to cultivate, and articles of consumption agreeable to their respective tastes” and this restored them to humanity.⁴⁰ He did not name blacks as brutes but in need of *civilizing* to comprehend and be restored to liberty. Through an abolitionist lens, though intending to be equalizing in admonitions of human sameness, Raynal somewhat paternalistically refuted his thoughts with his language. Though assumed to be equal, the black African needed European help and civilization.

Raynal perceived the black African as human wanting *European* help, yet Marquis de Condorcet, who wrote eleven years after Raynal, vehemently disagreed. Similar to Raynal, Condorcet advocated humanity to be measured by non-physical means; yet he did not believe in differences warranting European intervention and

³⁹ Ibid., 53.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 54.

maintained human similarity despite physical difference. In a letter to African slaves, Condorcet wrote in 1781, “although I am not the same *color* as you, I have always regarded you as my brothers.”⁴¹ Nature had endowed each human with an innate reason, which made all humans equal – none more or less man.⁴² As a result, the practice of slavery was regarded as despicable. In a similar vein to Montesquieu’s abolitionist rhetoric, Condorcet argued that the worst crime was selling another man into servitude and that no man could become another’s property.⁴³ According to Condorcet, slavery was the ultimate crime; not because it was a cruel or unfair process, but because no man was greater than another or had more innate humanness. At birth, all humans were equal regardless of intellect; the human form was the first and only qualifier to being part of humanity. From Aristotelian logic through 1781, nature maintained a great role in human development; but by 1781, human nature was a constant, irrefutable characteristic of all humans. Condorcet claimed that, however, it was not yet a widespread belief. Rather Condorcet’s belief in human equality contributed another theory into the ever-growing discussion of human nature of the eighteenth century.

Many *philosophes* developed differing definitions regarding human nature. As the weight of theological importance ebbed, Enlightenment philosophers ushered in an era of skepticism of current systems and inquiry into truth. Although the aforementioned philosophers disagreed regarding the specifics of human development, they generally concluded that nature produced human variation. More importantly, these philosophers

⁴¹ Marquis de Condorcet, “Reflections on Negro Slavery,” (1781), *The French Revolutions and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. and trans. Lynn Hunt, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1996), 56.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

defined human nature as part of the non-physical man, humanity rested on intellectual capabilities, reasoning and soul. Man's form mattered in Aquinas's writing, yet did not appear in Enlightenment writing. A human body capable of rationality and feeling uncomplicated by physicality defined what it meant to be human in this context. Already in these writings, however, it becomes evident that there was no universality to thought at this time. Rather, on almost every point there existed dissent and tension, which would continue in other areas of human understanding throughout the eighteenth century. Additionally, these philosophers wrote from nearly an exclusively philosophical point of view, where these concepts were directly being applied to humans. When the question turned to the naturalists and the actual categorization of man came into practice, thought changed to deal with this more tangible situation.

Chapter Two: How Naturalists Made Understanding Humans More Confusing

As philosophy, science, and theology diverged into separate branches between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe, Naturalism, the study of history regarding the natural world, became a legitimate, studied field with scope and specialists. Although the *philosophes* previously discussed status and categories of human varieties, they did not form the proto-history of mankind. Rather, the naturalists took credit and detailed a history, which as a result to refined technology and discoveries made during the Scientific Revolution as discussed in Chapter One, was more reliable than the world histories that had preceded it. The study of naturalism took off during the eighteenth century though initially it did not differ much from philosophy, that is it persisted without real experimental data and often relying on conjecture. As time progressed, however, the naturalists turned to the question of human variety and how exactly to order it, often forming broad categories, which were rarely based off of substantial data or Lockean Empiricism. In order to understand how various enlightenment thinkers posited the existence and humanness of man with physical deformities, it is first necessary to comprehend their understanding of human genesis and variation. Over the course of the eighteenth century, naturalists developed a variety of qualifying and organizing man according to a myriad of characteristics as opposed to the broad and sometimes vague theories of the *philosophes*.

Preceding the launch of the French Enlightenment, François Bernier developed a racial classificatory system in his *A New Division of Earth* in 1684. Bernier claimed that previously, the world had been partitioned according to geography, so countries or

regions of origin naturally segregated peoples.⁴⁴ As a former world voyager, he believed himself to be endowed with the knowledge to best effectively divide peoples. Superficial human variation existed among each and every man, which especially corresponded to his country of origin. As a result, there existed enough patterns and similarities among man's variations so Bernier argued that between four and five species of men existed whose similarities and differences between and within groupings were definitive enough to be called independent.⁴⁵ Bernier believed physical features prodigious enough to categorize people and to warrant a "new division of earth."⁴⁶ Bernier's dependence on natural human categories as defined by their physical attributes alluded to an understanding of humans that indicated their most outward characteristics to be markers of their internal qualities. Although Bernier's multitude of human species belonged to humanity at large, they were different enough to belong to different varietal classifications. The human category was vast and encompassing, to him smaller categories based on every minute variation would be inadequate. This emphasized human differences and consequently as these groups became increasingly solidified and rigid later, descriptions became sullied with language of disgust, set by physically ordained groupings and pointed to internal inequalities among races. As a result, Bernier's work set the foundation for racist categorizations, which later took on racist implications, despite Bernier's best effort to scientifically divide peoples.

When the question turned from how to divide man to the origins of human development, Bernier believed that in the case of blackness, "the cause must be sought

⁴⁴ Francois Bernier, "A New Division of the Earth," (1684), *The Idea of Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000), 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

for in the peculiar texture of their bodies, or in the seed, or in the blood – which last are however, of the same color as everywhere.”⁴⁷ This presented the theory of animalculism, an offshoot of preformationism, where the sperm, and not the ovum, contained the whole of the embryo. This version of embryology suggested that the sex act was meaningless to the development of man; neither spontaneous development nor accident spawned the creation of man. Rather, it was the sperm, whose coloring dictated the darker pigmentation of the black African in the case of skin color, which therefore indicated a polygenetic view that stated that human varieties had independently arose rather than a monogenetic outlook that conceived that man had descended from a single pair of ancestors. By 1720, the theory of preformation had effectively been established and confirmed by several scientists such as Malpighi, Swammerdam, Andry, Dalenpatius, and Guatius, who all claimed that they had personally witnessed extremely small forms of fully developed men with heads, arms, and legs in the spermatozoa under the microscope.⁴⁸ Eventually, degeneration theorists adopted Bernier’s theory because it dignified the spectrum of human varieties in which some humans possessed a greater quality than others, resulting from sperm that had degenerated since their conception to create the unpleasant looking life form.

As he preceded Enlightenment momentum, Bernier had proposed a somewhat revolutionary (for his time) restructuring of the European mindset in regard to human classifications. His conception of animalculism represented early embryology theory of man, which lasted throughout much of the eighteenth century. Preformationism set the

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Joseph Needham, Sc. D., *A History of Embryology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 183.

stage for degeneration theory to later develop, but eliminated spontaneity to be a cause in human development—all the humans that would ever walk the earth had already been partially conceived and were maintained in a microform, as in a miniature version in the sperm, until their time to develop. External factors could not influence development; but preformationism also indicated a great overall organization of earthly things that was beyond human volition or even accident.

Although Bernier sought to create broad human categories emphasizing similarities among man, Abbé Dubos, offered a description of the human hierarchy in *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture* in 1719. Although ostensibly a work that intended to frame and elaborate on artistic theories and movements, his *Réflexions* came to ponder the vast differences such as body type, stature, inclinations and mind, between humans in light of his monogenist mindset.⁴⁹ Similar to what naturalists would maintain throughout the eighteenth century, Dubos offered a two-part climate theory, where he posited that the specific air and soil elements to which peoples were acclimated affected both their organ development and blood quality.⁵⁰ Additionally, these intrinsic biological differences had a profound impact on man’s “morphological and intellectual diversity.”⁵¹ Although Dubos’s somewhat conjectural theories on man’s interaction with his environment did not greatly differ from original Aristotelian climate theory, it emphasized fundamental similarities throughout humankind. This recalibration of mind indicated that beyond climactic stimuli, at its foundation all men were same and equal at that.

⁴⁹ Andrew Curran, “Rethinking Race History,” 152.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Just a decade later, Voltaire addressed a similar question of the multitude of varieties among man. Voltaire also subscribed to a polygenetic theory of man. In this theory, he refuted the claim that mankind had originated from the biblical Adam and Eve story in Genesis. Instead, he supported the notion that races had independently come about from different origins. Similar to Bernier, however, Voltaire believed there to be at least seven different races: white, Negro, Albino, Hottentots, Laplander, Chinese and American.⁵² Voltaire believed that the differences among human varieties were biological, which manifested themselves in phenotypic markers such as complexion color. In the case of the black African, Voltaire claimed that the Negro uniquely possessed an extra mucous membrane, the *reticulum mucosum*, which was black and diffused blackness throughout their bodies.⁵³ The darker pigmentation was a permanent feature of the Negro race, and therefore, he did not believe in racial reversibility or change – man’s race was inherent and lasting. Although disease may have destroyed the texture of the *reticulum mucosum*, even altering the color because of the diffusion of grease, whatever superficial alteration arose was purely motivated by the sickness. The permanence of race in this context alluded to the formation of rigid, phenotypically based categories of human varieties. More than a category, race was a lasting classification to which a human owed all of its characteristics; rather than malleable categories that would have permitted more inclusion and emphasized similarities over differences, like that of Bernier.

⁵² Francois-Marie Arrouet de Voltaire, “Of the Different Races of Men” from *Philosophy of History* (1734), *The Idea of Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000), 5.

⁵³ Ibid.

In the creation of the classifications of man, Voltaire emphasized differences between races. He was unconcerned with the individual and focused on the greater trends of races. The albinos, for example, maintained a fairly limited population and

No more [resembled] a Guinea negro, than ... an Englishman or Spaniard. Their whiteness is not like ours, it does not appear like flesh, it has no mixture of white and brown; it is the color of linen, or rather of bleached wax; their hair and eye-brows are like the finest and softest silk; their eyes have no sort of similitude with those of other men, but they come very near partridge's eyes.⁵⁴

Here, Voltaire designated races not only by region of origin, but by subtle complexion differences like that of the Englishman compared to the Spaniard. Although both races were European, they constituted different human varieties because of their skin's color gradation. For each race, there was a checklist of certain physiological traits to fulfill to be categorized as such. For example, the albino race was reduced to its coloring, quality of skin, and physiological descriptors of their facial features. All of the races were human because of their overall stature and thinking and speaking abilities. In Voltaire's understanding of race among men, human variety was an intrinsic and lasting quality of the elemental level. The phenotype of a race was indicative of a deeper biological difference, which thereby qualified race as a legitimate system of classification. As human varieties independently developed, their differences became more profound. Although these racial classifications separated man by purely physiological differences, they allowed for the case to be made of internal more fundamental differences to underlie the physical as the outward phenotype signaled biological shortcomings, as Blumenbach and Kant later would argue regarding intelligence. Throughout the eighteenth century, the emphasis shifted to differences, rather than similarities among men, so that different races

⁵⁴ Ibid., 6.

were endowed with a higher quality of humanity than others, therefore, leading to a codified racial hierarchy.

Carl von Linné, otherwise known as Linnaeus, was both a zoologist and physician and developed modern taxonomy, specifically binomial nomenclature – a way to name animals based on their genus and species. In his *Systema Naturae*, he classified more than 10,000 plant and animal species. Although this work was a foray into the categorization of all living things, Linnaeus also addressed the question of human varieties to classify man. He created two categories of the Homo genus, the first of which, *sapiens*, encompassed the “Wild Man, American, European, Asiatic, and African⁵⁵.” The second Homo species was *monstrous*, in which the “Mountaineer, Patagonia, Hottentot, American, Chinese, and Canadian” found themselves.⁵⁶ The *sapiens* were diurnal and differed amongst themselves by “education and situation,” whereas the *monstrous* varied by “climate or art.”⁵⁷ All the groups listed under the genus were human, yet the *sapiens* were intellectual beings, more akin to Aristotle’s Rational Animal and the *monstrous* were duds in comparison.

The European and African varieties were both Homo *sapiens* – though the European, “fair, sanguine, and brawny,” possessed the following characteristics as described by Linnaeus, “*Hair* yellow, brown, flowing; *eyes* blue; *gentle*, acute, inventive. *Covered* with close vestments. *Governed* by laws.” Whereas the African fit the following, “*Hair* black; frizzled; *skin* silky; *nose* flat; *lips* tumid; *crafty*, indolent, negligent. *Anoints*

⁵⁵ Charles Linné, *A General System of Nature, Through the Three Grand Kingdoms of Animals, Vegetables and Minerals; Systematically Divided into Their Several Classes, Orders, Genera, Species, and Varieties with their Habitations, Manners, Economy, Structure, and Peculiarities* (London, 1802), 3.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

himself with grease. *Governed* by caprice.” Though differing in physicality, behavior, and governing style, the European and African belonged to the same human species. Therefore, these factors had no bearing on humanness. These descriptions, though short, were comparatively extensive compared to the description of the Homo *monstrous*. Here, the “mountaineer” was “small, active, timid;” the “Hottentot,” “less fertile;” and the Canadian “head flattened.” Although Linnaeus’s characterization of the *monstrous* was far less extensive than that of the *sapiens*, the adjectives related to the same qualities: appearance and behavior. As a result, Linnaeus did not elucidate his classificatory requirements for what constituted a *sapiens* as opposed to a *monstrous* beyond the vague notion that the latter “vary by climate or art.” Yet Linnaeus’s distinction of the monstrous varieties focus on either unpleasant behavioral descriptors such as the “timid” Mountaineer or the “indolent” Patagonian or a singular salient physical feature such as the “beardless” American or the “head coned” Chinese or “head flattened” Canadian. Perhaps Linnaeus offered such an essentialist description of the *monstrous* as compared to the *sapiens* because he had a visceral disgust of these varieties or perhaps he innocently did not know enough about them to elaborate on their cause. Nevertheless, Linnaeus’s most important contribution was the creation of “*monstrous*” as a viable and scientific human category here. As he did not specify the necessary characteristics to belong to this group, the *monstrous* became a malleable category for men whose variations did not fit into the more elaborately defined *sapiens* group. Although Peter Burke claimed that labeling some men as monsters “offered a means for people to define their identities and to confront the cultural difference” and that “the views they encouraged were stereotypes and generally hostile,” the *monstrous* did not engage or

confront cultural, physical, or regional differences, rather it dismantled other beings' humanity so that they were intentionally subjugated and essentially removed from the greater discourse on humanity.⁵⁸

As Linnaeus systematically and soberly separated humans, Maupertuis remarked on the novelty of human difference. He believed in monogenetic ovist preformationism. His theory, proposed in his *Venus Physique* in 1745, posited that all men had been formed in a series of eggs – one within another – so that the first mother was laden with a multitude of differently colored eggs.⁵⁹ God controlled the hatching of eggs so that a multitude would “hatch only in their proper order of development.”⁶⁰ Therefore, the eggs that had hatched first were of the most primitive sort, meaning the first races to appear on earth were less advanced than those that followed. Although Maupertuis did not indicate an order of races, he asserted European Exceptionalism where “it is on the banks of the Seine that this [white European] happy variety is found.”⁶¹ In this respect, the European was the archetype of beauty and greatness, which therefore affirmed their variety as the most developed and refined status, atop the hierarchy of egg hatching.

Although Maupertuis did not subscribe to climate theory, he believed there to be a connection between geography and variety. In his opinion, the most superior races occupied the most pleasant climates of the world, meaning Western Europe, whereas the dignified European group had forced these divergent forms, namely the “giants, dwarfs,

⁵⁸ Burke, 37.

⁵⁹ Pierre Louis Maupertuis, *Venus physique: contenant deux dissertations, l'une sur l'origine des hommes et des animaux, et l'autre sur l'origine des noirs*, (La Haye : J.M. Husson, 1746), 69.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, 67.

or blacks” to the most unpleasant regions of the world.⁶² Here, he began to reveal his theory of European Exceptionalism and rightness as arbiters of the world.

In terms of Maupertuis’s philosophy regarding human varieties, he believed that the differences among humans amounted to thousands more beyond white or black.⁶³ He did not classify men who exhibited physiological differences into broad groups; rather, he rested with the notion that there were far too many human varieties to codify stable groups. He also argued that Nature had equally created those with and without ostensible differences, even those with obvious deformities.⁶⁴ This therefore naturalized and potentially normalized human deformities, though not to say equalize them. Some human varieties survived and some did not – although humans had unnaturally manipulated animals to create new breeds attractive to the market, which were by definition unnatural, and human intervention maintained and reproduced their presence on earth.⁶⁵ Yet, only nature controlled man and its continuity. Maupertuis noted that although the unattractive “cross-eyed, the lame, the grouty, and the tubercular” races and individuals appeared now and again, nature’s “disgust” prevented their “strain” from continuing, natural forces would ensure the death and elimination of unfavorable varieties.⁶⁶ As much as humans had the tendency to degenerate from their original form, nature eventually yielded the return of the most perfect, original form of the species. Maupertuis’s theory vested all causality and responsibility of human difference in nature and served as an early version

⁶² Ibid., 84.

⁶³ Ibid., 71.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 72.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

of survival of the fittest rationale, similar to Rousseau's pre-Darwinian view of human intellect.

