Gender, Race, and Nation: The Comparative Anatomy of "Hottentot" Women in Europe, 1815–1817

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Anne Fausto-Sterling

A *note about language use:* Writing about nineteenth-century studies of race presents the modern writer with a problem: how to be faithful to the language usage of earlier periods without offending contemporary sensibilities. In this chapter I have chosen to capitalize words designating a race or a people. At the same time, I will use the appellations of the period about which I write. Hence I will render the French word *Negre* as Negro. Some nineteenth-century words, especially "Hottentot," "primitive," and "savage," contain meanings that we know today as deeply racist. I will use these words without quotation marks when it seems obvious that they refer to nineteenth- rather than twentieth-century usage.

A note about illustrations: This chapter is unillustrated for a reason. The obvious illustrations might include drawings and political cartoons of Sarah Bartmann or illustrations of her genitalia. Including such visual material would continue to state the question as a matter of science and to focus us visually on Bartmann as a deviant. Who could avoid looking to see if she really was different? I would have had to counter such illustrations with an additional discussion of the social construction of visual imagery. But this essay is meant to focus on the scientists who used Bartmann. Thus an appropriate illustration might be the architectual layout of the French Museum, where Cuvier worked, or something of that order. Failing to have in hand a drawing that keeps us focused on the construction and constructors of scientific knowledge, I felt it would be better to have none at all. Readers who are dying to see an image of Bartmann may, of course, return to any of the original sources cited.

Introduction

In 1816 Saartje Bartman, a South African woman whose original name is unknown and whose Dutch name had been anglicized to Sarah Bartmann, died in Paris. Depending upon the account, her death was caused by smallpox, pleurisy, or alchohol poisoning (Cuvier 1817; Lindfors 1983; Gray 1979). Georges Cuvier (1769–1832), one of the "fathers" of modern biology, claimed her body in the interests of science, offering a detailed account of its examination to the members of the French Museum of Natural History. Although now removed, as recently as the early 1980s a cast of her body along with her actual skeleton could be found on display in case #33 in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris; her preserved brain and a wax mold of her genitalia are stored in one of the museum's back rooms (Lindfors 1983; Gould 1985; Kirby 1953).[1]

During the last several years Bartmann's story has been retold by a number of writers (Altick 1978; Edwards and Walvin, 1983; Gilman, 1985).[2] These new accounts are significant. Just as during the nineteenth century she became a vehicle for the redefinition of our concepts of race, gender, and sexuality, her present recasting occurs in an era in which the bonds of empire have broken apart, and the fabric of the cultural systems of the nations of the North Atlantic has come under critical scrutiny. In this article I once again tell the tale, focusing not on Bartmann but on the scientists who so relentlessly probed her body. During the period 1814–70 there were at least seven scientific descriptions of the bodies of women of color done in the tradition of classical comparative anatomy. What was the importance of these dissections to the scientists who did them and the society that supported them? What social, cultural, and personal work did these scientific forays accomplish, and how did they accomplish it? Why did the anatomical descriptions of women of color seem to be of such importance to biologists of the nineteenth century?

The colonial expansions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shaped European science; Cuvier's dissection of Bartmann was a natural extension of that shaping. (By "natural" I mean that it seemed unexceptional to the scientists of that era; it appeared to be not merely *good* science; it was forward-looking.) But a close reading of the original scientific publications reveals the insecurity and angst about race and gender experienced by individual researchers and the European culture at large. These articles show how the French scientific elite of the early nineteenth century tried to lay their own fears to rest. That they did so at the expense of so many others is no small matter.

Constructing the Hottentot before 1800

Several of the African women who ended up on the comparative anatomists' dissecting tables were called Hottentots or, sometimes, Bushwomen. Yet the peoples whom the early Dutch explorers named Hottentot had been extinct as a coherent cultural group since the late 1600s (Elphick 1977). Initially I thought written and visual descriptions would help me figure out these women's "true" race; I quickly discovered, however, that even the depictions of something so seemingly objective as skin color varied so widely that I now believe that questions of racial origin are like will-o'-the-wisps. Human racial difference, while in some sense obvious and therefore "real," is in another sense pure fabrication, a story written about the social relations of a particular historical time and then mapped onto available bodies.

As early as the sixteenth century, European travelers circling the world reported on the peoples they encountered. The earliest European engravings of nonwhites presented idyllic scenes. A depiction by Theodor de Bry from 1590, for example, shows Adam and Eve in the garden, with Native Americans farming peacefully in the background. The de Bry family images of the New World, however, transformed with time into savage and monstrous ones containing scenes of cannibalism and other horrors (Bucher 1981). Similarly, a representation of the Hottentots from 1595 (Raven-Hart 1967) shows two classically Greek-looking men standing in the foreground, with animals and a pastoral scene behind. A representation from 1627, however, tells a different story. A man and woman with yellow brown skin stand in the foreground. The man's hair is tied in little topknots; his stature is stocky and less Adonis-like than before, and he looks angry. The woman, naked except for a loincloth holds the entrails of an animal in her hand. One of her breasts is slung backwards over her shoulder, and from it a child, clinging to her back, suckles. As we shall see, the drawings of explorers discussed here in turn became the working background (the cited literature) of the racial studies of the early nineteenth century, which are presented in a format designed to connote scientific certainty.