For Maupertuis, variation from a species did not indicate a new type, but an individual mishap specific to the preformed sperm; therefore, those who had obviously diverged, specifically those with visible physical deformities, were accidents and not indicative of new human species. Consequently, nature, though the master arbiter of living things, was fallible and made mistakes. These accidents of “fortuitous combinations of particles in the seed or the effect of too great or too weak an attraction between these particles” resulted in the creation of humans with ostensible and striking differences, which Maupertuis labeled as “monsters.”⁶⁷ Maupertuis was unwilling to extensively categorize human varieties beyond regions, yet he devoted a significant amount of time to writing on the albinos and those with physical deformities. Obviously more comfortable writing about people with visible and tangible differences (the albino's hypopigmentation, for example), Maupertuis limited the classification of human monstrosity to physical attributes. This was not an intellectual debate but rather the compilation of a physiological rubric, and depending on how far a person strayed from this checklist defined them as either a human with a difference or a monster with humanlike qualities.

Although the previously discussed naturalists somewhat haphazardly threw around terms of climate and degeneration theory, Georges Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon formally theorized the two in his *Natural History* published in 1749, which specified the proto-history of mankind. In his masterpiece, he examined different

⁶⁷ Ibid., 84.

populations in a multitude of ways, detailing their looks and behaviors, religion, diet and mores. He was a contemporary of fundamental thinkers such as Voltaire and Maupertuis, and although formally trained as a mathematician, he became the royal *intendant* of the *Jardin des Plantes* for Louis XIV, of which he took inventory. Through his intense study of plants, Buffon refined his scientific techniques and came to examine the relationship between individuals and varieties of humans, which served as a foundation for proto-racial thought in its focus on region, behavior, and race.

In *Natural History*, Buffon confronted the question of human differences and asserted that man principally varied in four ways: color, form, size, and disposition.⁶⁸ Buffon formally defined a climate theory, which asserted that human variation resulted from differences in climate, diet, and mannerisms, where climate played the greatest role.⁶⁹ This meant that there essentially existed two major categories of man: those in cool climates and those in warm climates. Although this ostensibly alluded to differences in man's complexion (paler in cool climates and darker in warm climates), his theory dug beyond pigmentation and claimed that climate had a profound effect on man's character and nature. He believed that inhabitants of cool climates were civilized, supported an ordered society run by a regulated government, abhorred and resisted oppression, and were generally handsome, white and vigorous.⁷⁰ Those of warm climates, however, were savage and careless, selfish, behaved more like animals than men, and were ugly and wrinklier than the cooler climate inhabitants.⁷¹ Climate, therefore, had manifested phenotypic affects and created inner differences among peoples living in different

⁶⁸ Buffon, 191.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 269.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 265.

⁷¹ Ibid.

environments. Climate theory informed his Degeneration theory, which proposed that those living in warmer climates, whose bodies and mentalities differed from that of the cool climate living European, had degenerated to their current state as a result of the extremely warm climate.

Blackness or whiteness was the not the cause of the problem, but an indicator of intrinsic differences between men, which made them into different races. He did not create a binary of white Europeans and black Africans, or even other delineations including Laplanders and Hottentots, as Bernier, Voltaire and Linnaeus had. Rather, he noted subtle differences among peoples inhabiting all regions of the world. Although Bernier and Voltaire tended to broadly categorize all black Africans into a large, sweeping human category, Buffon noted the great differences between black varieites such as the Ethiopians, Nubians, Jaloffs and Madagascans, including their coloring, clothing, type of government, mode of salutation, smell, and level of civilization.⁷² Buffon resisted creating rigid classifications, but zoologically categorized human varieties based on their physical features, emotional characteristics, and habits, while inserting his personal perceptions of different peoples intermittently with his scientific dialogue. He assimilated the meaning of variety and race so that the two terms were defined as groups of people who exhibited similarities in body type, skin pigmentation, habits, and customs.⁷³ He believed the genesis of human difference rooted in the effects of climate and the continuation of these variations occurred as degeneration from a more perfect European prototype.

⁷² Ibid., 272-303.

⁷³ Ibid., 63.

By the 1750s, preformationism had been ridiculed and in 1750, Sir John Hill addressed the Royal Society in London on the subject. He asserted that preformation held three main shortcomings: it could not explain the production of monsters, it did not account for animal-limb regeneration, and it did not explain the embryonic similarities between mammals, birds, and reptiles.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, society had subscribed to preformationism years prior and the theory remained as a viable way to explain human development throughout the eighteenth century.

The last of the notable mid-eighteenth naturalists to address human categories, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach published *On the Variety of Mankind* in 1755. Unlike the previously discussed natural philosophers, Blumenbach first emphasized human universality when he presented his most important claim regarding humanity: differences among men were physical and minute—no human variety was so unlike others that it could be of another species.⁷⁵ Although Maupertuis emphasized some human differences, Blumenbach, like Buffon and Montesquieu attempted to illuminate broader human similarities, noting that all humans were clearly related and “only [differed] from each other in degree.”⁷⁶ He did, however, subscribe to climate theory and degeneration theory, although not in a way that was ostensibly to rank human variety based on their regionally induced qualities.

Before going into his classificatory system, Blumenbach acknowledged the shortcomings of his methodology: namely, the fact that he had formed categories based

⁷⁴ Needham, 186-188.

⁷⁵ Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, “On the Natural Variety of Mankind,” (1755), *The Idea of Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000), 27.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

on broad generalizations, which were indicative of groups at large and did a disservice to the individual. Still, Blumenbach saw patterns of variety that had developed regionally enough to divide mankind into five “arbitrary kinds of divisions:” “Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, Malay and American.”⁷⁷ He presented the Caucasian variety as the first race, so that the Mongolian and Ethiopian species had vastly degenerated from the original type, creating an informal and unspecified hierarchy.⁷⁸ As his discussion continued, Blumenbach listed each of his human races and described them in terms of their physiognomy. He detailed the Caucasian as, “white, cheeks rosy, forehead smooth, nose narrow;” the Mongolian as “yellow, hair black, stiff, straight...opening of the eyelids narrow;” the Ethiopian as “black, hair black and curly, forehead knotty, uneven, eyes very prominent;” the Malay as “tawny-colored, hair black, soft, curly, thick and plentiful” and the American as “copper-colored, hair black, stiff, straight, forehead short.”⁷⁹ Although at first this appeared to be a fair delineation of human types as categorized by their physical properties, he added an extra note only to his description of Caucasians. In addition to his observation, their physicality exhibited “that kind of appearance which, according to *our* opinion of symmetry we consider most handsome and becoming.”⁸⁰ Although the other human varieties deserved a physical description along with their usual region of origin, Blumenbach asserted Caucasian superiority because they represented the archetype of beauty and were the original and most beautiful race. As much as he believed all humans to be of the same fabric, his subjective

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 28.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 28-29.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 28. Note: my italics here.

observation betrayed his actual assumptions of Caucasian greatness and supremacy, due to their naturally and regionally endowed properties.

Although Blumenbach believed Caucasians to be atop the racial hierarchy, to him this did not mean that other races were so below the Caucasian that they were inhuman. He addressed the then contemporary notion that the Ethiopian races were more akin to apes than to other human races and dismissed it as invalid and ridiculous because complexion color reduced their humanness.⁸¹ Degeneration, though indicative of the human type moving further from the original, more perfect Caucasian variety, was a natural phenomenon, present among all species and purely physiological.⁸² Although other naturalists and philosophers hinted at phenotypic differences alluding to cerebral deficiencies or the sense that human degenerate forms marked inferior biology and intellectual capabilities, Blumenbach saw difference as limited to the physical. This harkened back to Aristotle's Rational Animal theory because it emphasized that man's humanity rested not in his form but in his intellect and ability to reason. He concluded his theory with an allusion to his original point of axiomatic human sameness; that ultimately, all humans had enough similarities among them to universally belong to one unique human species.⁸³ Climatic factors and consequential degeneration had fashioned man into five distinct varieties, which though obviously physically different belonged to a singular species of mankind.

Confusion abounded. Arthur Lovejoy poignantly claimed in *The Great Chain of Being* that although philosophers and naturalists yearned for nature to act along "clear

⁸¹ Ibid., 35.

⁸² Ibid., 37.

⁸³ Ibid.

lines of demarcation; she loves two twilight zones.”⁸⁴ As much as eighteenth century thinkers alluded to natural laws, which were supposedly uniform and perfect, nature was inconsistent and therefore caused tension in understanding natural phenomenon. As naturalists came upon different and complex ways of understanding human varieties, Immanuel Kant published “Of the Different Human Races” in 1777, which attempted to give a systematic and updated way to define race. This essay was first published in 1775, but translated into English and elaborated on in 1777. Similar to Aristotle and Montesquieu, Kant emphasized his belief in natural laws, which governed the universe, specifically an organic grouping of all things into genus and species binary based on the ability to procreate, which was an ability unique to a species of animals.⁸⁵ Based on reproductive capabilities, he classified all humans within the same natural genus because of their ability to produce fertile children, despite ostensible physical differences in their body.⁸⁶ Within the genus of man, Kant made an important point and differentiated between “natural genus” and “artificial division.” A natural genus came from determining biological reproductive relations, whereas artificial divisions were based on observed similarities and classes.⁸⁷ Race was an artificial division, which came about “as a consequence of migration or through interbreeding with other deviations of the same line of descent,” Kant defined man’s varieties based on physiognomy and observable factors.⁸⁸ As a result, Kant declared there to be four distinct races: the white, Negro,

⁸⁴ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 56.

⁸⁵ Immanuel Kant, “Of the Different Human Races,” (1777), *The Idea of Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000), 8.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

Hunrace (Mongol or Kalmuck), and Hindu.⁸⁹ However, Kant identified the white and Negro race as “base races,” and called the reasoning behind that assertion to be “self-evident” through the human experience.⁹⁰ These species developed as a result of the quality of seed, and depending on such, there were deviations and races, which possessed natural predispositions, or different proportions.⁹¹ Human variation was, therefore, a natural phenomenon and spontaneous at that. In his polygenetic view, Kant believed that “human beings were created in such a way that they might live in every climate and endure each and every condition of the land.”⁹² Unlike Buffon and Montesquieu, specific climates did not shape the specific development of human varieties, rather, human beings were naturally predisposed with flexibility, which endowed them with an ability to inhabit any region – be it temperate Europe or the extreme heat of Africa. Although climate did not dictate the development of races, air quality and environment played a role in the reproductivity of a race.⁹³ So that in colder nations, the body had to adjust its inner-workings to maintain heat, and so not to “squander its juices,” which meant that the body’s appearance changed; for example, in colder climates men grew more hair to protect the skin against harsh weather, altered as well.⁹⁴

Human divisions were natural according to Kant, and at the very most basic level, all types of man shared more in common than in difference. Humans began at the same level, but through variation in seed and interactions with varying environments they grew dissimilar in features. These features made them different, but did not inhibit their ability

⁸⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 12.

⁹¹ Ibid., 13.

⁹² Ibid., 14.

⁹³ Ibid., 15.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

to produce fertile offspring within the genus. Although he defined four specific races, he conceded the existence of vast numbers of human varieties, which for reasons of population size did not attain the status of race. Kantian logic created a category particular to any human.

Naturalist discourse, though a foray into scientific objectivity, resulted in a variety of tensions surrounding the development and classification of human varieties. Although naturalists like Blumenbach and Buffon shared similarities in the way that they portrayed human difference, each naturalist developed his own conclusions and systems for categorizing mankind. Even through Kant's work, the amount and qualifications of human races were debatable and confusing. Naturalists debated the subjects of monogenesis and polygenesis, accidentalism and intentionality of human variety, and climate theory. Although Descartes had defined man by his intellectual capabilities and reasoning skills, the naturalists focused on physical characteristics to define and group man. There were tensions within naturalist discourse and between naturalist and philosophical discourse. The eighteenth century continued without the acceptance or agreement on a singular and systematic way of categorizing man in a fair or comprehensible way. Therefore, the question persisted: where do those human varieties that do not easily fit into these (most often) rigidly designed categories fit? We will explore this conundrum in Chapters Four through Seven in relation to the albino and hermaphrodite.

Chapter Three: The Meat of Empiricism: Harnessing Science as Proof

By the eighteenth century, naturalists' dialogue had transformed forms of human evaluation and understanding to take into consideration the interactions between Europeans and Africans. These ways of human categorization were based on the identification of ostensible similarities and differences between groups of people. As these Euro-African encounters continued, European traders and explorers codified a theoretical vocabulary of race based on superficial observations drawn from travelogues detailing colonial expeditions and economic interactions, and so, the trader-slave relationship became the norm in notions of race, thereby solidifying a subjugated conception of the African. Prior to this, the inclination to examine the interior of the body and to look to biology had been refused; instead, ideas of human degeneration and variety based on skin color acted as the measure of race, which conformed to existing social standards and societal conditions, clouding true questioning and growth of racial thought beyond the phenotype. But as the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment took hold in Europe, there developed a movement toward understanding the body inside-out, a break from the traditional outside-in approach of purely superficial observations and fantastical conjecture, marked by dissections, experiments, and new theories. Yet, although these scientific studies appeared to be objective attempts to better comprehend the human condition, as it relates to addressing the genesis of blackness, science was actually articulated and harnessed to bolster existing naturalist conceptions. By the time the Enlightenment came to Western Europe, the faith in empiricism and scientific fact had come to dominate the eighteenth century mind.⁹⁵ The understanding of the black

⁹⁵ Lovejoy, 183.

condition illuminates the manipulation of scientific practices during the eighteenth century. This new falsified and philosophically-based “science,” agreed with prevailing climate theory, degeneration, and disease theory, further contributing to the dehumanization and pathologization of blackness.

Racial thought transitioned to quasi-scientific explanations of human typology by Comte de Buffon published in 1749. Buffon’s works, specifically *Natural History*, specified the proto-history of mankind. Concurrently, the Euro-African slave trade was booming as Europeans scoured and dominated Africa for new markets and commodities – namely black African slaves.⁹⁶ Although he refuted a divine hierarchy among nature, he later defined a white prototype of man from which certain peoples degenerated to various degrees. This developed into a spectrum of humanity which classificatory subjugation.⁹⁷ Overall, Buffon’s thinking exemplified superficial racial thought, which was conducted outside-in and fought inner-body inspection to understand human variety. However superficial, Buffon argued for pseudo-scientifically ordained black subjugation as a result of his observed climate and degeneration theories.

But protoracial thought went beyond mere observation of human differences and went so far as to infer and conclude the causes for that variation. The gaps in knowledge between what one saw and knew prompted the movements to examine anatomical differences and biological compositions to fill in details of prevailing accounts. Preceding the development of Buffonian-racial thought, scientists had already begun to question the origins of blackness. In 1618, Jean Riolan, seeking the roots of the black phenotype,

⁹⁶ Buffon, 63.

⁹⁷ Jacques Roger, “Diderot et Buffon en 1749,” *Diderot Studies*, 4, (1963), 234.
Philip Sloan, “The Gaze of Natural History,” *Inventing Human Sciences*, ed. Christopher Fox et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 136.

chemically induced a blister on a black specimen. In his experiment, he observed the formation of two skin layers: a black outer layer and a white inner layer, the *cutis*, which to him not only indicated the existence of the white prototype from which blacks had degenerated, but also that proximity and exposure to the sun had permanently burned the African skin, endowing them with a black complexion.⁹⁸ In 1665, however, Marcello Malpighi found a “third and separate layer of gelatinous ‘African skin’ located in between the ‘outer’ scarf skin and the inner ‘true’ skin” that Europeans did not possess.⁹⁹ This discovery made the black African biologically different from his European counterpart. This need to understand blackness led scientists to treat the black African as a specimen of study and consequently led to their dehumanization as subordinate. The identification of anatomical differences between blacks and whites defined racial categorizations at a deeper level than had previously been, although the true discussion of race had yet to come to fruition.

Although this process of a human becoming a scientific specimen may be glazed over as a step in the scientific process, the manipulation and reduction of man into data was a deliberate process. Paolo Ferruta coined the term “scientific gaze” in a lecture about hermaphroditism in nineteenth century photography, but the idea is applicable in the scientific renderings of humans, who diverged from the norm and whom scientists dissected as curious samples to satiate scientific thirst. Ferruta claimed that not only scientists but also those viewing a subject in this format utilized the “scientific gaze,”

⁹⁸ Andrew S. Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science and Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 122.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

which formed a clear and distant division between the observer and the observee.¹⁰⁰ The transformation of the black African into a studied subject akin to a sample was a purposed action, rather than an accidental side effect from objective studies conducted to comprehend man. Ferruta also noted that the absence of clear clues to define or categorize man made the gaze uncomfortable, and therefore, the distinction between the observer and observee is made even more distinct and bolstered.¹⁰¹ Consequently, in the case of the black African, where the physiological similarities to the white European abounded, the scientific gaze deepened and grew to account for the discomfort felt. The scientific gaze, therefore, with respect to the black African and by extension to other humans transformed into specimens during this era, unmistakably created an inflexible dichotomy between the scientist (or physicians in different areas of biological study) and the specimen.

However accurate the understanding of the scientific gaze may now be, it is indeed a retroactive label to describe interactions between authority and subject in the eighteenth century European scientific world. The dichotomy created by the scientific gaze persisted though under the radar, and despite the discoveries made in the seventeenth century, the questioning of the source skin color varieties had yet to be satiated, and in 1741, there was an essay contest held in Bordeaux that questioned *la cause physique de la couleur des nègres*¹⁰². Although some of the entries partially

¹⁰⁰ Ferruta, 7.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰² It is noteworthy that the essay contest posed the question of complexion coloration for the *négre*. *Négre* was the pejorative term to describe blacks, whereas *Noire* was more of an innocent adjective used to describe skin color, without other implications. Therefore, this pseudo-scientific foray into understanding the cause of blackness was not at all objective. Rather, it was tinged with proto-racist disgust, thereby inhibiting objective

affirmed the origins of blackness as a malediction resulting from the myth of Ham, other participants attributed the black phenotype to climate theory and to inner, biological differences.¹⁰³ Author 8 asserted that the strength of the sun darkened blood from the European norm, from red to black, which then infiltrated the body's interior membranes and subsequently blackened the skin.¹⁰⁴ Blackness, according to this author, came from the African's proximity to the sun, which was similar to standing close to a fire for a prolonged period: black skin was burned skin; if, however, the African was removed from the warm climate, the blood would ostensibly turn red, but at its base it was black. The actual qualities and elements remained constant, though climate altered the actual coloring. This differed from the preexisting Buffoninan conception that concluded that if a subject was moved to another climate, the subject's phenotype would change as well.¹⁰⁵ Author 5 also attributed skin color variation to geographical location, but furthered his argument in his description of *le corps reticulaire*, a sub-layer of black skin, which in Europeans was red, but in the African was "*rouge noirâtre*."¹⁰⁶ According to this author, blackness was transmitted by degenerated seminal fluid, thereby connoting the black condition as a result of human degeneration at the fundamental, genotypic level, drawing

scientific practices. The essay contest's title betrayed the underlying hateful sentiments, which led to later manipulation of "science" to bolster existing racial divides.

¹⁰³ The myth (or curse) of Ham is a biblical story from Genesis. In this story, Noah became drunk and fell asleep. His son, Ham, saw Noah naked in his tent, and told his brothers. When Noah woke, he knew of Ham's action and punished his son to eternal servitude. As a result, it was said that the curse had blackened the black African as a curse, which also marked Africans as suited for slavery.

¹⁰⁴ These Bordeaux Race Essays were published in 1741 in the *Journal des Sçavans*, which Andrew Curran clarifies and elaborates in *The Anatomy of Blackness* (2011), Bordeaux Race Essays, source 8, *Sur la Cause de la couleur des nègres de la qualité de leur cheveux et de la dégénération de l'une et de l'autre*, 53-54.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁰⁶ Bordeaux Race Essays, *Disseration sur la cause Physique de la couleur des nègres de la qualité de leur cheveux et de la dégénération de l'une et de l'autre*, numero 5, 2-5.

upon Bernier and Maupertuis's philosophical tradition.¹⁰⁷ The theorization of human phenotypic differences occurring from this elemental origin made the black African biologically different from Europeans, consequently alluding to their lesser quality as humans – hierarchically moving them from human status to in limbo between man and animal. This marked the understanding of blackness as something irreversible and intrinsic to the African, which solidified climate theory and the conception of blacks as degenerates. Therefore, at the most basic level, the African differed from the European, which confirmed the separation of Africans and Europeans into distinct, different races and categories. Rather than elucidating human similarities, the new utility of science in the realm of racial thought, however purportedly scientific, led to the hardening of climate theory and the conception of blackness as a disease.

By 1751, the *Encyclopédie* published by Diderot and d'Alembert presented a conglomeration of existing scientific knowledge. In the entry for “*négre*” the two authors detailed the prevailing scientific theories still battling for acceptance. They first detailed egg and sperm theories, which respectively stated that in the first egg and sperm there existed a collection of all the human species possible, which would be birthed in “order of development.”¹⁰⁸ They had argued that there existed a cycle of race generation so that new races materialized as superior and advanced while old races died off because of their comparative inferiority. Diderot also included Malpighi's research as a theory along with Barrere, who, unlike the former, concluded the cause of blackness to be from the skin

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 12.

¹⁰⁸ Johann Heinrich Samuel Formey, "Negro," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Pamela Cheek. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2003). <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.026> (Accessed April 18, 2011). Originally published as "Negre," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 1:76–79 (Paris, 1751).

tissue itself, and not an underlying layer, resulting from degenerate seminal fluid.¹⁰⁹

Barrere's findings precipitated that of the future anatomists in his discussion of the concentration of *negro* bile in the blood of the African as more abundant than other elements; but his research also declared blackness to be a sullyng agent, therefore, he concluded that Africans were intrinsically different and inferior to the white European.¹¹⁰

Although this indicated that there was a wide array of information explaining the origins of blackness, the question had yet to be truly answered and in the process of determining this cause, Diderot scientifically set the black African below the white European.

Although the research conducted by Riolan and Malpighi had yet to be demonstrated enough to rule out egg and sperm theory, the conception of biological difference prevailed in a way that agreed with naturalist theory regarding human races, which solidified the black African's status as inferior.

This new scientific rhetoric of race continued with Johann Friederich Meckel, who published *Nouvelles observations sur l'épiderme et le cerveau des nègres* in 1755, in which he emphasized human differences rather than similarities. The language of Meckel's study initiated black dehumanization with the word *poils*, a word usually used to discuss animal fur, but in this instance employed to describe the unique bond between body hair and skin found on the African.¹¹¹ Furthermore, his findings confirmed the existence of a black mucous, the Malpighienne layer or *rhet mucosum* that created a

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Johann Friederich Meckel, "Recherches anatomiques, sur la nature de l'épiderme, et du réseau, qu'on appelle Malpighien," *Mémoires de l'Académie royale des sciences et des belles lettres de Berlin*, (Berlin: Ambroise Haude, 1755), 61.

stronger connection between the hair and the skin.¹¹² The *rhet mucosum* disseminated blackness throughout the African so that its cortical substance and pineal glands were darker and even blacker than to the European, whose coloring was lighter and whiter. This indicated mutation and degeneration from the white prototype.¹¹³ Overall, Meckel's observations concluded that the black African possessed the analogous machinery as the European, yet these structures were fundamentally flawed in the former. The difference in brain color also suggested differences eligible to ensure blacks belonging to a different human species than Europeans. Through declaring the two human phenotypes as anatomically different, Meckel created an innovative distinction and therefore dehumanized the black African.

In 1765, Claude-Nicholas le Cat also pursued the question of the source of blackness in humans in his *Traité de la couleur de la peau humaine* in which he bolstered Meckel's accounts. Le Cat denied the source of blackness to be found in African blood. Rather he, through his dissections, confirmed that Africans had darker brains.¹¹⁴ His conclusions, however, exceeded Meckel's, as he explained that there existed a dark nervous fluid, *oethiops*, which originated in and blackened the African brain, leading to its diffusion throughout the body.¹¹⁵ The way that this fluid pervaded the human body offered evidence that there was something wrong with the African in its physiological literal denigration. Le Cat's work influenced other naturalists, who confirmed the notion

¹¹² Ibid., 62-64.

¹¹³ Ibid., 69.

¹¹⁴ Claude-Nicholas Le Cat, *Traité de la couleur de la peau humaine en general, de celle des nègres et de la metamorphose d'une de ces couleurs en l'autre, soit de naissance, soit accidentellement: Ouvrage divisé en trois parties*, (1765), 54.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 55.

expressed in the Bordeaux race essays that blackness was a consequence of extra sullyng agents whether in the seminal or nervous fluid.

Cornelius DePauw followed Le Cat in his 1768 *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains* where he asserted the origin of blackness to biologically denatured qualities, which manifested themselves in skin color.¹¹⁶ Here, the black phenotype came secondary to the biological quality of the specimen and as a marker of inner difference, whereas in Buffonian logic, the African had degenerated to a lower rank of humanity as exhibited in their skin color and their poorer quality of health and functionality as a result. This understanding of blackness as an indicator of the idea that there was an intrinsic flaw in the African came to fruition as somewhat of a clinicalization of the black condition.

Moreover, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach confirmed notions of biological difference as reasoning for human variety in *On the Variety of Mankind*, in which he ascribed differences to a “secretion and precipitation of [a] carbonaceous pigment.”¹¹⁷ This elemental difference confirmed the black African had degenerated to an irreversible degree from the European. He described the reason for degenerative blackness on the same fundamental level as Meckel, Le Cat, and DePauw, but further compared human degeneration (specifically that of the black African) to animal degeneration.¹¹⁸ Therefore, Blumenbach established a link between man and animal, likening the man whose physicality severely diverged from the original, more perfect prototype to a lesser degree of human more akin to animal. This therefore related back to the previous discussion of

¹¹⁶ Cornelius de Pauw and Antoine Joseph Pernety, *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Américains, ou Mémoires Intéressants pour Servir à l’Histoire de l’Espèce Humain, Vol. 2*, (London, 1771), 2-4.

¹¹⁷ Robert Bernasconi, *The Idea of Race* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000), 31.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

human nature, which had generally concluded that man's humanity originated from his ability to reason and intellect, yet here, man's nature depended on his physiognomy. The further the black African diverged from the white European, the more his status as human depreciated, which likened him increasingly as an animal. Although he categorized Africans and Europeans as belonging to the same species, he maintained their separation into different varieties, and while he did not completely dehumanize them, he kept them at a lower level of humanity.

Scientific evidence officially confirmed racial divides, which demonstrated how science was harnessed to explain existing social organization and support naturalist suppositions concocted by armchair philosophers. Through establishing blackness as something unlike the white European, these scientific findings abnormalized the black African. In this case, the philosophers and naturalists of the eighteenth century had established the white European not only as the ideal, but as the norm, and even the prototype for humanity. From this point, all other types of humans were measured and compared, so that the black African's divergence from this type marked them not only as different, but as strange and abnormal.

These speculative explanations broke with Buffonian climate theory, though they lacked true data and instead of expressing human similarities, exacerbated differences between the African and the European with a scientific vocabulary. This overarching pseudo-scientific logic became accepted as "epistemological status of fact," and sustained the black's societal reputation, confirming faulty scientific conduct similar to the case of Mary Toft.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, with the outbreak of blackness defined as a biological

¹¹⁹ Curran, *Anatomy of Blackness*, 174.

degeneration, the African's besmirched reputation was so that their intellectual capabilities, too, came into question, and fell under the same conception of inferiority. All in all, these discoveries made in the second half of the eighteenth century were not in fact scientific breakthroughs of any sort, but rather creation of experimental (though indeed falsified) proof to support preconceived, proto-racist naturalist notions.

Beyond the speciation of Africans to understand the origins of blackness developed the medicalization of this specific complexion to comprehend phenotypic difference. In 1799, Benjamin Rush published his "Observations Intended to Favour a Supposition that the Black Color (As It Is Called) of the Negroes is Derived from Leprosy" in which he diagnosed blackness as a consequence of not only climate, diet, and customs, but of leprosy.¹²⁰ He supported this claim in asserting that the African was "morbidly" black and in a constant state of disease, exhibited by their "peculiar and disagreeable smell," "morbid insensibility in the nerves," "strong venereal desires," their enlarged lips, and their "woolly heads," which were characteristic of lepers.¹²¹ This pathologization echoed earlier claims that there were underlying characteristics that alluded to the existence of something wrong to have yielded the black phenotype. Although Rush explained that white superiority was merely an ignorant claim, the dissemination of information, which linked leprosy to blackness fit in with prevailing naturalist standards and bolstered the case against Africans as degenerates. The medicalization of blackness also agreed with theories from Meckel, Le Cat, and DePauw because it encouraged the conception of intrinsic, fundamental, and biological differences

¹²⁰ Benjamin Rush "Observations Intended to Favour a Supposition That the Black Color (As It Is Called) of the Negroes is Derived from Leprosy" *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 4 (1799): 289.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*: 291-294.

between the African and the European. This manipulation of the black African from human being to specimen led to its subsequent dehumanization. Accordingly, this view of blackness as a medical condition and even sickness from leprosy solidified rigid racial categories.

By the mid-nineteenth century, racial thought fueled by scientific discovery changed, and it no longer existed to support prevailing racial subjugation as slavery and legalized racism had been abolished in England and France in the early part of the century; rather it acted as evidence of human sameness. In 1836, Frederick Tiedemann published an article “On the Brain of the Negro, Compared with that of the European and the Orang-Outang,” in which he concluded that the brain size of the black African was no different than that of the European, and therefore, their intellectual capacity did not differ either.¹²² Although Tiedemann conceded phenotypic differences of some “ugly and degenerate Negro tribes” as similar to apes, it was not entirely common, and he asserted that the research previously conducted that indicated anatomical differences was “ill-founded.”¹²³ Furthermore, Tiedemann’s idea of degeneration was not a reference to the black African’s degeneration from the white prototype, rather it expressed his view that slavery had “retarded the civilization of African tribes” and it was the degenerative agent that diminished their intellectual capabilities and character.¹²⁴ This study indicated a more responsible application of science that spurred a greater understanding of *human* similarity, which no longer condoned the use of pseudo-scientific information as

¹²² Frederick Tiedemann, “On the Brain of the Negro, Compared with That of the European and the Orang-Outang,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 126 (1836): 511.

¹²³ *Ibid.*: 511-523.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*: 522-526.

epistemological evidence for the suppression of blacks.¹²⁵ Although this study differed in the information reported and discoveries made from those published in the second half of the eighteenth century, it did in fact fall in line with the evolved social conscience regarding race.

In this case study of the attempt to understand blackness in the Enlightenment, many eighteenth century scientists and philosophers exploited science to create categories in the human species based on differences between the European norm and the black African. Skin color served as a marker to define humans on a spectrum of quality, where Europeans were the prime example and Africans existed as lower ranks of degeneration from the white prototype. Scientific evidence was harnessed to legitimize prevailing racial subjugation and human differentiation. Furthermore, based on “scientific” theories of degeneration and the development of blackness from disease, evidence concluded that the black African was an abnormal condition as opposed to the European. Moreover, the specimenization of the black African led to scientific excuses to create racial hierarchies, where the white European stood above the inferior black African; and the black condition was clinicalized as a result. The resulting theory of blackness as a disease made the presence of the African in society detrimental and poisonous, thereby warranting its domination and control. Science was used during the eighteenth century not as unbiased third-party source to assess the origin of the black African’s skin coloration, but as evidentiary support to racial inequities proposed by naturalists ideas through black dehumanization, abnormalization, and pathologization. Therefore, it can be understood in other areas that the scientific profession at this time was not a completely reliable or

¹²⁵ Ibid.: 525.

objective source. Rather, it settled on providing convenient evidence to bolster existing social norms – as opposed to breaking rigid practices with revelatory information.

Chapter Four: The Theoretical Albino: Undecidedly Inhuman

As the Enlightenment progressed throughout the course of the eighteenth century, proto-biological studies advanced, as did their linkage into the social sciences. As much as scientists used to obsess about anatomy and human form, their scholarly attention began to turn toward the curiosities present in living things by mid-century.¹²⁶ Defining man against animal persisted as a way of species differentiation so that what was not expressly categorized as “man” became *monstrous* or animal. Over the course of the eighteenth century, philosophers and scientists alike attempted to codify stable definitions of human varieties into formal racial categories. As these rigid classifications developed however, the question arose: how different must one be to belong to a different category, or more scientifically, a different species?

At the crux of this question was the human Albino, commonly referred to as the *négre blanc*. The albino’s hypopigmentation made it visibly *different* from other humans, and presented issues for philosophers at the time: although the albino had a white complexion, the quality of whiteness and its philosophically assumed localization to the Southern Hemisphere made it a *problem* for eighteenth century philosophers. A justification for both theorizing race differences as maledictions and polygenist theory, its hierarchical standing was highly debated. Philosophers and scientists sought to tackle this problem, and through the dehumanization and animalization of the albino, they ultimately concluded albino to be subhuman and monstrous. As Andrew Curran stated in his article, “Rethinking Race History: the Role of the Albino in the French Enlightenment Life Sciences”: “Black yet white, human and yet somehow inhuman, this creature forced

¹²⁶ Jacques Roger, *The Life Sciences in Eighteenth-Century French Thought*, ed. Keith R. Benson, trans. Robert Ellrich, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 257.

naturalists and natural philosophers to reevaluate and redefine the limits and breadth of the human species.”¹²⁷ Valid as this claim is, the philosophers’ questioning moved beyond the previously codified categories of human and animal and instead elaborated into the creation of a legitimately defined new classification of “monstrous.” Although this idea of man’s deformities alluding to him being a monster may appear to be an ancient concept of superstition more akin to medieval logic, Enlightenment philosophy served to elucidate the exact category of the degenerate quality of the albino as monstrous compared to the rest of humanity.

This is not to say, however, that mythical and fantastical descriptions had never before been applied to albinos. Since the time of Ptolemy, the *Leucoaethiopes* were described as a “pale, night-dwelling people living on the African continent.”¹²⁸ Alas, eighteenth century philosophers maintained the albino as a localized problem to the southern hemisphere, almost as an alien presence at that. Yet the albino did indeed exist on the European continent. Enlightenment philosophers ignored its presence, either because its whiteness was not unusual to a white dominated area or because the European exhibited the highest degree of humanity and therefore a degenerate type *could not* exist among the perfect.

This status remained until Hernan Cortez’s voyage to Mexico in the 1520s, when he reported completely white beings among Montezuma’s curiosities.¹²⁹ Long before the biological inclinations of the eighteenth century, Cortez’s findings were generally passed over. Additionally, Andrew Battel, an English explorer, continued this inspection into the

¹²⁷ Andrew Curran, “Rethinking Race History:”153.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.:153-154.

case of these pigment-less beings nearly a century later. His interactions with people of Loango led him to note that the king of Loango possessed albino children as his own curiosity similar to Montezuma.¹³⁰ In this case, Battel's albino or *négre blanc* was called *dondo*, according to Portuguese practice in this central African locus. Still preceding philosophical tendencies of the Enlightenment, Battel's observations did not seep into explanation, yet drawing from his prose it is of note to consider the description of the albino in these contexts as a *curiosity*.

An obvious aberration from normal standards of pigmentation found in humans, the albino in these southern regions was considered different and not of the same quality as the rest of the humans living in these societies. However, in these contexts, "different" signified special, out of the ordinary, and of an otherworldly nature due to its unique complexion. Divine leaders, such as Montezuma and the King of Loango, thought it necessary to preserve and keep close to the albino, perhaps using the albino as a living talisman or prophet. The Enlightenment thinkers viewed this history as a primitive glorification of physical difference – that is, intellectually underdeveloped peoples valued the novelty of this physical aberration because they did not understand it, as they themselves were ignorant – still, this set the stage for an understanding of the albino as something different; different enough to be considered inhuman.