The Adamic visions of newly discovered lands brought with them a darker side. Amerigo Vespucci, whose feminized first name became that of the New World, wrote that the women went about "naked and libidinous; yet they have bodies which are tolerably beautiful" (Tiffany and Adams 1985: 64). Vespucci's innocents lived to be 150 years old, and giving birth caused them no inconvenience. Despite being so at one with nature, Vespucci found Native American women immoral. They had special knowledge of how to enlarge their lovers'

sex organs, induce miscarriages, and control their own fertility (Tiffany and Adams 1985). The early explorers linked the metaphor of the innocent virgin (both the women and the virgin land) with that of the wildly libidinous female. As one recent commentator puts it:

> Colonial discourse oscillates between these two master tropes, alternately positing the colonized 'other' as blissfully ignorant, pure and welcoming as well as an uncontrollable, savage, wild native whose chaotic, hysterical presence requires the imposition of the law, i.e., suppression of resistance. (Shohat 1991: 55)

From the start of the scientific revolution, scientists viewed the earth or nature as female, a territory to be explored, exploited, and controlled (Merchant 1980). Newly discovered lands were personified as female, and it seems unsurprising that the women of these nations became the locus of scientific inquiry. Identifying foreign lands as female helped to naturalize their rape and exploitation, but the appearance on the scene of "wild women" raised troubling questions about the status of European women. Hence, it also became important to differentiate the "savage" land/woman from the civilized female of Europe. The Hottentot in particular fascinated and preoccupied the nineteenth-century scientist/explorer—the comparative anatomist who explored the body as well as the earth. But just who were the Hottentots?

In 1652 the Dutch established a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope, which not long after became a colonial settlement. The people whom they first and most frequently encountered there were pastoral nomads, short of stature, with light brown skin, and speaking a language with unusual clicks. The Dutch called these people Hottentots, although in the indigenous language they were called Khoikhoi, which means "men of men." Within sixty years after the Dutch settlement, the Khoikhoi, as an organized, independent culture, were extinct, ravaged by smallpox and the encroachment of the Dutch. Individual descendants of the Khoikhoi continued to exist, and European references to Hottentots may have referred to such people. Nevertheless, nineteenth-century European scientists wrote about Hottentots, even though the racial/cultural group that late-20th-century anthropologists believe to merit that name had been extinct for at least three-quarters of a century. Furthermore, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Europeans often used the word "Hottentot" interchangeably with the word "Bushman."[3] The Bushmen, or Khoisan, or hunter-gatherer Khoi, were (and are) a physically similar but culturally distinct people who lived contiguously with the Khoikhoi (Elphick 1977; Guenther 1980). They speak a linguistically related language and have been the object/subject of a long tradition of cultural readings by Euro-Americans (Haraway 1989; Lewin

1988; Lee 1992). In this chapter I look at studies with both the word "Bushman/Bushwoman" and the word "Hottentot" in the titles. Cuvier, for example, argued vehemently that Sarah Bartmann was a Bushwoman and not a Hottentot. The importance of the distinction in his mind will become apparent as the story unfolds.

Constructing the Hottentot in the French Museum of Natural History

The encounters between women from southern Africa and the great men of European science began in the second decade of the nineteenth century when Henri de Blainville (1777–1850) and Georges Cuvier met Bartmann and described her for scientific circles, both when she was alive and after her death (Cuvier 1817; de Blainville 1816). We know a lot about these men who were so needful of exploring non-European bodies. Cuvier, a French Protestant, weathered the French Revolution in the countryside. He came to Paris in 1795 and quickly became the chair of anatomy of animals at the Museum of Natural History (Appel 1987; Flourens 1845). Cuvier's meteoric rise gave him considerable control over the future of French zoology. In short order he became secretary of the Académie des Sciences, an organization whose weekly meetings attracted the best scientists of the city, professor at the museum and the Collège de France, and member of the Council of the University. Henri de Blainville started out under Cuvier's patronage. He completed medical school in 1808 and became an adjunct professor at the Faculté des Sciences, while also teaching some of Cuvier's courses at the museum. But by 1816, the year his publication on Sarah Bartmann appeared, he had broken with Cuvier. After obtaining a new patron, he managed, in 1825, to enter the Académie and eventually succeeded Cuvier, in 1832, as chair of comparative anatomy.

Cuvier and de Blainville worked at the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, founded in 1793 by the Revolutionary Convention. It contained ever-growing collections and with its "magnificent facilities for research became the world center for the study of the life sciences" (Appel 1987: 11). Work done in France from 1793–1830 established the study of comparative anatomy, paleontology, morphology, and what many see as the structure of modern zoological taxonomy. Cuvier and de Blainville used the museum's extraordinary collections to write their key works. Here we see one of the direct links to the earlier periods of exploration. During prior centuries private collectors of great wealth amassed large cabinets filled with curiosities—cultural artifacts and strange animals and plants. It was these collections that enabled the eighteenth-century classifiers to begin their work.