Later on in the seventeenth century, the Dutch Olfert Dapper tackled the issue of Battel's *dondo* through compiling a collection of travelogues in *Description de l'Afrique contenant les noms, la situation, et les confines de toutes ses parties*. Although Dapper conceded that the *négre blanc* appeared to be like the Europeans, he countered that upon

¹³⁰ Ibid., 154.

closer inspection, they were very much unlike what is known to be human. In his account, he echoed what later Enlightenment thinkers argued in his understanding of albinos as similar to humans, but overwhelmingly different, because their physical characteristics betrayed them as inhuman. Their complexion was a white akin to “the skin of a dead corpse,” their eyes seemed to be “fixed in their heads, like people that lie a dying,” which allowed them particularly keen night-vision by “moon-shine.”¹³¹

According to Dapper, the monstrosity that was the albino was a condition specific to Africa, or a “geo-ethnic” particularity, which verified the Euro-centric theory that Africa was a continent deprived of humanity and normality.¹³² Sickeningly white skin and colorless eyes made the albino appear lifeless and almost like a vision of the walking dead. Dapper painted a picture of a miserable life for the albino – phenotypically akin to an image of death and isolated from a greater society, with which they were constantly at war.¹³³ During this time, the quality of life for an animal or a subhuman was not in the frontal lobe of philosophers; therefore, although Dapper dehumanized the *négre blanc*, he imbued it with misery, undoubtedly a human quality. Building on this humanness, he also asserted that the albino community maintained a bellicose relationship with the black Africans habituating the same region.¹³⁴ This claim, however, created a tension because it held that albino children born to black parents were systematically removed from their communities and created their own refugee society. Otherwise, it declared that albino communities sprang up, which paid no attention to their exact origin. Overall, Dapper’s contribution to the knowledge of the albino was to overwhelmingly declare it a

¹³¹ Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness*, 88.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

monstrosity among Africans. He was one of the first to illuminate the case of the albino, and his assertion made the pigmentless human appear lifeless in its own isolated community. Indeed the albino possessed human characteristics and qualified the general checklist of human requirements such as physiognomy, but the exact coloring made it so visibly different to Dapper that he could not understand the *négre blanc* as human.

As the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries progressed, thinkers transitioned from travelogue plagiarism and long-distance conjecture as Dapper had done – casting observations and theories onto people whom he had never encountered – to actually importing their specimens to Europe for more in-depth and “scientific” observation. Voltaire was one to take advantage of the exhibition of a four-year-old albino boy in Paris in 1744, imported like a commodity from South America. Skeptical about the climate theory, which Aristotle and other Enlightenment naturalists echoed, Voltaire subscribed to the notion that albinos constituted their own species or race of human.¹³⁵ The albino shared no more resemblance to a “Guinea negro, than he [did to] an Englishman or Spaniard.”¹³⁶ The albino, Guinea negro, Englishman, and Spaniard represented four distinct geographical locations, cultures, and complexion colorations; therefore, Voltaire made his point regarding the albinos being a separate race based not only on their skin coloration, but also on their region and behavior.

Additionally, Voltaire declared there to be different races of Europeans in his distinction between the Englishman and the Spaniard, while other philosophers did not. Here, each degree of change in man’s color seemed to award a species divergence. Voltaire sustained the albinos as an inferior human race like the Hottentots, Chinese, and

¹³⁵ Francois-Marie Voltaire, “Of the Different Races of Men,” 5.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

Americans, and yet he welcomed them as participants in an actual *human* category along the hierarchy of being. Among all of these categorizations of man, it became evident that Voltaire's most important criteria was physical appearance, namely complexion color.

For Voltaire, he found differences in the albino in more than just the coloration of its skin. The whiteness of the albino was incomparable to that of the European, as it did not appear like human flesh.¹³⁷ "It is the color of linen, or rather of bleached wax; their hair and eye-brows are like the finest and softest silk; their eyes have no sort of similitude with those of other men, but they come very near partridge's eyes."¹³⁸ Voltaire did not resist tying the physiological attributes the albino to fabrics and the partridge, and although he conceded the human status of the albino, their humanity was not of the same character as the European. As much as he potentially animalized the albino, Voltaire refuted the claim that man's hypopigmentation was a malediction resulting from leprosy.¹³⁹ At this time, the *négre blanc* had been believed to have resulted from black Africans contracting leprosy, however, in Voltaire's world, that type of assertion was without merit and as justifiable as stating that "blacks themselves [were] whites blacked by the leprosy."¹⁴⁰

As much leeway as it appears that Voltaire afforded the albino, in a later description his albino had nothing in common with any other nation in terms of the appearance of their hair, eyes, ears, and skin; and they had nothing, besides their body stature in common with the rest of man.¹⁴¹ Though capable of thinking and speaking,

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

their humanness was nothing akin to that with which he was familiar. Voltaire thought of the albino as a “curiosity” – though a “curiosity” of a much different caliber from his Mexican predecessors – which Europeans had grown accustomed to purchasing from the Africans who were stronger than the weak nation that was the albinos.¹⁴²

When the question turned to actually defining the humanity of the albino, Voltaire claimed that “All (Albinos, Darrians, Americans, and Africans) are equally men, but only as a fir, an oak, and a pear tree are equally trees; the pear tree comes not from the fir, nor the fir from the oak.”¹⁴³ In this polygenist acknowledgement, Voltaire alleged that the albino was human by name, but intrinsically different from other nations of humans. For the Albino, it was not their “partridge eyes” or their fine hair and eyebrows, which made them lesser humans, but “their bodies, and consequently their courage” that made them more delicate and fragile than Voltaire’s archetype of man.¹⁴⁴

Voltaire offered no scientific categorization for the albino beyond a race of humanity, yet through inspecting his definition of monsters, it became rather clear that Voltaire may have intended for the albino to be a *monstrous* race – human, yes, but monstrous at that. To define an elaborate category of the monstrous, he declared, “let us reserve the name for animals whose deformities strike us with horror.”¹⁴⁵ The personalization of definition of monsters allowed Voltaire’s obvious aversion to albinos as a fully human species by their degenerate physical features to be considered monstrous.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Voltaire, *A Philosophical Dictionary* (1932), 179.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 228.

For Voltaire, the import of the albino boy to Paris in 1744 had created a “physical impossibility,” where a degenerate racial hybrid had been produced without racial mixing.¹⁴⁶ Although the creation of the mulatto could be easily understood as the combination of white and black procreative fluids, the albino posed a conundrum in its arrival from the sex act of two blacks. The *négre blanc* was a creature emblazoned with “fuzzy wool like a negro” and a “muzzle shaped like that of a Laplander,” yet a general whiteness more well known in Europe.¹⁴⁷ Using a somewhat humanizing vocabulary and referencing other previously codified human varieties, it must be noted that the human quality of both the negro and the Laplander were quite debatable at the time. Not to mention that beyond that, his lexicon objectified and animalized the albino in attempts to describe it.

The question of the albino continued with Maupertuis’s examination of the same albino boy in 1744. As news circulated of the young boy’s arrival, Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis was one of the first to take a stab at deciphering the question of the albino. In *Vénus Physique*, published anonymously in 1745, Maupertuis divided his study into two; the first volume contained his theory on embryology and the second volume on the categorization of humanity by physical and intellectual capabilities.¹⁴⁸ In his commentary on proto-racial constructs of the time, Maupertuis offered an anthropological observation regarding the status quo:

Had the first white men who saw black men, encountered them in forests, they might not have called them men. But in turn, those found in large cities, governed by wise queens who caused the arts and science to flourish at a time when all

¹⁴⁶ Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness*, 142.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

other peoples were still barbarians, might not have wished to accept the whites as brother.¹⁴⁹

Therefore according to Maupertuis, there did not exist a divinely ordained or universally assigned value differentiation among different types of people; rather, societal constructs and encounters created a racial hierarchy and subjugated human varieties based on skin color resulted. Humanity, in this context, was in fact a subjective and fluid definition dependent on time and circumstance of interactions and encounters between men. There was not a rubric of requirements to fulfill in order to be deemed inhuman or human, but rather it was a label acquired based on context. A spectrum of human values was not a natural development, but a chronological one.

To answer the question regarding human groups, however, Maupertuis argued for a more scientific rubric, so rather “the color white or black,” classifications should be based on the number of vertebrae.¹⁵⁰ As much as he advocated for a scientifically justified classificatory system, however, he conceded that “it is on the banks of the Seine that this happy variety is found. On a fine day in the gardens of the Louvre, you can see the marvels that the whole earth can produce.”¹⁵¹ Although Maupertuis denied the plausibility of a European-oriented hierarchy, he confusingly subscribed to a euro-centric aesthetic standard as correct. As previously discussed, his support of European Exceptionalism contributed to his monstrification of peoples diverging from this tract as beneath the ideal and far from the standard. As insightful as his observation regarding rigid, colored, social constructs were throughout *Vénus physique*, Maupertuis offered some fantastical descriptions of *other* peoples, like those living in the Borneo forests,

¹⁴⁹ Maupertuis, 63.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 67.

who, according to word of mouth, were like men “but think less well for having tails like monkeys.”¹⁵² In this, he acknowledged a relationship between mind and physicality, where the tail either marked lesser intelligence (similar to the relationship between the black African’s physiognomy and intellectual capabilities in Chapter 3) or if the tail itself contributed to a lesser quality psyche, those living with tails were less capable of intellectual prowess. Therefore, in the case of the albino, Maupertuis made a similar case for the man suffering from hypopigmentation and fashioned him into a scientific specimen. Far from his dignified human existence, in his detailed observation-based description, he alleged that there were

Men whiter than any known to us...their hair might be mistaken for the whitest of wools. Their blue eyes, too feeble to stand daylight, open only in the darkness of night. They are in the human species what bats and owls are in the realm of birds.¹⁵³

These nocturnal creatures were quite different from normal men: identifiable by their strikingly pale complexion contextualized against fabric as opposed to humanity and with a predisposition to the night as opposed to daylight. According to Maupertuis, when the rest of humanity succumbed to the human necessity of sleep, the *négre blanc* awoke, adored their gods, and celebrated the darkness.¹⁵⁴ The nature of these beings indicated something, which made them inhuman or perhaps as if there was something *wrong* with them. This strange seemingly mythical species of white men in black societies appeared to Maupertuis as a problem purely of the “Torrid Zone,” “a wide band round the globe from the Orient to the Occident,” but more specifically America, Africa and the Orient—

¹⁵² Ibid., 65.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

curiously he failed to note their existence in Europe.¹⁵⁵ Visibly, behaviorally, religiously and regionally, Maupertuis recorded them as different, and emphasized these differences to a degree, which made them appear less like the European man.

This problem appeared to be a “[disgusting]” occurrence in nature, but Maupertuis continued to describe the “history of [the] little freak” albino boy who had been brought to Paris in 1744.¹⁵⁶ He was a

Child of four or five, whose features are entirely negroid and whose very white and pale skin only enhances his ugliness. His head is covered by white wool with a reddish tinge. His eyes are light blue and seem hurt by bright daylight. His hands, large and misshapen, resemble more an animal’s paws than the hands of a man. He is the offspring, we are told, of African parents, both black.¹⁵⁷

Ugly, hair disguised as wool, and sharing more in common with animals than with man, albinism hovered between a clinicalized malediction and nature’s accident.¹⁵⁸ As stated in Maupertuis’s embryology theories, he attributed the “accidental production” of the albino variety from the quality of seminal fluid.¹⁵⁹ In addition to Maupertuis’s theory on accidentalism, he also maintained a degeneration theory akin to that of Buffon’s, where all produced in nature had the tendency to degenerate from their initial more perfect form because of climatic and behavioral influences and that which was maintained for long periods of time was done so through “art or discipline.”¹⁶⁰ Therefore, cultures that appeared to be more in touch with the arts or were better behaved and more akin to the original prototype were the most perfect form of man. From a European point of view during this time, the European countries were most advanced in art and were most

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 66.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 71, 75.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 75.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 76.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 78.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 80.

advanced in art and were most disciplined, whereas African countries, which suspiciously had the albino problem, were far less advanced, making them more prone to degeneration – as exhibited in the arrival of the monstrous albino.

Of the three theories that he offered, the albino was the result of something that had gone wrong. For Maupertuis, the emergence of the *négre blanc* was an indication that white had been the primitive color of man, and consequently, the black African had degenerated from it.¹⁶¹ The albino had a purpose in the links between blacks and whites, yet once decontextualized from this racial hierarchy, it devolved to one of the “monsters, which undoubtedly [came] from fortuitous combinations of particles in the seed.”¹⁶² The albino race was an “abnormal people,” deserving of the world’s antagonism, which had relegated them to the inhabitable parts of the world.¹⁶³

Maupertuis’s albino was partly human, partly animal, and completely monstrous. It was nearly devoid of intellectual capabilities and specimenized to the point of bitter dehumanization. His scientific language of embryology and polygenesis justified his conjectural description and insight into the *négre blanc*, yet he imbued his observations with an air of disgust and European Exceptionalism so that it clarified Maupertuis’s position that the albino, though of a similar complexion to the European, could not exist as fully human or of the same value as the *real* white prototype. Maupertuis targeted the albino’s hypopigmentation for its expulsion from humanity. Although racial hierarchies have been reduced to black, white, and mulatto, the case of the albino demonstrated that the reduction of humanity in specific groups was not restricted to a categorical triad.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 72.

¹⁶² Ibid., 84.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

More than racial hatred, the physical characteristics of the albino haunted philosophers like Maupertuis to depreciate its humanness to a monstrous species closer to animal.

Maupertuis's probing study of the albino still left confusion regarding the station of the albino, as outlined by Andrew Curran, who posed: "What was the etiology of the *négre blanc*? Was the phenomenon, which as entirely naturalized in Maupertuis's work, still a monstrosity?"¹⁶⁴ George-Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon, whose naturalist theories were previously discussed in the preceding chapters authored *Natural History* in which he answered the above questions. Although Buffon resisted forming a rigid system of racial hierarchization or classification, he sorted through human varieties using complexion color (among a few other categories) to define his human categories. Relying heavily on his version of climate theory, which was at root of human variation in complexion color, figure and stature, and their dispositions, he employed climactic factors to explain the appearance of the *négre blanc*. Buffon's work in *Natural History* allied human varietal classification with behavior, so that they were respectively indicative of each other. For example, it was clear that the Saoiedes, the Borandians, and the Greenlanders were of the same race because they were similar in figure, stature, color, and manners.¹⁶⁵ As much as he resisted formal categories of humanity, Buffon strictly observed humans in groups and as a result made generalizations regarding certain tribes, such as the Tartars of Dagheftan, who were excellent slave traders yet they were all robbers.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Curran, "Rethinking Race History," 162.

¹⁶⁵ Buffon, 63.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

Buffon, like Voltaire and Maupertuis, encountered an albino girl named Genevieve in Paris in 1777, but learned of albinism present in hot climates from his various correspondences with travelers. Almost as half-hearted suppositions, Buffon invoked the writings of different world voyagers such as Mr. Sanchez, the first physician to the Russian army who travelled through Tartary.¹⁶⁷ In the case of albinism in the Americas, Buffon described, most likely through hearsay evidence, a white people whose color was not European white, but was more akin to “milk or the hairs of a white horse.”¹⁶⁸ Similar to the Chacrelas of Java or the Bedas of Ceylon, the albinos represented a human variety, yet a very animalistic one. Immediately upon Buffon’s initiation of the discussion of the *négre blanc*, he compared their physiognomy to animals. He continued this trend of animalization in his observation: “Their skin is covered with a kind of short and whitish down.”¹⁶⁹ Treated more as an animal than as a human, Buffon further dehumanized the albino and categorized it as monstrous, as compared to other human varieties. Along with this physical description, the albino was averse to work, and similar to Maupertuis’s Darian, were nocturnal and potentially allergic to light as they had to “scamper through the forests as nimbly as they [could]” in reaction to moonlight.¹⁷⁰ The *blafard*, as Buffon called the albino, constituted a human variety of monstrous men.

Buffon offered two explanations for the emergence of these strangely white near-humans. Waser, a thinker, who witnessed the birth of a white child from two “copper-colored,” offered the first explanation that attributed the albino Indian and its “strange

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 70.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 322.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

color and temperament” to a malady, which they inherited from their parents.¹⁷¹ Buffon, himself, dabbled in this theory in the case of the albinos of Panama, and decided that this hypopigmentation had developed from “a widespread, cross-racial, pathological condition” that affected many peoples.¹⁷² This clinicalization of the albino condition alluded to the notion that there was something *wrong* with the albino, which had forced it to develop so inhumanly. Even if it were to be considered human, Buffon claimed this sickly pale man was medically ill, and its poor health warranted its status as something beneath the European. Although albinism is indeed an indication of a genetic mutation, in Buffon’s time, albinism was a malady allowed its continued sequestering from society and status as monstrous marginalia to the European conscience.

The second explanation came from Buffon’s degeneration theory, which originally supposed that human variety had developed through gradual degeneration from various climates. Buffon supposed that

If these white people are actually born of copper-colored parents, we shall have reason to believe, that the Chacrelas and the Bedas [previously defined albinos throughout *Natural History*] originate also from the parents of the same color; and that all white men, whom we find at such distances from each other, are individuals who have degenerated from their race by some accidental cause.¹⁷³

For Buffon this monogenetic view categorized the human albino along with the black African, which was essentially the closest master race from which the albino had degenerated. Similar to Voltaire and Maupertuis, the idea of the white prototype indicated that white was man’s “natural” color, and climate, diet, and behavior corrupted men to degenerate to corresponding complexions, which were by no means equal to the original

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 322.

¹⁷² Curran, *Anatomy of Blackness*, 98.

¹⁷³ Buffon, 323.

whiteness.¹⁷⁴ The accident of the *blafard* was a form of something natural yet against *natural forms*. Meaning, nature had produced the albino, yet it was quite imperfect and was a degraded version of the more perfect European. The *négre blanc*'s lack of strength and vigor identified them as degenerate beings.¹⁷⁵ This theory of degeneration argued against the humanity of the albino – its life was a corrupt physognomical mistake, which was of a clearly lesser quality than the European. Additionally, degeneration legitimized the expulsion from normal human categories because following this theory along with Buffon's climate theory, it became evident to Buffon that something unnatural had interfered in the development of albinos to cause them to persist in such degraded human qualities.¹⁷⁶

Aside from Buffon's work in *Natural History*, in which he offered an at-distance understanding of the case of the albino, a further example of the accidental emergence of the pigment-less human form was not indicative of a species at large, but a reminder of imperfectability of nature. This somewhat romanticized view of the albino girl Genevieve in 1777 developed as Buffon resisted making her into a strict specimen; rather, he humanely described the woman according to a rather sexual illustration. With full breasts and a round body similar to the ideal female form of the time, Geneviève's voluptuous body warranted sexual desire, according to Buffon. The woman was displayed vulnerably

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 324.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 325.

¹⁷⁶ According to Andrew Curran, Buffon had imagined and wrote for a specific "ideal audience" composed of learned readers, who would be able to identify gaps in the field of ethnographic knowledge (Curran, *Anatomy of Blackness*, 116). Unfortunately for Buffon, his eventual audience consisted of proto-anatomists who quickly adopted his theory of degeneration and broadly applied it to the evolving ethnography of the time. Therefore, there are perhaps subtleties in the text that were not appreciated or picked up on by his contemporaries as they are now.

naked, facing the audience, without exhibiting shame of appearance, hair shorn, and seemingly unaware of her sexuality. Though possessing a raw, human sexuality, and reduced fertile sex parts, Geneviève's ignorance of self indicated her objectification and consequent dehumanization – though her body's warranting lust normalized her to a certain extent.

As Buffon illuminated the rather unnatural, degenerate, monstrous albino, he helped to codify a specific lexicon for the pigment-less human, which served to normalize the status. Between albinos, Bedas, Chacrelas, Dondos, *négres blancs*, and *blafards*, the albinos accidentally acquired a vocabulary unique to them.¹⁷⁷ Though this naturalization of the albino had the potential to humanize its case, the understanding of the accidental degeneration of the human form to being physically and visibly deformed had so damaged the image of the albino in philosophy that it was more animal than human, and more monstrous than either. Although naturalists like Buffon attempted to showcase the similarities between the albino and man, the albino further diverged in the human category.

Buffon's *Natural History* went through many publications throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, and although it constituted a large part of proto-raciology and proto-biology, it was insufficient and supplemented by the work of other *philosophes* and naturalists. Of those to supplement Buffon's work was Diderot, whose *Encyclopédie* was compiled of prevailing contemporary thought of most anything. Of the entries, that of the "Negroes, White" made bold and definitive claims regarding the albino.

According to Diderot, the appearance of the *négre blanc* was unique to Africa, and

¹⁷⁷ Curran, *Anatomy of Blackness*, 98.

though an accident, at birth all black Africans were initially white.¹⁷⁸ The different between the *négre blanc* and the *négre* being that the latter eventually became black within a few days of birth. Regarding the origin of the albino's tribe's hypopigmentation, Diderot offered several theories. He refuted cross-breeding between whites and black Africans, the pathologization of the albino condition from leprosy, and the sex act between monkeys and black women as reasoning for the birth of the *négre blanc*. He did, however, allow the theory that the birth of the albino was the result of the "stricken imagination of pregnant women," similar to the case of Mary Toft.¹⁷⁹

Anatomically, Diderot described the albinos as "Pale as dead corpses. Their eyes are gray, hardly animated, and seem to be immobile. It said that they see only in moonlight like owls. Their hair is either blonde, red, or white and frizzy."¹⁸⁰ More akin to a deceased human and owl than to another living being, Diderot continued the trend of relating the albino to a monster. He agreed with Maupertuis that the blacks of Loango were constantly at war with the tribe of albinos and thought of them as "mokissos, or the devils of the woods." Yet once captured by their Loango aggressors, it was believed that the kings of Loango maintained a group of White Negroes at their courts, where they were trained as children to fulfill the duties of priests and sorcerers.¹⁸¹ These pigment-less humans were capable of otherworldly activity, yet were unaware of their true capabilities, as they did not recognize a god. Diderot affirmed the manipulation of the albino into a

¹⁷⁸ Denis Diderot, "Negroes, White," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Pamela Cheek, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2003), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.027> (accessed 29 November 2011). Originally published as "*Négres blancs*," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 11:79 (Paris, 1765).

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

curiosity whose strangely colored complexion indicated extra powers beyond the normal realm of humans to the Loangos.

They address their wishes and prayers only to demons on whom they believe all happy and unfortunate events depend. They invoke and consult them on all undertakings and represent them in human form in different sizes out of crudely worked wood and clay.¹⁸²

Though endowed with special abilities, this did not mean that the albino was to be accepted as of equal quality as the rest of humanity, but rather as a functionary to carry out specific tasks. Although this duty may be construed as an important responsibility, these albinos were maintained most often against their will and as curiosities. They were stripped of their ability to control their whereabouts and strictly used to conjure spirits, communicate with the otherworldly forces, or perform extraterrestrial acts. Objectified and animalized, Diderot's version of the albino was far from human and more akin to a mythical, spiritual creature.

The philosophical discussion surrounding the categorization of the albino came and left the eighteenth century unconfirmed and confused as to the exact humanity of the character of the albino, though it was a decidedly pessimistic notion. *Philosophes* like Voltaire, Maupertuis, Buffon, and Diderot thrust conjecture onto people whom they had never encountered solely based on travelogue writings and superficial observations. In the minds of these thinkers, the albino awkwardly straddled the line between animal, human, and superhuman. Anatomically they were almost by rule reduced to animalesque features, which served to indicate their intrinsic inequality of capabilities. The albino appeared to be human in form, but as these thinkers philosophically examined each of their attributes at an arm's length, the *négre blanc* quickly became some type of distorted

¹⁸² Ibid.

and degenerated monstrous human. None of these philosophers directly conferred with the albino specimens of whom they spoke; besides interactions with specimen imports it appeared almost as if these curiosities had been confined to a soundproof glass chamber, strictly maintained for observational purposes. They did not treat the albino as a human in their minimal interactions, and it was therefore not surprising that they shied away from any real concession that would leave the albino categorized as human along with Europeans.

Chapter Five: The Scientific Afterthought: the Albino

Eighteenth century philosopher and naturalist discourse regarding the albino had created an image of the man suffering hypopigmentation as more a curiosity or animal than human. The naturalist of the time took the reigns in the debate concerning what exactly constituted the *négre blanc*, writing extensively on the topic and dedicating large portions of their work to its study. Throughout the works of writers from Voltaire to Maupertuis, the albino was a fairly prominent subject, with whole chapters devoted to understanding its origin, exact classification, and where it stood in the chain of being. Having gathered travelogues and made observations on the number of albino specimens brought to Europe during the mid-eighteenth century, these authors attempted to make scientific arguments, which morphed into poorly informed, pseudo-scientific suppositions based on ideals of European greatness and limited by social standards, such as the rigidly organized French society and slavery tradition.

Once considered mythical and deserving of great attention, the albino appeared to have escaped formal scientific investigation and experimentation – a fate of which most curiosities were not privy. Although the albino was a conceptual item in eighteenth century discussion of human difference, practically, it did not have a place in the scientific world. It remained, consequently, a conundrum, too uncomfortable for scientists to actually investigate. Understanding why the albino was not completely made into a scientific specimen, however, is more elusive than the fact that Albinos were not included in science.

There does not exist a plethora of experiments solely dedicated to the case of the albino, mentions of the *négre blanc* appeared in other studies, usually as an afterthought

or side note. Although Diderot, himself, was not a specialized scientist, in his *Encyclopédie*, he referenced the work of preceding scientists who had been at a loss in understanding the origin of hypopigmentation in the human form. Many of Diderot's entries gathered all existing knowledge on subjects ranging from philosophy and religion to science, yet in the case of the *négre blanc*, he did not invoke any scientific authority or terminology. Diderot intended his *Encyclopédie* to be a compilation of circulating known facts regarding anything and everything; in this entry, however, he limited his definition of the albino to denying rather antiquated philosophical suppositions. Here, the *négre blanc* was not the result of unions between white European males or apes and black African women, nor were they black Africans suffering from leprosy, or the product of strange imaginations of pregnant women.¹⁸³

Yet oddly enough, these rumor-like suspicions, which Diderot dispelled as semi-fantastical notions to explain human difference, were maintained throughout the majority of the eighteenth century. Some twenty years later, in 1784, Monseieur le Vallois brought two of his own curiosities: two “motley colored” subjects: a pye Negro girl and a mulatto boy, which Dr. John Morgan examined. The girl, Adelaide, was a two-year-old child brought before the American Philosophical Society. Though not albino, her different skin colorations qualify her case to be addressed along with the *négre blanc*. Her complexion was mostly brown, though stark white spots covered many parts of her body. Black, brown, and white, Adelaide presented a racial and complexion conundrum to eighteenth century scientists and doctors like Dr. Morgan. Although her eyes were “black and lively,” a white spot occupied her chin and forehead and stretched under her chin to the

¹⁸³ Diderot, "Negroes, White."

upper part of her neck.¹⁸⁴ To Dr. Morgan, many of the spots appeared to be complex with different layers of colored spots; some had rays emanating from them and resembled stars, others possessed such shading as to appear like a lunar eclipse, while the coloring on the hands bared “pretty striking resemblance to gloves.”¹⁸⁵

Unlike previous descriptions of the corpse-like whiteness of the albino, Dr. Morgan’s particularization of Adelaide’s white spots as “lively” and “soft, smooth, and sleek” indicated an evolving sentiment regarding albinism.¹⁸⁶ Additionally, there was an attractiveness to Adelaide’s temperament as she was “cheerful, gay and sportful,” and in “pretty good health.”¹⁸⁷ Her overall robustness made her naturally human in appearance, though with physical shortcomings. Although her white spots were technically of the same coloring that characterized the albino, Dr. Morgan made sure to note that she did not possess the “eyes, nor ears, nor any particularity in her features, or external conformation” like that of the *négre blanc*, whose complexion was “dead white” and whose “wooly hair resembled their negro parents.”¹⁸⁸ The albino’s eyes were dead, of usually a pale blue or even red coloring, whereas Adelaide’s eyes were “black and lively,” expressing emotions and communicating thoughts.¹⁸⁹ Though ostensibly of similar complexion conditions, Dr. Morgan refuted any similarity between the two types.

¹⁸⁴ John Morgan, “Some Account of a Motley Colored, or Pye Negro Girl and Mulatto Boy, Exhibited before the Society in the Month of May, 1784, for Their Examination, by Dr. John Morgan, from the History Given of Them by Their Owner Monseieur le Vallois, Dentist of the King of France at Guadeloupe in the West Indies,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 2 (1784): 392.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*: 393.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*: 392.

Adelaide's whiteness was perceived as living whereas philosophers had previously described the albino's complexion as palely more akin a deathly complexion. Although Adelaide possessed a similar skin condition to the albino, her condition's spotted novelty categorized her as a human with a deformity, rather than as an albino, who naturalists cast aside as a divergent human species. The repetitive nature of the *négre blanc* transformed its physical aberration from deformity to difference; and acknowledging similarities between the exemplar European human and the albino species would have made the European more monstrous or the albino more human.

Why was this distinction so important to note? In the eighteenth century mindset, perhaps the appearance of Adelaide demonstrated the difference between deformity and difference. Deformity occurred as an accident or spontaneous development in an otherwise normal individual, so there were greater similarities between the deformed subjected and the normal form. Perhaps a singular aberration was more acceptable to eighteenth century philosophers, as it was in the case of Adelaide. A unique physical break from the norm represented a singular, one-time variation from the normal human type. Difference, however, which many *philosophes* had previously defined as a basis for distinguishing human variety, represented greater human difference – occurring often enough to be a thought of as a species of man. Both deformity and difference represented lesser quality alternatives to the accepted archetype of normality. They therefore were considered *monstrous* by that standard. Dr. Morgan's account of Adelaide, however, treated her like an actual child, not truly as a monster, emphasizing her similarity to other humans, calling her by name, referencing her family, her personality traits, and mannerisms. This difference in treatment warranted the question: why?

Philosophers acknowledged natural differences among humans: ostensible differences in height, coloring, and mannerisms. Oftentimes, *philosophes* and early naturalists spoke of accidental varieties and natural mistakes. The spontaneous appearance of a deformity may have been deemed a natural accident, akin to any other slight physical aberration. Monstrous in terms of its strangeness, the repetition of the albino's form appeared to be a divergence from the norm and made the albino inhuman.

Beyond the treatment of Adelaide in the scientific study, the attributed causes to her form echo what Diderot attempted to dispel in his *Encyclopédie*—that is superstitious and unscientific reasoning to explain the phenomenon of the albino. Believed to have truth to it, Dr. Morgan relayed the idea that Adelaide's odd pigmentation pattern had developed because her mother, while pregnant with her, enjoyed stargazing in the open air, looking into the dark night sky and observing the stars and planets.¹⁹⁰ Dr. Morgan, though not in full support of this view, passed it along as a viable theory for human variety – pregnant women's "fears, longings, or impressions" made an impact on their pregnancy and their children's development similar to the case of Mary Toft.¹⁹¹ Conjecture under the guise of informed science in the person of Dr. Morgan, a physician, passed superstition off as truth. This was pseudo-scientific at best, though more akin to philosophy than anything remotely scientific. This article was published near the end of the eighteenth century, years after Meckel, le Cat, and DePauw's biological investigations into the human body had been completed and codified so a grander audience understood their theses.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 395.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Despite Diderot's haphazard philosophical rhetoric regarding albinism, the albino does in fact appear in a few scientific texts – however, not until the very last leg of the eighteenth century some twenty years after the philosophical world had made the study of the albino passé. That being said, the appearance of the *négre blanc* was purely limited to short mentions within other scientific works. It is first worth discussing the previous anatomical dissection work that had been done to understand the anatomical differences among human varieties. Between 1715 and 1768, Johann Friedrich Meckel, Claude-Nicholas le Cat, and Cornelius DePauw published their own accounts of observations and dissections of the black African, which had affirmed the existence of the malphigienne layer or the *rete mucosum*. Through blistering, burning, and soaking black Africans' skin samples, the three scientists isolated this layer of scarf tissue, which possessed a blackness that imbued the subject's organ and therefore blackened their skin along with their brain. Although many other curious scientists performed the same experiments – though without similar success – Meckel, le Cat, and DePauw were the most celebrated. Scientists fearlessly looked into and dissected the human body to understand man's inner workings better. Although all varieties of man were at one point examined, dissected, and made into individual specimens, the albino escaped this foray into biological questioning, and became a footnote to other studies.

One of these short references came in 1779 with *Experiments on the Insensible Perspiration of the Human Body Shewing its Affinity to Respiration*.¹⁹² In this report, Dr. William Cruikshank searched to determine total insensible perspiration over the course of a day, the elements present in perspiration, and the relationship between the substance of

¹⁹² This work was originally published in 1779, however, the version in reference here is that, which was published in 1795 with additions and corrections.

insensible perspiration and the substance of the lungs in exhalation.¹⁹³ In this study, Dr. Cruikshank quickly turned to examining the malpighienne layer, or the *rete mucosum* in the Negro, explaining that its removal revealed the “true skin” which was “white, like that of a European.”¹⁹⁴ He referenced the whiteness as normal and not so pale as the albino’s corpse-like form. Nothing beyond that or an elaboration, *négre blanc* was reduced to a slight mention in a scientific context.

The next mention of the albino came in a footnote in Dr. Robert Thornton’s *Philosophy of Medicine*, published in 1794. In each chapter, Dr. Thornton encyclopedically detailed each organ system, organ, and function of the body. Although the subject of race and complexion color had been a rather hot topic throughout the beginning of the century, so much so that there was an essay contest in 1741 in Bordeaux to determine the cause of blackness, Dr. Thornton’s entry on skin and complexion color is extremely short, perhaps alluding to a recalibration of mindset; at that time racial categories were becoming less important in light of the social advances that the French Revolution and the Revolution in Saint-Domingue made – specifically progress in slavery and human rights. As short as it is, the footnote to this entry was quite long, detailing the subtleties of cuticle or scarfskin and Malpighi’s experiment, then almost 100 years old. However, in this entry Dr. Thornton claimed that the albino and the “inhabitants of cold climates” commonly had a white *rete mucosum*.¹⁹⁵ Although he

¹⁹³ William Cruikshank, *Experiments on the Insensible Perspiration of the Human Body Shewing its Affinity to Respiration* (London, 1795), iii-iv.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹⁵ Robert John Thornton, “Philosophy of Medicine; or, Medical Extracts on the Nature of Health and Disease, Including the Laws of the Animal Economy, and the Doctrines of Pneumatic Medicine,” (1794), *Eighteenth Century Journals Online*, 1, (27 February 2012), 89.

conceded this similarity, he immediately noted, “With *us* it becomes brown in those exposed to the beams of the sun.”¹⁹⁶ The albino’s skin had different reactive properties, and compared to the European, was actually defective in its inability to adequately respond to climate stimuli. Similar in a fundamental biological element, though differing in a phenotypic response to climate, this acknowledgement indicated sameness between Dr. Thornton’s European and the albino, which somewhat scientifically humanized the *négre blanc*.