Bruno Latour identifies this process of collection as a move that simultaneously established the power of Western science and domesticated the "sav-

age" by making "the wilderness known in advance, predictable" (Latour 1987: 218). He connects scientific knowledge to a process of accumulation, a recurring cycle of voyages to distant places in which the ships returned laden with new maps, native plants, and sometimes even the natives themselves. Explorers deposited these mobile information bits at centers, such as museums or the private collections that preceded them. Scientists possessed unique knowledge merely by working at these locations, which enabled them literally to place the world before their eyes without ever leaving their place of employ. Latour writes: "[T]hus the history of science is in large part the history of the mobilization of anything that can be made to move and shipped back home for this universal census" (Latour 1987: 225). Cuvier literally lived, "for nearly forty years, surrounded by the objects which engrossed so great a portion of his thoughts" (James 1830: 9). His house on the museum grounds connected directly to the anatomy museum and contained a suite of rooms, each of which held material on a particular subject. As he worked, he moved (along with his stove) from one room to the next, gathering his comparative information, transported from around the world to the comfort of his own home (Coleman 1964).

As centers of science acquired collections, however, they faced the prospect of becoming overwhelmed by the sheer volume of things collected. In order to manage the flood of information, scientists had to distill or summarize it. Cuvier, de Blainville, and others approached the inundation by developing coherent systems of animal classification. Thus the project of classification comprised one aspect of domesticating distant lands. The project extended from the most primitive and strange of animals and plants to the most complex and familiar. The history of classification must be read in this fashion; the attention paid by famous scientists to human anatomy cannot be painted on a separate canvas as if it were an odd or aberrant happening within the otherwise pure and noble history of biology.

During the French Revolution the cabinets of the wealthy who fled the conflict, as well as those from territories that France invaded, became part of the museum's collections. The cabinet of the Stadholder of Holland, for example, provided material for several of Cuvier's early papers. Appel describes the wealth of collected material:

> . . . in 1822, the Cabinet contained 1500 mammals belonging to over 500 species, 1800 reptiles belonging to over 700 species, 5000 fishes from over 2000 species, 25,000 arthropods . . . and an unspecified number of molluscs. . . . (Appel 1987: 35–36)

Cuvier's own comparative anatomy cabinet contained still more. He championed the idea that, in order to classify the animals, one must move beyond their

mere surface similarities. Instead, one must gather facts and measurements from all of the internal parts. Without such comparative information, he believed, accurate classification of the animals became impossible. By 1822, among the 11,486 preparations in Cuvier's possession were a large number of human skeletons and skulls of different ages and races.

The human material did not innocently fall his way. In fact he had complained unbelievingly "that there is not yet, in any work, a detailed comparison of the skeletons of a Negro and a white" (Stocking 1982: 29). Wishing to bring the science of anatomy out of the realm of travelers' descriptions, Cuvier offered explicit instructions on how to procure human skeletons. He believed skulls to be the most important evidence, and he urged travelers to nab bodies whenever they observed a battle involving "savages." They must then "boil the bones in a solution of soda or caustic potash and rid them of their flesh in a matter of several hours" (Stocking 1982: 30). He also suggested methods of preserving skulls with flesh still intact, so that one could examine their facial forms.

As we shall see, Egyptian mummies—both animal and human—supplied another significant source that Cuvier used to develop and defend his theories of animal classification. These he obtained from the travels of his mentor-turned-colleague, and eventual archenemy, Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire spent several years in Egypt as part of the young general Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition. Cuvier declined the opportunity, writing that the real science could be done most efficiently by staying at home in the museum, where he had a worldwide collection of research objects at his fingertips (Outram 1984).[4] In 1798 Bonaparte took with him the Commission of Science and the Arts, which included many famous French intellectuals. During his years in Egypt, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire collected large numbers of animals and, of particular importance to this story, several human and animal mummies. By 1800, British armies had defeated the French in Egypt; the capitulation agreement stipulated that the British were to receive all of the notes and collections obtained by the French savants while in Egypt. But in a heroic moment, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire refused. In the end he kept everything but the Rosetta stone, which now resides in the British Museum (Appel 1987). Once again we see how the fortunes of modern European science intertwined with the vicissitudes of colonial expansion.

Cuvier and de Blainville used the technologies of dissection and comparative anatomy to create classifications. These reflected both their scientific and their religious accounts of the world, and it is from and through these that their views on race, gender, and nation emerge. In the eighteenth century the idea of biologically differing races remained undeveloped. When Linnaeus listed varieties of men in his *Systema Naturae* (1758), he emphasized that the differences

between them appeared because of environment. There were, of course, cross-currents. Proponents of the Great Chain of Being placed Hottentots and Negroes on a continuum linking orangutans and humans. Nevertheless, "eighteenth-century writers did not conceptualize human diversity in rigidly hereditarian or strictly physical terms. . . ." (Stocking 1990: 18).

Cuvier divided the animal world into four branches: the vertebrates, the articulates, the molluscs, and the radiates. He used the structure of the nervous system to assign animals to one of these four categories. As one of his successors and hagiographers wrote, "the nervous system is in effect the entire animal, and all the other systems are only there to serve and maintain it. It is the unity and the multiplicity of forms of the nervous system which defines the unity and multiplicity of the animal kingdom" (Flourens 1845: 98).[5] Cuvier expected to find similarities in structure within each branch of the animal world. He insisted, however, that the four branches themselves existed independently of one another. Despite similarities between animals within each of his branches, he believed that God had created each individual species (which he defined as animals that could have fertile matings). As tempting as the interrelatedness was to many of his contemporaries, Cuvier did not believe that one organism evolved into another. There were no missing links, only gaps put there purposely by the Creator. "What law is there," he asked, "which would force the Creator to form unnecessarily useless organisms simply in order to fill gaps in a scale?" (Appel 1987: 137).[6]

Cuvier's emphasis on the nervous system makes it obvious why he would consider the skull, which houses the brain, to be of utmost importance in assigning animals to particular categories. It takes on additional significance if one remembers that, unlike present-day taxonomists, Cuvier did not believe in evolution. At least in theory, he did not build the complex from the primitive, although his treatment of the human races turns out to be more than a little ambiguous in this regard. Instead he took the most complex as the model from which he derived all other structures. Because humans have the most intricate nervous system, they became the model to which all other systems compared. In each of his *Leçons d'anatomie comparée*, he began with human structures and developed those of other animals by comparison (Coleman 1964). In this sense, his entire zoological system was homocentric.

Cuvier's beliefs about human difference mirror the transition from an eighteenth-century emphasis on differences in levels of "civilization" to the nineteenth-century construction of race. His work on Sarah Bartmann embodies the contradictions such a transition inevitably brings. In 1790, for example, he scolded a friend for believing that Negroes and orangutans could have fertile matings and for thinking that Negroes' mental abilities could be explained by

some alleged peculiarity in brain structure (Stocking 1982). By 1817, however, in his work on Sarah Bartmann, he brandished the skull of an Egyptian mummy, exclaiming that its structure proved that Egyptian civilization had been created by whites from whom present-day Europeans had descended (Cuvier 1817).[7]

Cuvier believed in theory that all humans came from a single creation, a view we today call monogeny. He delineated three races: Caucasians, Ethiopians (Negroes), and Mongolians. Despite uniting the three races under the banner of humanity (because they could interbreed), he found them to contain distinct physical differences, especially in the overall structure and shape of the head. One could not miss the invisible capabilities he read from the facial structures:

> It is not for nothing that the Caucasian race had gained dominion over the world and made the most rapid progress in the sciences while the Negroes are still sunken in slavery and the pleasures of the senses and the Chinese [lost] in the [obscurities] of a monosyllabic and hieroglyphic language. The shape of their head relates them somewhat more than us to the animals. (Coleman 1964: 166)

Cuvier, it is worth noting, was opposed to slavery. His was "a beneficent but haughty paternalism. . . ." (Coleman 1964: 167). In practice, however, his brother Frederic, writing "under the authority of the administration of the Museum" (i.e., brother Georges), would include Georges Cuvier's description of Sarah Bartmann as the only example of the human species listed in his *Natural History of the Mammals* (Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier 1824: title page). Accompanying the article were two dramatic illustrations similar in size, style, and presentation to those offered for each of the forty-one species of monkeys and numerous other animals described in detail. The Hottentots' inclusion as the only humans in a book otherwise devoted to mammalian diversity suggests quite clearly Cuvier's ambivalence about monogeny and the separate creation of each species. Clearly, his religious belief system conflicted with his role in supporting European domination of more distant lands. Perhaps this internal conflict generated some of the urgency he felt about performing human dissections.

Other scientists of this period also linked human females with apes. While they differentiated white males from higher primates, using characteristics such as language, reason, and high culture, scholars used various forms of sexual anatomy—breasts, the presence of a hymen, the structure of the vaginal canal, and the placement of the urethral opening—to distinguish females from animals. Naturalists wrote that the breasts of female apes were flabby and pendulous—like those in the travelers' accounts of Hottentots (Schiebinger 1993). Cu-

vier's description of Sarah Bartmann repeats such "observations." The Hottentot worked as a double trope. As a woman of color, she served as a primitive primitive: she was both a female and a racial link to nature—two for the price of one.

Although Cuvier believed that the human races had probably developed separately for several thousand years, there were others, who we today call polygenists, who argued that the races were actually separate species (Stepan 1982). Presentations such as those in the *Natural History of the Mammals* provided fuel for the fire of polygeny. Cuvier's system of zoological classification, his focus on the nervous system, and his idea that species were created separately laid the foundations for the nineteenth-century concepts of race (Stocking 1982, 1990; Stepan 1982).