Shortly thereafter, Dr. John Ferriar published *Illustrations of Sterne*, in which he sought to determine the “true foundations, on which the existence of some monstrous varieties of our species.”¹⁹⁷ Quite different from the preceding sources, which primarily began in the field of race and then moved onto the case of the albino, Dr. Ferriar addressed the question of the origin of pygmies – beginning with Homer, Aristotle, and Pliny. As he continued to discuss regional African tribes like the Java and the Amboyna, he quickly touched on the albino. Unlike Voltaire who described the albino as an individual of a large race of *négre blancs*, Dr. Ferriar noted the peculiarity of the albino and its spontaneous birth into ordinary society.¹⁹⁸ Yet the description ended there; his going into great detail with the inner workings and scientific observations of pygmies and other human monstrosities made two sentence tribute to the perplexing quandary of the human albino appear to be sparse, incomplete and inconclusive.

Had the albino exhausted its time in the spotlight during the mid-century? Potentially all the questions had been posed of the *négre blanc*, yet it would have been

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. Note: my italics here.

¹⁹⁷ John Ferriar, *Illustrations of Sterne: with other Essays and Verses by John Ferriar, M.D.* (London: Cadell and Davis, 1798), 197.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 208.

unusual for a scholarly group so inclined to understand anything and everything in the human to leave the question of the albino unanswered. However, as naturalists and philosophers attempted to push the albino variety further away from the European species, the studies pursued in the last quarter of the eighteenth century seemed to inch toward an illumination of human similarities. Although Thornton created a “them” and “us” dichotomy between the albino and the European, making the albino into an anonymous other, Thornton and Ferriar both alluded to similarities between the albino and the European. Much time had been spent making the albino into a monstrous human variety, a reference to the previously discussed scientific gaze, yet the notion that the two indeed shared qualities, let alone human nature, would have made an extreme break with preceding thought. Therefore, perhaps a fear of humanity in the albino stagnated a movement to uncover the actual biology of the albino. Humanizing the albino would have contradicted all theory, which distanced the albino’s place in society from the normal human. Although the same fear could have been cited in the case of the black African, it must be noted that the differences between the Albino and the black African were so emphasized that the concession of a similarity would not have had the same effect. The discovery of the black *rete mucosum* and Meckel’s claim that the black African’s brain, organs, and blood were black and dark as compared to that of the European made the African into such a monstrous species, so different and unlike men that acknowledging analogous structures could not have reversed the depth of these theories. Additionally, scientists held claims made during the seventeenth and early eighteenth century as fact, though the experiments and results were impossible to replicate – as they were often falsified or manipulated to adhere to contemporary social mores. Therefore, it would have

been preposterous for a new discovery to be held as factual and to eclipse preexisting pseudo-scientific allegations.

Chapter Six: Mythical or Real?: The Ambiguous Hermaphrodite

This battle concerning the categorization of man continued beyond racial classifications. The question regarding humanness of an individual possessing a sexual deformity arose in the case of the hermaphrodite. The sexual conundrum coincided with the development of the Libertine literary genre – an era whose literary themes often included anticlericalism and antiestablishment, but most importantly eroticism. Thus, this combination of naturalists' obsession with categorization (as previously discussed) and the popularity of sexuality in literature made the exploration and subsequent classification of the hermaphrodite valid and timely. The Enlightenment's inclusion of the hermaphrodite in its hierarchical discourse, however, did not initiate the discussion. Rather, for centuries, the hermaphrodite's sexuality was not only discussed, but its very existence was also contested, hovering between a reality and mythological machination.

Though very real and omnipresent in society, the actual word, hermaphrodite, owes itself to Greek mythological tradition. The myth tells us that the Greek god, Hermes, and Greek goddess, Aphrodite, had a child together whom they named Hermaphroditus – a clever combination of the two parents' names.¹⁹⁹ When the boy was fifteen or so years old, he travelled to Carie, where he saw the lake Salmacis, in which a nymph of the same name lived. Overcome with lust for Hermaphroditus, Salmacis embraced the boy. He became angry with Salmacis, who shortly left the lake. He then, believing her to be gone, undressed and entered the lake. Shortly thereafter, she appeared, and threw herself at Hermaphroditus, begging the gods to never allow them to separate. Hermaphroditus and his nymph suitor were from that point on fused into one body – half

¹⁹⁹ Thomas Peend, *The Pleasant fable of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis (1565)*, (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1992), 91-102.

male and half female, they embodied bisexuality, consequently, hermaphrodite served as the term to describe a person presenting both male and female genitalia until the late nineteenth century. The myth of Hermaphroditus lasted through the eighteenth century and as a result, the very existence of the hermaphrodite was more heavily debated than the origin of the deformity. Nevertheless, philosophical inspection of the case of the hermaphrodite human developed during the mid-eighteenth century, similar to the turn to albinism, where naturalists delved into the proper categorization of it.

Interestingly enough, although Comte de Buffon examined nearly every variety and human deformity known at the time in his *Natural History*, he denied the actual existence of the hermaphrodite. He claimed that although “we every day see children with eyes like the father, and the forehead and mouth like the mother; ...we never find a like mixture of the sexual parts; it never happens that they have the testicles of the father, and the vagina of the mother.”²⁰⁰ Buffon, asserted that degeneration created physical divergences from the norm, especially in the case of the albino, yet he believed that degenerating into the hermaphroditic was impossible, though he did not comment further on the mythical machination or the famed hermaphrodites (who will be later discussed in the following pages). Best known for his contributions to proto-natural history in his detailed inventory of human varieties, Buffon skipped touching on the debate concerning the hermaphrodite, which absolutely contributed to its mythical existence.

Although this mythical status continued, Louis Chevalier de Jaucourt explored this condition and contributed the Hermaphrodite entry to Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*. Quite long in comparison to many of the other entries, Jaucourt attempted to offer a

²⁰⁰ Buffon, 243.

comprehensive look at the hermaphrodite, pulling from mythology, philosophy, and science to justify his claims—though eventually, he failed to decide without reservation if the hermaphrodite was a living creature or a surviving mythological fabrication.

Jaucourt began his entry retelling the story of Hermaphroditus, calling the discussion of the elusive hermaphrodite a “legend,” which “[continued] to honor Greek illusions.”²⁰¹ In justifying his view, Jaucourt asserted that it was imperfect and unnatural for two sexes to coexist within one single body. Although nature created human varieties and differences among individuals, it did not create aberrations so far as “confusions of substances” or “perfect assemblages of two sexes.”²⁰² Rather, a child’s sex at birth was singular, unchangeable, “there is no person in whom the two sexes are perfect, that is to say who could reproduce in herself as a woman, and also outside himself as a man or as much as the male to produce out of another and the female to produce in her own self in the words of one canonist.”²⁰³ Confusing rhetoric aside, this passage illustrated the impossibility for the two perfect sexes to inhabit one body; however, what of imperfect sex? He conceded that nature may have temporarily confused sex in an individual, yet “never permanently,” for nature “ultimately shows the characteristics that distinguish sex.”²⁰⁴ Here, natural laws acted as the invisible hand in maintaining only the best and most fit species. Although by Voltaire’s definition people possessing both male and female genitalia were monstrous because of their excess organs; yet this was not a

²⁰¹ Louis chevalier de Jaucourt, "Hermaphrodite," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Naomi Andrews, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2003), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.208> (accessed 29 November 2011), Originally published as "Hermaphrodite," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 8:165–167 (Paris, 1765).

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

permanent categorization for nature herself would equalize, demystify, and eventually arrive at last to relieve the person of their physical confusion. Nature was both the source of the deformity and the antidote to it. Although Jaucourt's notion that nature created the hermaphrodite normalized the occurrence, it also pathologized it to a certain extent.

Interestingly enough, as nature was the chief force behind the development of the hermaphrodite, climate played a role as well. Although not a codified or even fluid version of climate theory like that of Buffon, Jaucourt localized hermaphroditism as a problem in "blazing hot countries of Africa and of Asia than among us."²⁰⁵ Although studies, which attested to the existence of hermaphrodites in Europe had emerged during this time, Jaucourt emphasized the frequency of hermaphroditism occurring in warmer climates – where Buffon's degeneration theory had already marked its territory as evidenced by the lesser quality, poorly endowed quasi-humans. This effort aimed to regionalize hermaphroditism as a problem to the *other* (warm) regions of the world, where Buffon had successfully deemed the natives uncivilized, barbaric, and flawed as compared to Europeans.

Yet still skeptical, Jaucourt laid out a checklist of sex norms to define and compare the male and female. In his opinion, the two sexes shared homologous anatomy, though ultimately man was the better sex. Although females may have dressed to portray themselves as men, a manly exterior and garments had the ability to conceal a woman as a man, yet indeed Jaucourt noted that it was a superficial transformation and failed to actually morph a woman into a man.²⁰⁶ This occurred often. Recognized in 1693, in the case of Marguerite Malaure, a Parisian woman, embodied the character of a man: she

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

dressed as a man, carried a sword, and wore a hat. She identified as hermaphrodite (although Jaucourt remained unconvinced). As she had the natural organs of both sexes, she believed herself to be empowered with the ability to exist as both male and female. Apparently for small compensation, Marguerite displayed herself to physicians, in both public and private settings for the curious. Although top ranked doctors and surgeons agreed with Marguerite that she was a hermaphrodite, Jaucourt believed these physicians were seeking fame through tying their name to such a scientific novelty and their word was not a credible source. So eventually, Monsieur Saviard, “finding himself to be the only skilled man who was unbelieving” examined Marguerite in front of others to conclude that Marguerite was actually a boy with a “prolapsed uterus; accordingly, [Mr. Saviard] reduced the prolapse, and cured Marguerite perfectly – so she returned to her proper sex, female.”²⁰⁷ Thus the inexplicable enigma of hermaphroditism, in this subject, turned out to be clearer than day. Jaucourt claimed that after Mr. Saviard’s intervention, Marguerite had been healed of her illness and by her request, returned to wearing women’s garb.²⁰⁸ A sickness had caused her temporary physical changes, but she had always been and would continue to be female, despite illness or personal alacrity. The conclusion that Marguerite, had in fact been suffering a disease, attempted to demystify her condition through a process of natural normalization. Through attributing Marguerite’s claimed hermaphroditism to disease made her first monstrous nature a temporary result from a disease, which therefore made her more normal to humanity.

²⁰⁷ Jaucourt spoke incredibly highly of M. Saviard. He claimed that his evidence only was irrefutable and his conclusions were the only ones on which he could rely.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

The actual facts regarding Marguerite's case remain elusive – unclear if she in fact was hermaphroditic or not – but this example and subsequent instance of eighteenth century intellectuals asserting their scholarly opinion over individuals in possession of physical deformities occurred often to women. David Cressy claimed that these authors were most concerned with “social, professional, and gender hierarchies” and the “threat to those hierarchies posed by headstrong women.”²⁰⁹ Although this view supposed that the sexuality debate among hermaphrodites was fought on behalf of maintaining a patriarchal and misogynist society, there are few other clues that would suggest this. This claim does, however, illuminate the fact that almost all of the reported and studied cases of hermaphroditism during this time period involved humans whose identified sex was female. This therefore may indicate that either self-identified male hermaphrodites lived unexposed, or in accordance with Cressy's view of society, males could freely live with both sex organs without controversy. The actual facts of this situation remain elusive and the above explanations are purely speculative.

Sexual categories much like early racial categories were static, intrinsic, and rigid. It was an either-or situation: male or female – black and white without any grey area, Jaucourt believed that “supposed hermaphrodite men who have a menstrual flow [were] simply real girls.”²¹⁰ Though self-defined as one sex, Jaucourt revealed that there existed philosophers who assumed their perception of the subject's sex to be more correct and consequently changed them accordingly.

²⁰⁹ David Cressy, “Lamentable, Strange, and Wonderful: Headless Monsters in the English Revolution,” *Monstrous Bodies/ Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 44.

²¹⁰ Jaucourt, 1.

Decidedly, Jaucourt believed that hermaphroditism was a “chimera” and the tales of the hermaphrodite’s existence and interfecundity were indeed “childish fables, drawn from the heart of ignorance in the love of marvels so difficult to dismantle.”²¹¹ Man had conceived of the hermaphrodite here as a fantastical machination to satisfy their curiosity. Although he denied their real existence, Jaucourt’s *Encyclopédie* entry does not end there, rather, he continued with a series of detailed scientific case studies concerning episodes of hermaphroditism. This confusion alluded to an internal tension within Jaucourt’s work – although he claimed the hermaphrodite to be a mythological fabrication, he continued to discuss hermaphroditic studies with merit. The writer himself could not create a stable definition or view of the hermaphrodite, this created more impediments to the hermaphrodite’s integration into society as no category existed for it.

Although his discourse was initially somewhat scientific, Jaucourt subjectively cast the female hermaphrodite into a sexualized role. Almost by rule, in his opinion, there were hermaphrodites in Angola who possessed an enlarged clitoris and on their own volition asked others to remove it and enlarge their vaginal canal to better suit their male lovers.²¹² Already embodying an excess of sexual genitalia, the notion that these women intended to alter their body for pure sexual gratification – whether it was for themselves or their mates—made the hermaphrodite into a sex-crazed creature concerned solely with pleasure. This sexualization of the hermaphrodite alluded to the erotic libertinism of the time; yet, this reduction of the hermaphrodites to their sexual urges made them less reasonable and more driven by instinct and need like animal.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

Jaucourt could not conclude his *Encyclopédie* article without bringing into question Michael-Anne Drouart, who was the famed hermaphroditic specimen of the century. Brought to Paris in 1749 as a sixteen year old, she had been baptized as a female, but at the ripe age of maturation had yet to develop breasts, hips or begin menstruation. She possessed a penis, though a foreskin and hair covered its appearance. Additionally, the opening to her urethral canal was “extremely short” and her vulva was “very narrow.”²¹³ Jaucourt believed that “this subject had not and would never have, if it continued to live the potency of either sex.”²¹⁴ Although previously adhered to fixed sexual categories of male and female, Jaucourt capitulated to ambiguity here and did not attempt to lock Michael-Anne into a specific category. As Michael-Anne persisted unverified as male or female, Jaucourt defined her as ambiguous and between sexes – a hovering, sexed monstrosity, possessing an excess of sexual anatomy. Yet, though without a scientifically ordained sex group, Michael-Anne chose to continue to live her life as a female. Jaucourt, the philosopher, wished to truly examine her genitalia and dictate the sex as which she should lead her life. Yet, her parents’ refusal to concede to a formal medical examination to assign her a sex troubled Jaucourt’s quest for Michael-Anne’s true sex—thereby hindering his role of puppeteer in which he could manipulate her identity in a fashion more suitable to his opinion. He motivated this approach with an entrenched belief that hermaphroditism was a myth, so much so that for those unsatisfied with his explanation, he only recommended a certain discourse by Riolan because it refuted any truth to the existence of this monstrous human and a work by a Mr. Parsons

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

who also determined that the existence of hermaphrodites was a “popular misconception.”²¹⁵

Fettered by the growth of rigid social constructions of variety and social class, Jaucourt allowed himself to subscribe to an inflexible sexual binary of male and female, where no divergences or variety could exist. Throughout his article, he refuted the existence of hermaphrodites and believed them to be concoctions of the human mind, which did not stand against empirical evidence; especially as “scientific” observations had repeatedly proved hermaphroditism to be untrue and a confused diagnosis of other sicknesses. Illnesses and deformities were natural, and did not diminish one’s quality of humanity; however, as Jaucourt demonstrated, philosophers acted as puppeteers, who redefined and assigned sexes to *supposed* hermaphrodites. Completely human, though temporarily monstrous in their sexual ambiguity or confusion, self-identified hermaphrodites lost their decision-making power regarding how they lived. Therefore, Jaucourt infantilized the hermaphrodite, making the human with dual sex organs into a child without the ability to make decisions or truly comprehend the world – believing himself to be better judge of how these individuals should live than the individual itself.

Although Jaucourt contributed to and collaborated with Diderot in the *Encyclopédie* project, they disagreed on the existence of a hermaphrodite. Jaucourt believed the hermaphrodite to be no more than a cerebral fabrication, although Diderot considered it preposterous to deny the reality of it. In *D’Alembert’s Dream* (1769), Diderot’s Mademoiselle de l’Espinasse called those who denied the possibility of a

²¹⁵ Ibid.

perfect hermaphrodite “just silly.”²¹⁶ Mademoiselle de L’Espinasse was modeled after a woman of the same name, who ran a successful salon during the period of the book’s publishing. Although just a short mention, L’Espinasse’s interjection regarding the hermaphrodite represented an enlightened opinion regarding the existence of the hermaphrodite. Real and absurd to deny its reality, the development of a hermaphroditic human was indeed nature’s doing. Mademoiselle de L’Espinasse conceded that nature created the curiosity that was the hermaphrodite, and as nature was omniscient and omnipotent compared to the mere existence of man, this power was potentially inconceivable to man.²¹⁷ Categorically, Diderot did not comment on where the hermaphrodite fell in terms of the greater hierarchy of humanity. Yet, the naturalness of this condition purposefully, as opposed to Jaucourt who perhaps accidentally in its sexuality –that is, its admittance of needs and reasoning—normalized hermaphroditism. Although Voltaire’s *Philosophical Dictionary* would have categorized the hermaphrodite as monstrous by this “excess,” Diderot made no differentiation between the category of the hermaphrodite and the *normal* human.