In Search of Sarah Bartmann

In contrast to what we know about her examiners, little about Bartmann is certain. What we do know comes from reading beneath the surface of newspaper reports, court proceedings, and scientific articles. We have nothing directly from her own hand. A historical record that has preserved a wealth of traces of the history of European men of science has left us only glimpses of the subjects they described. Hence, from the very outset, our knowledge of Sarah Bartmann is a construction, an effort to read between the lines of historical markings written from the viewpoint of a dominant culture. Even the most elementary information seems difficult to obtain. Cuvier wrote that she was twenty-six when they met and twenty-eight when she died, yet the inscription in the museum case that holds her body says that she was thirty-eight (Kirby 1949). She is said to have had two children by an African man, but de Blainville (1816) says that she had one child. One source says that the single child was dead by the time Bartmann arrived in Europe. According to some accounts, she was the daughter of a drover who had been killed by Bushmen. According to others, she was herself a Bushwoman (Altick 1978; Cuvier 1817). One London newspaper referred to her as "a Hottentot of a mixed race," while a twentieth-century writer wrote that he was "inclined to the view that she was a Bushwoman who possessed a certain proportion of alien blood" (Kirby 1949: 61).

Some sources state that Bartmann was taken in as a servant girl by a Boer family named Cezar. In 1810 Peter Cezar arranged to bring her to London, where he put her on exhibition in the Egyptian Hall of Picadilly Circus.[8] She appeared on a platform raised two feet off the ground. A "keeper" ordered her to walk, sit, and stand, and when she sometimes refused to obey him, he threatened her. The whole "performance" so horrified some that abolitionists brought

Cezar to court, charging that he held her in involuntary servitude. During the court hearing on November 24, 1810, the following claims emerged: The abolitionists charged that she was "clandestinely inveigled" from the Cape of Good Hope without the permission of the British governor, who was understood to be the guardian of the Hottentot nation "by reason of their general imbecile state" (Kirby 1953: 61). In his defense, her exhibitor presented a contractual agreement written in Dutch, possibly after the start of the court proceedings. In it Bartmann "agreed" (no mention is made of a signature, and I have not examined the original), in exchange for twelve guineas per year, to perform domestic duties for her master and to be viewed in public in England and Ireland "just as she was." The court did not issue a writ of habeas corpus because—according to secondhand accounts—Bartmann testified in Dutch that she was not sexually abused, that she came to London of her own free will in order to earn money, and that she liked London and even had two "black boys" to serve her, but that she would like some warmer clothes. Her exhibition continued and a year later, on December 7, 1811, she was baptized in Manchester, "Sarah Bartmann a female Hottentot of the Cape of Good Hope born on the Borders of Caffraria" (Kirby 1953: 61). At some point prior to 1814, she ended up in Paris, and in March of 1815 a panel of zoologists and physiologists examined her for three days in the Jardin du Roi. During this time an artist painted the nude that appears in Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier's tome (1824). In December of 1815 she died in Paris, apparently of smallpox, but helped along by a misdiagnosis of pleurisy and, according to Cuvier, by her own indulgence in strong drink.

Why was Bartmann's exhibition so popular? Prior to the nineteenth century there was a small population of people of color living in Great Britain. They included slaves, escaped slaves, and the children of freedmen sent to England for an education. Strikingly, the vast majority of the nonwhite population in England was male. Thus, even though people of color lived in England in 1800, a nonwhite female was an unusual sight (Walvin 1973). This, however, is an insufficient explanation. We must also place Bartmann's experiences in at least two other contexts: the London entertainment scene and the evolving belief systems about sex, gender, and sexuality.

The shows of London and those that traveled about the countryside were popular forms of amusement. They displayed talking pigs, animal monsters, and human oddities—the Fattest Man on Earth, the Living Skeleton, fire-eaters, midgets, and giants. Bartmann's exhibition exemplifies an early version of ethnographic displays that became more complex during the nineteenth century. After her show closed, "the Venus of South America" appeared next. Tono Maria, a Botocudo Indian from Brazil, publically displayed the scars (104 to be exact) she bore as punishment for adulterous acts. In time, the shows became more

and more elaborate. In 1822 an entire grouping of Laplanders shown in the Egyptian Hall drew 58,000 visitors over a period of a few months. Then followed Eskimos and, subsequently, a "family grouping" of Zulus, all supposedly providing live demonstrations of their "native" behaviors. Such displays[9] may be seen as a living, nineteenth-century version of the early-twentieth-century museum diorama, the sort that riveted my attention in the American Museum of Natural History when I was a child. The dioramas, while supposedly providing scientifically accurate presentations of peoples of the world, instead offer a Euro-American vision of gender arrangements and the primitive that serves to set the supposedly "civilized" viewer apart, while at the same time offering the reassurance that women have always cooked and served, and men have always hunted (Haraway 1989).

Sometimes the shows of exotic people of color involved complete fabrication. A Zulu warrior might really be a black citizen of London, hired to play the part. One of the best documented examples of such "creativity" was the performer "Zip the What-is-it," hired and shown by P. T. Barnum. In one handbill, Zip was described as having been "captured by a party of adventurers while they were in search of the Gorilla. While exploring the river Gambia . . . they fell in with a race of beings never before discovered . . . in a PERFECTLY NUDE STATE, roving among the trees . . . in a manner common to the Monkey and the Orang Outang" (Lindfors 1983: 96). As it turns out, Zip was really William Henry Johnson, an African American from Bridgeport, Connecticut. He made what he found to be good money, and in exchange kept mum about his identity. Interviewed in 1926, at the age of 84, while still employed at Coney Island, he is reported to have said, "Well, we fooled 'em a long time, didn't we?" (Lindfors 1983: 98).

The London (and in fact European) show scene during the nineteenth century became a vehicle for creating visions of the nonwhite world.[10] As the century progressed, these visions "grew less representative of the African peoples they . . . were meant to portray. . . . Black Africa was presented as an exotic realm beyond the looking glass, a fantasy world populated by grotesque monsters—fat-arsed females, bloodthirsty warriors, pre-verbal pinheads, midgets and geeks" (Lindfors 1983: 100). From this vision Britain's "civilizing colonial mission" drew great strength. And it is also from this vision, this reflection of the other, that Europe's self-image derived; the presentation of the exotic requires a definition of the normal. It is this borderline between normal and abnormal that Bartmann's presentation helped to define for the Euro-American woman.

Bartmann's display linked the notion of the wild or savage female with one of dangerous or uncontrollable sexuality. At the "performance's" opening, she appeared caged, rocking back and forth to emphasize her supposedly wild and

potentially dangerous nature. The *London Times* reported, "She is dressed in a colour as nearly resembling her skin as possible. The dress is contrived to exhibit the entire frame of her body, and spectators are even invited to examine the peculiarities of her form" (Kirby 1949: 58). One eyewitness recounted with horror the poking and pushing Bartmann endured, as people tried to see for themselves whether her buttocks were the real thing. Prurient interest in Bartmann became explicit in the rude street ballads and equally prurient cartoons that focused on her steatopygous backside.[11]

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term *steatopygia* (from the roots for fat and buttocks) was used as early as 1822 in a traveler's account of South Africa, but the observer said the "condition" was not characteristic of all Hottentots nor was it, for that matter, characteristic of any particular people. Later in the century, what had been essentially a curiosity found its way into medical textbooks as an abnormality. According to Gilman, by the middle of the nineteenth century the buttocks had become a clear symbol of female sexuality; and the intense interest in the backside, a displacement for fascination with the genitalia. Gilman concludes, "Female sexuality is linked to the image of the buttocks, and the quintessential buttocks are those of the hottentot" (Gilman 1985: 210).[12] Female sexuality may not have been the only thing at stake in all of the focus on Bartmann's backside. In this same historical period, a new sexual discourse on sodomy also developed. Male prostitutes, often dressed as women, walked the streets of London (Trumbach 1991), and certainly at a later date the enlarged buttocks became associated with female prostitution (Gilman 1985). Until more historical work is done, possible relationships between cultural constructions of the sodomitical body and those of the steatopygous African woman will remain a matter of speculation.

Bartmann's story does not end in England. Her presentation in Paris evoked a great stir as well. There was a lively market in prints showing her in full profile; crowds went to see her perform. And she became the subject of satirical cartoons filled with not particularly subtle sexual innuendo. The French male's sexual interest in the exotic even became part of a one-act vaudeville play in which the male protagonist declares that he will love only an exotic woman. His good, white, middle-class cousin, in love with him, but unable to attract his attention, disguises herself as the Hottentot Venus, with whom he falls in love, making the appropriate mating, even after the fraud is revealed. (The full story has many more twists and turns, but this is the "Cliff Notes plot" [Lindfors 1983: 100].)

Of all the retellings of Bartmann's story, only Gould's attempts to give some insight into Bartmann's own feelings. We can never see her except through the eyes of the white men who described her. From them we can glean the following:

first, for all her "savageness," she spoke English, Dutch, and a little French. Cuvier found her to have a lively, intelligent mind, an excellent memory, and a good ear for music. The question of her own complicity in and resistance to her exploitation is a very modern one. The evidence is scant. During her "performances" "she frequently heaved deep sighs; seemed anxious and uneasy; grew sullen, when she was ordered to play on some rude instrument of music" (Altick 1978: 270). Writing in the third person, de Blainville, who examined her in the Jardin du Roi, reported the following:

> Sarah appears good, sweet and timid, very easy to manage when one pleases her, cantankerous and stubborn in the contrary case. She appears to have a sense of modesty or at least we had a very difficult time convincing her to allow herself to be seen nude, and she scarcely wished to remove for even a moment the handkerchief with which she hid her organs of generation. . . . [H]er moods were very changeable; when one believed her to be tranquil and well-occupied with something, suddenly a desire to do something else would be born in her. Without being angry, she would easily strike someone. . . . [S]he took a dislike to M. de Blainville, probably because he came too near to her, and pestered her in order to obtain material for his description; although she loved money, she refused what he offered her in an effort to make her more docile. . . . She appeared to love to sleep: she preferred meat, especially chicken and rabbit, loved (alcoholic) spirits even more and didn't smoke, but chewed tobacco. (de Blainville 1816: 189)

In this passage, de Blainville expressed the same conflicts evinced two centuries earlier by Vespucci. He found her to be modest, good, sweet, and timid (like any modern, "civilized" Frenchwoman), but he could not reconcile this observation with what seemed to him to be the remnants of some irrational wildness (including habits such as chewing tobacco), which were out of line for any female he would wish to call civilized.