Previously discussed in Chapter Three for his rather tame and society-minded writings on blackness, Cornelius De Pauw published his *Recherches sur les americains, ou memoirs interresants pour servir a l’histoire de l’espece humain* in 1771, in which he dedicated an entire chapter to “*Des Hermaphrodites de la Floride.*” Similar to the climate theory, which had ordained regional differences as the chief cause to varieties in human complexion, De Pauw credited climactic differences with imperfections among groups of

²¹⁶ Denis Diderot, *Rameau’s Nephew and D’Alembert’s Dream* (1769), trans. Leonard Tancock, (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 187.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

humans in those regions. He compared the multitude of climate gradations to the vast spectrum of human varieties and appearances of differences among man. Once again aiming at Africa for producing humans with something intrinsically wrong with their physiognomy, he believed that hermaphrodites were more commonly found in warmer climates than in cooler ones – though they did in fact exist in Europe.²¹⁸ The dryness or humidity and sun combination, which was characteristic of warmer climates, affected man’s organic composition, and localized these divergences of human form, harkening back to Buffon’s Degeneration theory.

Additionally, De Pauw noted that climate motivated the rise of hermaphroditism, and therefore this human deformity was natural. Yet, this natural condition was a “radical” monstrosity.²¹⁹ He contested its actual existence, and claimed that almost all hermaphrodites were merely females with overdeveloped sexual organs, which became more enlarged with time and maturation.²²⁰ In most cases, these deformities naturally cured themselves, but in the case of the hermaphrodite, nature had willed the enlargement to remain. Although Maupertuis’s opinion of nature would have concluded that if nature had maintained the deformity, it was an attractive and favorable development, De Pauw maintained hermaphroditism as a disease similar to Jaucourt’s work.

Although other authors’ concession of naturalness in the hermaphrodite somewhat normalized their condition, De Pauw insistently repeated his belief that hermaphrodites represented another type of human –though not so much as to define a variety or race—

²¹⁸ De Pauw, 71.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 72.

²²⁰ Ibid., 74.

which was a monster.²²¹ Possessing both male and female genitalia marked the hermaphrodite's inferiority to other normal humans. This deformity, to De Pauw, was enough to make them a different degree of human, though his discussion of their humanity did not delve into greater detail. Their physical condition indicated their inferior nature and status as a bastardized group of people.²²²

Overall classified in De Pauw's world broadly as monstrous humans, the hermaphrodite's sexuality posed a conundrum in classification. Due to varying beliefs about what qualified a human as a man or a woman, De Pauw claimed the true conundrum in defining the hermaphrodite or classifying it among other humans was the fact that in Paris, a subject could be deemed male, while the same subject could be defined as female in Toulouse based on whatever checklist of sex qualifications they used.²²³ De Pauw's point alluded to the subjectivity of classificatory systems of this period. One philosopher's opinion, though important, was just another view influenced by circumstance, and perhaps in a different situation, an alternative conclusion would be reached. Though uncomfortable with the awkward undefined sexuality of the hermaphrodite, and its inability to remain asexual or sexually ambiguous, he left further contemplation of the androgynous to future scholars.

Voltaire wrote extensively on the albino, yet did not address the hermaphroditic physical deformity question of the century as much. He resisted formally defining hermaphrodites as an entry in his *Philosophical Dictionary*; but he devoted a section of his "Testicles" entry to their elaboration. He approached the hermaphrodite initially from

²²¹ Ibid., 77.

²²² Ibid., 78.

²²³ Ibid., 75.

a religious standpoint, detailing the religious rights of those with “corporeal defects,” and how those with other physical aberrations – “the blind, crooked, the maimed, the lame, the one-eyed, the leper, the scabby, long noses, and short noses” –were prohibited in Leviticus 21:18 from altar services because their unfavorable qualities had the power to corrupt the offerings sacrificed to God.²²⁴ Biblically, their physiological defects made them prone to desecrate holy places and ceremonies. Voltaire did not elaborate further, but posed, “It has been demanded whether an animal, a man for example, can possess at once testicles and ovaria, or the glands which are taken for ovaria; in a word, the distinctive organs of both sexes? Can nature form veritable hermaphrodites, and can a hermaphrodite be rendered pregnant?”²²⁵ Voltaire honestly responded, “I answer, that I know nothing about it.”²²⁶ Yet his admittance of ignorance did not hinder him from offering his opinion on the subject. He believed that just as Europe did not produce such animal curiosities as the zebra or the giraffe, it was incapable of producing an “animal human” or monstrous creation that would be the hermaphrodite; the southern regions of the world, however, had this ability.²²⁷ Voltaire’s idea of a hermaphrodite was an imperfect mixture of both sexes within a single human and thus, they became a combination of animal and human – a perfect monstrosity.

Similar to De Pauw and Voltaire’s monstrous classification, in 1772, Dr. Claret de La Tourette published an article in *Journal de physique* in which he claimed that in the first inspection, one saw the hermaphrodite as a perfect example of androgyny, yet

²²⁴ Francois-Marie Arrouet de Voltaire, *A Philosophical Dictionary* (1772), Volume VI, (London, 1824), 255.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

ultimately, the being was a monster.²²⁸ He applied this label of monstrous because, in his time, the hermaphrodite's existence was still debated and maintained a chimeric reputation; therefore classifying the androgynous individual as an undefined and oddly sexually ambiguous human would have fallen on deaf ears. Rather, Tourette maintained the hermaphrodite as monstrous – whether or not this had more validity is debatable, yet describing it as such served as a commentary on its physical deformities, not on its actual existence. This contributed to the hermaphrodite's confusing presence, still contested late in the eighteenth century when scientists could not fully commit androgynous individuals to a potentially mythical category. Yet as the hermaphroditic condition was witnessed first hand, its denial begs the question: why live in a cheated reality denied of admitting the hermaphrodite's existence?

Neither male nor female, human nor animal, the hermaphrodite remained in limbo of distinction and of categorization, which led philosophers to label it as a monster. Although philosophers previously created rigid categories to fight their aversion to ambiguity and confusion, they left the hermaphrodite in an uncharted grey area of definition. According to Aristotle and almost every subsequent naturalist, nature was well ordered and if the hermaphrodite was indeed a natural phenomenon, it had to fit within a trenchant category. Denying a natural order would be to embrace a more chaotic experience governed by unknown regulations beyond comprehension – that is, controlling forces that were not natural. Despite Aristotle's Theory of Nature, the hermaphrodite, as demonstrated, could not neatly fit into the natural human/ animal or

²²⁸ Patrick Graille, *Les Hermaphrodites Aux XVIIe et XVIII Siècles: Ouvrage Rédigé avec le Concours de Centre National du Livre* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2001), 67. Note: I have personally translated any and all information taken from *Les Hermaphrodites*.

male/ female categories, which led to its classification in the more fluid and encompassing monstrous group. The monstrous category was a way for philosophers and naturalists to overcome the awkward in-betweenness, which the hermaphrodite inhabited and to adhere to only slightly altered organic human divisions and classifications under the guise of being empirically and truthfully scientific – in which all faith was vested. Though not as philosophically contested as the hermaphrodite's humanity was in the scientific realm, its presence indicated an awkward sexual ambiguity that was not uniquely male or female, but both and neither at the same time.

Chapter Seven: Science Knows Best: The Exploration of the Monstrous

Hermaphrodite

Philosophical Enlightenment discourse had created a hermaphroditic-animal man. Buffon and De Pauw believed the rise of hermaphrodites was a natural occurrence resulting from excessive heat in climactic conditions and so they maintained that the hermaphrodite was a problem localized to warmer climates – specifically Africa and Asia. Although many philosophers and naturalists commented on the genesis and classification of the hermaphrodite during this time, the exact understanding of the hermaphroditic condition continued to pose vexing questions: was it real? If so, what exactly was the hermaphroditic human? Decidedly undecided, the philosophers left the eighteenth century with a legacy of ambiguity regarding the hermaphrodite's classification beyond monstrous status. Continuing with the growing trend of faith in scientific evidence as proof and points of departure broader societal conclusions, scientists took on the case of the androgynous human. Although investigating other human deformities did take place before and especially during the Enlightenment, the hermaphrodite's case posed a problem: generally the deformity was hidden, that is, in order to examine a hermaphrodite, scientists had to be alerted to its presence by someone who had seen the person's sex organs. Though theoretically studied, the deformity often went unnoticed; yet other times, from birth through maturity, the hermaphrodite was studied and held as a curiosity. Once discovered, the hermaphrodite's deformity similarly came under question to physicians as it had to philosophers. Scientists typically believed that the person had assumed the incorrect sex, sought to change that and help them live as their true sex. Yet in this process, physicians managed to further solidify the

hermaphrodite's status as a curiosity and its classification as a sexually ambiguous monster, although these records affirmed the actual existence of the previously debated mythical hermaphrodite.

Inquiry regarding the hermaphrodite had previously existed in philosophical discourse, but one of the first recorded instances of scientific inquiry into the hermaphrodite in the eighteenth century occurred in a letter from a physician, Dr. Veay, to Monsieur de Saint Ussans during the last ten years of the seventeenth century. In this report, Dr. Veay noted a young woman, Marguerite, who was twenty-one years of age and of the same name as Jaucourt's specimen, though a different person. According to his account, she was a pleasant looking girl with desirable features: attractive large breasts, and thighs, and buttocks.²²⁹ Although Dr. Veay noticed a certain sexuality to Marguerite, his account did include a description of her monstrous quality – that is, her possession of male genitalia. Her male member was well formed, yet unaccompanied by testicles. Additionally, Dr. Veay claimed that her penis produced urine, semen, and menstruation.²³⁰ Though a handsome girl with physical features inciting lust, her very sexuality was imperfect, as she possessed a penis. As Dr. Veay wrote, however, he completed his description of her anatomy without casting any apparent judgment on her.

After physicians examined Marguerite and discussed the case and decided that she had not been living as her true sex. They forced Marguerite into men's clothes, into

²²⁹ Mr. Veay and Dr. Aglionby, "An Extract of a Letter Written by Mr. Veay Physician at Thoulouse to Mr. de St. Ussans, Concerning a Very Extraordinary Hermaphrodite in That City," *Philosophical Transactions (1683-1775)*, 16 (1686-1692): 282. Note: My translation here

²³⁰ Ibid.

beginning a suitable occupation for a man, and renamed, Arnaud Malause.²³¹ Decidedly Dr. Veay claimed that one must not be hesitant at their decision because “their Hermaphrodite” could function extremely well and strongly as a man, but was incapable of living the lifestyle of a woman.²³² Yet, Marguerite had been successfully living her life as a servant to another family. She had already been baptized, and had essentially been regarded as a fully capable human for the first twenty-one years of her life. After all this time, however, a physician’s examination led to her redefinition. When in this process did Marguerite lose her or his ability to rule her own life? As a female, Marguerite had been a servant in a family’s home and had been able to adequately lead her life. Yet, physicians appropriated this power of decision, believing that their scientific observations and consequent conclusions were more correct than the natural life that she had been living her life undoctored by medical interference. Science had the real power to determine true sex and if people had been living “correctly.”

Dr. Veay concluded his account with the following, “I believe that I have done you the pleasure of writing on this happening, which is already becoming public in Toulouse, but which is very rare and very extraordinary.”²³³ At first Dr. Veay sexualized Marguerite, highlighted her monstrosity, and then changed her gender. This final comment, however, alluded to Veay viewing the redefined Arnaud as a type of curiosity, deserving of special attention, much like a strange circus specimen.

As Chevalier de Jaucourt previously discussed, Michael-Anne Drouart was a hermaphrodite brought to Paris in 1750. A glorified specimen of the mid-eighteenth

²³¹ Ibid., 283. Note: Veay did not specify the career.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid. Note: my translation

century, many physicians and philosophers examined the hermaphrodite and offered their opinions. Of them, Monsieur Vacherie wrote his account of this encounter in 1750, where he met “the subject” in a “greater point of maturity, and consequently of perfection.”²³⁴ The perfection of which Vacherie spoke was not in reference to beauty or intellect, but rather to Michael-Anne’s ideal nature as a specimen to be examined, which was a rather odd way of describing a human. Although she was younger than the previously described specimen, only sixteen years old, similar to Marguerite, Michael-Anne was baptized as a girl in Paris.²³⁵

Unlike Marguerite, Michael-Anne’s history was more detailed. When she was born, she strongly exhibited both male and female characteristics, which led her parents to give her both male and female names – Michael and Anne. This “creature” identified as female, so her parents allowed her to “dress agreeable to that sex,” and when she was of age, put her to apprentice “to a trade which [consisted] of painting and coloring toys, fans, and the like.”²³⁶ Michael-Anne had personally (or her parents had) decided which sex to embody at a very young age, and had followed that sex’s proper development process. Just as Montesquieu had believed that inhabitants of different climates ought to have different laws, which more accurately accord to their habits, as respective climates altered human behavior to make conduct intrinsically different depending on region, Mr. Veay asserted that there were different expectations and rules for women and men. Therefore, once re-sexed to a female, Michael-Anne had to subscribe to a new rule set.

²³⁴ Vacherie: 3.

²³⁵ Ibid.: 4.

²³⁶ Ibid.

Though Vacherie did not describe how the knowledge of Michael-Anne's hermaphroditism became public knowledge, he argued that despite her chosen sex and embodiment, people came from far and wide to observe and encounter this curious sexual ambiguity.²³⁷ Although her parents had enjoyed their child, they soon became burdened with Michael-Anne's fame and came to resent having to maintain this strange specimen in their family. Nevertheless, the Drouart family continued to let people come to their home to observe their child, yet as time continued and the number of visitors increased, the parents allowed only persons of distinction to come in to "satisfy their curiosity" and only because they could not be turned away.²³⁸ By the time Michael-Anne had turned sixteen, Vacherie described her as a "reality of so wonderful a phenomenon," and "an object so interesting to the public curiosity...which rendered it the admiration of all the curious."²³⁹ Vacherie repetitively employed the word "curious" to describe the hermaphroditic specimen, whose life rather rapidly turned from somewhat normal – as she was baptized, cared for as a normal child, and took on an apprenticeship –to her becoming a caged specimen, to which famed people travelled to see.

As her status as a renown curiosity grew, Michael-Anne became too great a burden to her parents so they decided to send her to Monsieur Fage'aife, a noted surgeon, who agreed to keep her and would not be weathered by the fanfare.²⁴⁰ Again, M. Fage'aife allowed only the most highly ranked doctors and physicians to visit Michael-Anne. Almost uniformly, these doctors gave "this young Creature all the Marks of a tender Humanity and Compassion, for so singular and unfortunate a Distinction, now as

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.: 5.

²³⁹ Ibid.: 5-6.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.: 6.

fully and manifestly develop'd, as to the external Show, or Appearance, as its Age will permit."²⁴¹ Though suffering a physical deformity, which had since served to define Michael-Anne, she was decidedly human—"lively" and "sprightly" at that—characterized by intangible energy and presence – unrelated to her physiognomy.²⁴² Yet she continued to be a curious specimen, as she, on her volition, moved to London "where all Curiosities either of Nature or Art find an Encouragement proportionable to their Degrees of Merit."²⁴³ She was a natural occurrence, yet still an extraordinary creature, paraded around as a circus attraction. Although doctors had defined Michael-Anne as human, her treatment and status within this society suggested a perception otherwise, meaning she persisted as a curiosity without real human consideration (i.e. emotions or rights).

In London, doctors confirmed Michael-Anne's femaleness. She possessed a "female softness," well-formed breasts and nipples comparable to women of her age, yet she did have a penis, which was higher than it would normally be in a man; but all in all, she possessed a perfect duality of sex, where her sex organs were well formed and no different than the rest of humanity.²⁴⁴ This exquisite exhibit of sexual dual nature complicated a previously decided matter: Michael-Anne's sex. Although she had previously decided to live her life as a female, which doctors had initially approved, Vacherie detailed the development of the argument between doctors, where she was ostensibly female, but they found it "hard to pronounce which of the sexes predominates" and the neutrality of the sexes was so muddled that there was not enough distinction "to

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.: 7.

²⁴³ Ibid.: 6.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.: 8.

decide which sex has a right to own them.”²⁴⁵ Moreover, displeased with this conclusion, the physicians took it upon themselves to ponder her sexuality and saw it as their duty to pronounce her true sex, whether she was in fact female or male – to fit more perfectly into the predesigned human categories of the time.

Although the Greeks and earlier philosophers like Jaucourt and De Pauw had treated the hermaphrodite as a semi-mythical creature, Vacherie’s encounter confirmed its actual existence among man, and more importantly, among Europeans. This was no longer a problem localized to the southern hemisphere where the extreme heat had degenerated man into a sexually monstrous version of himself. Michael-Anne was a “complete” hermaphrodite, whom physicians examined with “the taste of mankind for the marvelous” rather than the truth.²⁴⁶ As Vacherie concluded with this note, he conceded that doctors and society favored curiosities and cast this lens onto hermaphrodites. Yet, they preferred to include this specimen of humanity as a physical difference, rather than a divergence from humankind. However, ultimately, the doctors remained undecided on its sex because the estranged parents were quite wealthy and refused the continuous prodding of their child’s sex to determine medical “authentic verification.”²⁴⁷ Therefore, science muddled the sexuality of a previously clearly defined human curiosity. Though initially defined as female, the doctors labeled Michael-Anne as sexually ambiguous and in limbo between the two codified categories of sex. Between both sexes and ultimately in transition between the two, Vacherie’s hermaphrodite rested as a sexually ambiguous monster. Philosophy had muddled and confused the case of the hermaphrodite, but rather

²⁴⁵ Ibid.: 12.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.:14.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

than elucidating the biological intricacies of the hermaphrodite, science had further blurred the question and created a greater tension concerning its existence and categorization among humanity.