It is also worth comparing de Blainville's language to that used by Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and F. Cuvier in the *Natural History of the Mammals*. In the section describing *Cynocephalus* monkeys (which follows immediately on the heels of Sarah Bartmann's description), they write that "one can see them pass in an instant from affection to hostility, from anger to love, from indifference to rage, without any apparent cause for their sudden changes" (Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier 1824: 2). They write further that the monkeys are "very lascivious, always disposed to couple, and very different from other animals, the females receive the males even after conception" (Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier 1824: 3). Clearly, de Blainville's language echoes through this passage framing the scientists' concerns about human animality and sexuality.

Constructing the (Nonwhite) Female

Although a theater attraction and the object of a legal dispute about slavery in England, it was in Paris, before and after her death, that Bartmann entered into the scientific accounting of race and gender. This part of the story takes us from Sarah's meeting with scientists in the Jardin du Roi to her death, preservation, and dissection by Georges Cuvier—and to other scientific and medical dissections of nonwhites in the period from 1815 to, at least, the 1870s.[13]

The printed version of de Blainville's report to the Société Philomatique de Paris (given orally in December of 1815 and appearing in the Society's proceedings in 1816) offers two purposes for the publication. The first is "a detailed comparison of this woman [Sarah Bartmann] with the lowest race of humans, the Negro race, and with the highest race of monkeys, the orangutan," and the second was to provide "the most complete account possible of the anomaly of her reproductive organs" (de Blainville 1816: 183). De Blainville accomplished his first purpose more completely than his second. On more than four occasions in this short paper he differentiates Bartmann from "Negroes," and throughout the article suggests the similarity of various body structures to those of the orangutan.

De Blainville began with an overall description of Sarah Bartmann's body shape and head. He then systematically described her cranium (one paragraph), her ears (two long, detailed paragraphs), her eyes (one paragraph), and other aspects of her face (five paragraphs, including one each devoted to her nose, teeth, and lips). In terms of printed space, her facial structure was the most important aspect. The final segment of his paper includes brief accounts (one paragraph each) of her neck, trunk, and breasts. In addition, he briefly described her legs, arms, and joints, devoting a full paragraph complete with measurements, to her steatopygous buttocks.

De Blainville's attempts to get a good look at her pudendum, especially at the "hottentot apron," which Cuvier finally succeeded in describing only after her death, were foiled by her modesty (see above). Despite this, de Blainville offers three full paragraphs of description. He verbally sketches the pubis, mentioning its sparse hair covering, and lamenting that, from a frontal view, one cannot see the vaginal labia majora, but that, when she leaned over or when one watched from behind as she walked, one could see hanging appendages that were probably the sought-after elongated labia minora.

De Blainville's ambivalences emerge clearly in the written text. He placed Bartmann among other females by reporting that she menstruated regularly, "like other women," but noted that she wasn't really like white women because

her periodic flow "appear[ed] less abundant" (de Blainville 1816: 183). (Debates about menstruation from the turn of the eighteenth century considered menstruation a measure of full humanity; the heavier the flow, the higher one's place in nature [Schiebinger 1993].) Although the person who showed her in Paris claimed that she had a highly aggressive sexual appetite—one day even throwing herself on top of a man she desired—de Blainville doubted the truth of the specific incident. Not to have her too closely linked to European women, however, he also suggests that the modesty he observed might have resulted from her presence for some years among Europeans, conceding that, even after so many years, "it is possible that there still remained something of the original" (de Blainville 1816: 183). Finally, de Blainville suggests "that the extraordinary organization which this woman offers" (de Blainville 1816: 189) is probably natural to her race, rather than being pathological. In support of his contention, he cites travelers who found the same peculiarities—of jaws, buttocks, and labia—among "natives" living in their home environments. Hence, he finishes with the assertion of natural racial difference.

In de Blainville's text different parts of the body carried specific meanings. To compare the Negro and the orangutan, he spent paragraphs on detailed descriptions of the head, face, jaws, and lips. He used these to link Hottentots to orangs, writing that the general form of the head and the details of its various parts, taken together, make clear that Hottentots more closely resemble orangs than they do Negroes. He repeatedly invoked Pieter Camper's facial angle (Gould 1981; Russett 1989), the shape and placement of the jaws, and—in somewhat excruciating detail—the arrangement and structure of the ears. These passages evoke the tradition of physiognomy elaborated by Lavater (1775–78), whose work, widely translated into French and other languages, offered a basis for Gall's phrenology and a method of using the face to read the internal workings of animals. Of humans Lavater wrote:

> The intellectual life . . . would reside in the head and have the eye for its center . . . the forehead, to the eyebrows, [will] be a mirror . . . of the understandings; the nose and cheeks the image of the moral and sensitive life; the mouth and chin the image of the animal life. . . . (Graham 1979: 48)

When de Blainville and then Cuvier offered detailed comparisons between Sarah Bartmann's cheeks and nose and those of Caucasians, they set forth more than a set of dry descriptions. Her "moral and sensitive life" lay evident upon the surface of her face.[14]

It is to the description of the genitalia that de Blainville turns to place Bartmann among women. Here he balances his belief in the civilizing effects of Europe against a scarcely hidden savage libido. The gender norms of white

women appear as a backdrop for the consideration of "savage" sexuality. Although he gave detailed descriptions of most of her exterior, de Blainville did not succeed in fully examining Bartmann's genitalia. Where he failed on the living woman, Cuvier suceeded after her death. Clearly a full account of this "primitive woman's" genitalia was essential to putting her finally in her appropriate place. By exposing them to what passed for scientific scrutiny, Cuvier provided the means to control the previously uncontrollable. Triumphantly, he opened his presentation to the French Academy with the following: "There is nothing more celebrated in natural history than the Hottentot apron, and at the same time there is nothing which has been the object of such great argumentation" (Cuvier 1817: 259). Cuvier set the stage to settle the arguments once and for all.