As an afterword, Vacherie referenced the case of an African hermaphrodite whose dual sexuality was uniquely referred to as imperfect, although writers almost always referred to the exhibition of male and female genitalia as respectively perfect.²⁴⁸ Yet in light of this sexual imperfection's perfection, the hermaphrodite was a monstrosity of a different sort. Marguerite and Michael-Anne were human monstrosities – without a doubt, humans with a sexual deformity of excess—yet the African hermaphrodite posed a different problem in terms of human classification. Not only did she (as she was more inclined with which to identify) possess both sets of sex organs, but she was black, conjuring philosophers' notions of climate theory, which posed that those living in warmer climates were prone to physical degeneration. Although this had previously been restricted to the philosophical field, the multitude of unanswerable questions in the case of the unclassifiable and ambiguous hermaphrodite forced science to harness philosophical renderings to satiate their inquiries.

As both Marguerite and Michael-Anne were paraded around Western Europe, partially on their own volition and partially toted around as animal fanfare, the practice was repeated in the case of other monstrosities. In each of these instances, there is documentation from different physicians offering their description of the specimen. One of these was James Parsons, who encountered a hermaphroditic female in 1751 in London. Upon meeting the girl, who remained nameless in this account, Parsons intended

²⁴⁸ Ibid.: 16-17.

to give a “true description of her *pudenda*.”²⁴⁹ His first examination concluded that her vagina was “as perfect as that of any other woman.”²⁵⁰ Yet he found this occurrence strange because it was axiomatic that hermaphroditism was not truly a European *problem*, but one localized to the inferior Asia and Africa, like De Pauw had noted.²⁵¹ Parsons’s discovery of a real European hermaphrodite indicated that the sexual deformity was condition to which all humanity was prone. Although it was a malformation in one person, Parsons claimed that it afflicted all persons of that region. Additionally, Parsons echoed a climate theory, similar to Vacherie’s, which claimed that the warmth of the southern regions of the world led to the excessive sexual development in these humans. Parsons acknowledged that hermaphroditic development was not unique to any specific region of the world, yet did not entertain the question as to *how* a European would possess this deformity, bringing in a new idea concerning climate and degeneration theory.

Parsons did, however, believe that females were usually born with both sets of genitalia, but lost male genitalia through maturation; and usually, if this did not occur, he charged parents with cutting or burning them off while the girl was young, so as not to confuse her “true” nature.²⁵² Following this train of thought, this meant that a girl whose extra genitalia was not punctually removed would be condemned as possessing a less-than-true nature. If her nature was neither truly female nor male, were there other categories? Did she maintain her humanity through this? What was she?

²⁴⁹ James Parsons, “A Letter to the President, Concerning the Hermaphrodite Shewn in London,” *Philosophical Transactions (1683-1775)*, Vol. 47 (1751-1752): 142.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 143.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*: 144.

²⁵² *Ibid.*: 145.

Parsons believed her to be human. Although he alleged that others had attempted to defeminize or desexualize her by claiming that she did not have breasts, he dismissed the allegation, countering that “she has as large breasts as any French girl of her age, and as good a nipple; whatever care they take to squeeze and compress them with her apparel.”²⁵³ Although she identified as a female, others had supposedly attempted to conceal her femininity in disguising her breasts, compressing them with certain vestments. The effort to disguise her breasts as a man’s chest suggested that there had been others uncomfortable with her sexuality and saw themselves as more correct in their belief that she should not exhibit her femaleness. Although this girl was comfortable with her life as a female, others were not; and perhaps as an action of dehumanizing or belittling her decision-making skills, they attempted to physically resex her by removing a most characteristic body part.

Although Parsons wrote from a scientific perspective as a physician, his account posed more sociological questions than scientific. He believed her hermaphroditism to be a parental oversight, for not having amended a problem of overgrowth when they had the opportunity, as it was in fact a normality among all females. Therefore, it was abnormal for Europeans to develop a sexual deformity such as this because most often they were intellectually superior and knew how to deal. Yet in warmer climates, where temperatures had tended to degenerate man into less intelligent and less capable, physical degeneration was more common or parents were unaware that they needed to attend to this.²⁵⁴

Although physicians had attempted to resex her, Parsons’s hermaphrodite was indeed female, though in possession of male body parts, which should have been removed at an

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Cressy, 45.

early age. She did not pose a problem. She did, however, illuminate a topic incompletely treated here, however; which was the case of how society reacted to deformity. Volumes could be written on that subject, but let us shortly address it. Although “scientifically” (Parsons’s pseudo-science, that is) this hermaphrodite was both natural and normal, the girl’s society did not approve of her condition. Yet, as they attempted to mask her breasts, which would have betrayed her femininity, they chose to include her in their community, while it could have been just as easy to banish her, or even eliminate her existence. Discomforting, yes; but only mildly so. She persisted as an enigma in society because of her body parts. The case of the hermaphrodite remained unclassifiable and without any real or stable category.

Between scientific and philosophical literature written at the end of the seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth, the differences are minimal. To Dr. Matthew Baille, a fellow at the Royal College of Physicians in London, the sexually ambiguous human was still a confusing development in humanity. He wrote an appendix to the *Morbid Anatomy of Some of the Most Important Parts of the Human Body* in 1798, in which he wrote of the monstrous form in his “Diseased Appearances of the Vagina” section. Although his writing did not offer any major revelations concerning the labeling of hermaphrodites into distinct categories beyond the vague *monstrous*, Dr. Baille suggested that hermaphrodites could be female, male, or both – the actual embodiment of true androgyny.²⁵⁵ Previously ambiguous or neutral at best, though scientists forced the

²⁵⁵ Matthew Baille, “An appendix to the first edition of the *Morbid anatomy of some of the most important parts of the human body*. By Matthew Baille, M. D. F. R. S. fellow of the Royal college of physicians, and physician to St. George's hospital” (London: 1798), *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, (Accessed 29 Nov. 2011), 138.

person into female or male norms, Baille's hermaphrodite created a new sex category. The "both" group all at once codified a new category in humanity and made the hermaphrodite more different and therefore more monstrous to the rest of man. Baille account also differed from previous authors in the way he spoke about the monstrosity. In his opinion, the female and male sex organ duality "[belonged]" to the person.²⁵⁶ The hermaphrodite itself was not monstrous, but a person in possession a monstrous deformity. This sentiment harkened back to Descartes who believed human nature was tied to man's mind—man's body and intellect were separate entities. This notion allowed Baille to examine the hermaphrodite no longer as more than a perplexing conundrum, but as a comfortable ambiguity, more easily categorized.

Baille introduced a case study of a young woman, aged twenty-four years old, who was forced to be an outpatient at Nottingham Hospital by the woman for whom she was a servant.²⁵⁷ The mistress noted the girl's hermaphroditism and coerced the girl to undergo tests and treatments to relieve the apparent malediction. The

person bears a woman's name, and wears the apparel of a woman. She has a remarkably masculine look, with plain features, but no beard. She has never menstruated... Various medicines were tried without effect, which led to the suspicious of the hymen being imperforated and the menstrual blood having accumulated behind it.²⁵⁸

Clearly, this woman possessed masculine features, though in possession of both female and male sets of genitalia had chosen to live as a female. Ostensibly of both sexes, her body neither menstruated nor produced facial hair, placing her in a strange sexual middle ground. The previous scientists did not present their specimens as such – otherwise, the

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 138.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 139.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

androgynous humans were nearly of perfect condition in one sex, though with a singular, physical deformity. Baille described a sexually imperfect person, truly caught between both sexes and able to embody this novel category for hermaphrodites. Also unique, Baille did not exhibit a predilection to fashion the girl into the previous male and female sex categories, and neither did the girl who did not wish to become either sex.²⁵⁹ Yet although this last note supported Baille new sex category, it raised an issue. If the person did not favor either male or female categorization, why had she been masquerading as a female for her twenty-four years of life?

This question can be answered by turning either to eighteenth century sex constructs or authorial manipulation. In the first case, sexual ambiguity was not a recognized state of being in the eighteenth century society. People were either male or female, and the opportunity to hover between the two did not exist. Forced by a rigidly organized and classified human hierarchy, society perhaps coerced (though indirectly) man to embody a sex in order to be included. In the second reasoning, Baillie's new theory was at risk of acceptance, and he therefore needed to have some tangible or empirical justification for his idea. In either instance, the specimen had fabricated a sex for him or herself at one point. What this suggested, then, was that there existed a disconnect between all things bodily and of mind. Physical differences were not indicators of internal inferiority, as Voltaire had argued in the case of the albino. The sexual deformity was monstrous, yet did not make the person a monster; and the physical duality of sex organs did not immediately dictate the sexuality of the person, and a choice no longer had to be made. Although truer, more fluid sex categories emerged later on in

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 140.

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Baille's account alluded to a new movement against the rigid, preexisting categories and the development of more malleable ways of classifying man, not strictly dictated by physicality.

Today, sex assignment and classification have been reduced to an algorithm. This statistical way of looking at human sex, haphazardly though objectively reinforces the sex classification binate of male and female in spite of the appearance of both male and female sex organs.²⁶⁰ Thus, the modern mathematical approach to categorizing male and female humans fails man and instead recalls the eighteenth century practice of leaving them with "ambiguous genitalia" – no different than pseudo-scientific categorization schemes of the earlier period.²⁶¹ Additionally, the medical expert still has the utmost authority in sex assignment.²⁶² Despite 200 years of progress, little has changed in terms of the actual classification of the hermaphrodite; yet, in this text, the hermaphrodite is never compared to or defined as a monstrous human, nor is their status as human ever reduced because of their sex organ duality. Baille's comfort in sex ambiguity has lasted, making this physiological difference acceptable.

The philosophically sanctioned bi-sexed animal-man image of the hermaphroditic human did not continue through the scientific realm. Although time progressed, the observations and conclusions that scientists drew did not. They remained perplexed at the existence of two sexes within one body; they usually concluded that a hermaphroditic person had assumed the wrong sex. Based off of limited observations, the scientists

²⁶⁰ Juan Carlos Jorge, "Statistical Management of Ambiguity: Bodies that Defy the Algorithm of Sex Classification," *DataCritica: International Journal of Critical Statistics*, 1:1, (2007): 19.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*: 20.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

believed their “objective” observation to be more correct and proceeded to force the subject to live their life as their labeled “true-sex.” The subordination of hermaphrodites through their doctor-approved redefinition solidified their categorization as something other than the standard European. Their genitalia confirmed their monstrous status, yet as much as scientific opinion did not evolve, a legitimate field of sexual ambiguity emerged toward the last part of the eighteenth century. It was no accident that the hermaphrodite remained human, though monstrous in the classifications of the time. Marguerite Buffet had begun a quasi-feminist movement geared toward the defense of women. She claimed that the soul was sexless, and despite physiological differences, the sexless soul ensured common humanity among those in possession of any sex organs.²⁶³ At that point, Dr. Braille codified the confusion regarding whether the hermaphrodite was male or female, and created a new category of sexuality of both. This revelation made the hermaphrodite both normal – as the hermaphrodite was now man enough to create a new human sexual grouping – and monstrous – the codified ambiguity established the hermaphrodite as a stable aberration from *normal* humans. This stability transformed the hermaphrodite from an accidental deformity to a fixed, divergent group. Although hermaphrodites were fully functional humans, betrayed by a sexual deformity and those who knew of it, they were considered below the normal status of man because of their physiognomy.

²⁶³ Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind has No Sex?: Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Harvard University Press, 1991), 170.

Conclusion

Arthur Lovejoy argued, contrary to popular conception and retelling of history, that the Enlightenment was “essentially quite simplistic in its conceptions and thought processes.”²⁶⁴ Although that is an oversimplification of the French and English thought of the eighteenth century, Lovejoy’s point carried some validity. Some headway was made in certain areas of thought, yet scholars recorded the same sentiments and confusion regarding human problems such as the albino and hermaphrodite from the beginning of the century to the end, only terminating in mild success of progress. Over the course of what is heralded as one of the greatest periods of thought explosion, little was effectively concluded in terms of what constituted man, basic human categories, the cause behind human variation, and what to do with the humans whose attributes did not easily fit into the preexisting human groupings. Although conclusions to these issues were not decided upon during this time, the Enlightenment stayed true to its original characterization in Chapter One: inquiry. Above all else, the eighteenth century brought hard pressed questions to the forefront of discourse, and forced philosophers and scientists alike to address these conundrums and phenomenon. The answers to these questions were oftentimes confusing and sometimes even incorrect, but the puzzlement created important tensions, which advanced thought and progress following this century.

The first of these tensions is between unique occurrences and patterns. As naturalists like Linnaeus categorized man according to physical traits, it was necessary to differentiate between aberrations, which ones allowed humans to remain men as opposed to those, which expelled man from the human category into either animal or monstrous

²⁶⁴ Lovejoy, 7.

characterizations. This indicated that some physical differences were acceptable whereas others were not. In comparing the case of the hermaphrodite and the albino, it becomes clear that hermaphroditism was a passable deformity – which is not to indicate that eighteenth century society fairly treated these persons or even treated them as humans.

In the case of the hermaphrodite, as exemplified by Michael-Anne Drouart, physicians and society alike looked at her as a novelty, worth exploring and understanding. Scientists travelled to see her and remarked on what they saw. Although she was treated as a specimen and eventually physicians concluded that the sex that she had been embodying was not the most suitable for her, she lived with her parents, existed successfully among society as a functioning human, and following her examination, she continued to live a normal life. Indeed her manner of dressing concealed her deformity, but when it was revealed that she possessed both male and female sex organs, her identity as a hermaphrodite was known. She became the most famed hermaphrodite of the eighteenth century.

Her inclusion in society can be explained by the nature of her physical difference. Although before her and the seventeenth century hermaphroditic specimen, Marguerite, hermaphroditism had been explained as a problem localized to the southern hemisphere as a result of Climate and Degeneration theory, the emergence of isolated instances of European hermaphroditism altered this view. Naturalists and philosophers had envisaged groups of hermaphroditic humans inhabiting South America and Africa because of the few hermaphroditic specimens that had been imported as curiosities to Europe. Therefore the admittance of natural hermaphrodites developing amongst the superior European continent made hermaphroditism appear as an accidental aberration from the

normal form only in a very small amount of cases, rather than a true issue resulting from warmer and more unfavorable regions of the world. As a unique occurrence, the hermaphrodite appeared to be a natural mistake where the deformity arose in light of nature's imperfection. The paucity of hermaphrodites worked on behalf of it and offered acceptance among humanity – or at least more so than divergent humans of the time.

Albinos, on the other hand, represented a divergence from humanity. The visible (or alleged) repetition of the albino form in South America and Africa alluded to a new pattern, which differed from the rest of humanity that nature had created. Unfortunately for the albino, unlike the hermaphrodite, their physical difference was nearly impossible to conceal amidst the darker South Americans and the black Africans. Although there were actually European albinos they more easily blended in with society or were concealed from the public. Therefore, during this time, as travellers explored these southern regions, they shockingly came upon not only few instances of albinos, but whole communities of pigmentless humans, cast away from their own (European-deemed unfavorable) societies. In the European mind, if those underdeveloped societies distanced themselves from the *négres blancs*, there must have been something wrong with these humans, and the Europeans sought to distance themselves as much as possible from this divergent form. Although the Europeans created a barrier between themselves and the albino communities, there was an intense fascination with the albino form. The sheer repetition and visibility of this pattern of hypopigmentation exacerbated the albino's difference from the European.

Though neither the hermaphrodite nor the albino's physiognomy neatly fit into pre-designated human categories, the hermaphrodite was treated much better than the

albino, who was castigated and animalized on a greater level. Indeed the difference between the hermaphrodite and the albino is quite different and the very nature of their deformity varied as well, their treatment during the eighteenth century differed as well. The most important difference between the hermaphrodite and the albino was the proliferation of each variation. Hermaphroditism was more selectively known (or more easily concealed) whereas albinism was a more abundant phenomenon localized to the southern hemisphere. Hermaphroditism was therefore understood as a rarity and a deformity limited to the physical sense. Albinism's prevalence and visibility, however, betrayed it as a divergence from the norm and between the proto-racism developing during this century and the vastness of the "studies" conducted on the subject, the albino's intellectual capabilities were also sacrificed. The nature of the prevalence of these variations in the human form represented a tension and inconsistency regarding physical aberrations.

The tension between deformity and divergence also illuminated the confusion between the categorization of humans whose physicality did not fit the mold: man, animal, or monster. As demonstrated, the exact categorization of humans with ostensible physical differences was never reached during the Enlightenment, rather naturalists created degrees of humans (for example, recall Linnaeus's *sapiens* and *monstrous*)—Buffon categorized them as animal while Maupertuis understood them as monsters. As much as these naturalists entrenched humans with physical deformities as part of these categories, in the case of the albino and the hermaphrodite, they were most commonly classified as monsters – too physically different to belong to the same category as the normal human.

Additionally, this alluded to a distinction that philosophers had made, which alleged that humans were such because of their intellectual capabilities, unrelated to their physicality, whereas naturalists accorded humanity with physical form. This difference in scholarly opinion created and maintained a tension concerning the understanding of humans so not only were exact groupings unclear, but there was no universal agreement regarding what did and did not constitute a human. As a result, philosophers, naturalists, and scientists employed the category, “Monster,” to define and group those who did not fit into the moldings, which had characterized the other human groups. As much as the other labels describing human varieties were vague, based on stereotype, and oftentimes conjecture, the Monster group was even more unspecific – encompassing both the albino and hermaphrodite, whose variations were quite different, yet simplistically differed from the norm. It was a flexible but ephemeral way to categorize peoples until later when substantial scientific strides had been made, greater understanding of humans had developed, and there existed a more effective and objective way of organizing man in the greater backdrop of all living things. Although these aforementioned philosophers and naturalists made headway into the conundrum of human classification, by the end of the eighteenth century, little progress had actually been made. Heralded as one of the most important eras for thought, the Enlightenment’s success fell short for those with physical abnormalities.

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