Twentieth-century scientific reports open with an introduction that uses previously published journal articles to provide background and justification for the report to follow. In Cuvier's piece we see the transition to this modern format from an older, more anecdotal style. Rather than relying on official scientific publications, however, Cuvier relied on travelers' accounts of the apron and the steatopygia. In later works, although these anecdotal, eyewitness testimonials fade from sight, they remain the source for knowledge incorporated into a more "objective" scientific literature. (Sexologists William Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, for example, in their scientifically dispassionate work on the *Human Sexual Response,* include a claim that African women elongate their vaginal labia by physical manipulation; their cited source is a decidedly unscientific (by modern standards) compendium of female physical oddities that dates from the 1930s but draws on nineteenth-century literature of the sort discussed here. [Masters and Johnson 1966: 58].)

To set the stage for his revelations about the Hottentot apron, Cuvier first needed to provide a racial identity for his cadaver (which he referred to throughout the article as "my Bushwoman"). Travelers' accounts indicated that Bushmen were a people who lived much deeper in "the interior of lands" than did Hottentots. The apron and enlarged buttocks were peculiarly theirs, disappearing when they interbred with true Hottentots. Cuvier believed that the confusion between Bushmen and Hottentots explained the inconsistent nature of travelers' reports, since some voyagers to the Cape of Good Hope claimed sightings of the Hottentot apron, while others did not. Nevertheless, he had to admit that many people did not believe in the existence of a Bushman nation. Cuvier threw his weight behind what he believed to be the accumulation of evidence: that there existed "beings almost entirely savage who infested certain parts of the Cape colony . . . who built a sort of nest in the tufts of the brush; they originated from a race from the interior of Africa and were equally distinct from the

Kaffir and the Hottentot" (Cuvier 1817: 261). Cuvier believed that the Bushman social structure had degenerated, so that eventually "they knew neither government nor proprieties; they scarcely organized themselves into families and then only when passion excited them. . . . They subsisted only by robbery and hunting, lived only in caves and covered their bodies with the skins of animals they had killed" (Cuvier 1817: 261). By naming Bartmann as a Bushwoman, Cuvier created her as the most primitive of all humans—a female exemplar of a degenerate, barely human race. Despite his lack of belief in evolution, he constructed her as the missing link between humans and apes.

To the modern reader, several noteworthy aspects emerge from these introductory passages. First, Cuvier melds the vision of an interior or hidden Africa with the hidden or interior genitalia of the Hottentot Venus. This becomes even clearer in subsequent passages in which, like de Blainville, he complains that when he examined her as a living nude in the Jardin du Roi in 1815 she "carefully hid her apron either between her thighs or more deeply" (Cuvier 1817: 265). Second, he connected a hidden (and hypothetical) people from the deep African interior with an animal-like primitiveness. The passage about making nests from brush tufts evokes monkey and ape behaviors (chimps sleep each night in nests they weave from tree branches). Cuvier's goal in this paper was to render visible the hidden African nations and the hidden genitalia. By exposing them he hoped to disempower, to use observation to bring these unknown elements under scientific control. In the remainder of the account, Cuvier devoted himself simultaneously to the tasks of racial and sexual localization. Where among humans did these interior people belong, and what did their women conceal in their body cavities?

In his presentation to the members of the Museum of Natural History, Cuvier moved from a description of the exterior, living, and never quite controllable Bartmann (for he needed her permission to examine her hidden parts) to the compliant cadaver laid out before him, now unable at last to resist his deepest probings. In both life and death Sarah Bartmann was a vessel of contradictions. He found that her "sudden and capricious" movements resembled those of a monkey, while her lips protruded like those of an orangutan. Yet he noted that she spoke several languages, had a good ear for music, and possessed a good memory. Nevertheless, Cuvier's vision of the savage emerged: belts and necklaces of glass beads "and other savage attires" pleased her, but more than anything she had developed an insatiable taste for "l'eau-de-vie" (Cuvier 1817: 263).

For fully one-fifth of the paper we read of her exterior. Cuvier paints what he clearly found to be a picture gruesome in its contradictory aspects. Only four and a half feet tall, she had enormous hips and buttocks, but otherwise normal body parts. Her shoulders and back were graceful, the protrusion of her chest

not excessive, her arms slender and well made, her hands charming, and her feet pretty. But her physiognomy—her face—repelled him. In the jutting of the jaw, the oblique angle of her incisors, and the shortness of her chin, she looked like a Negro. In the enormity of her cheeks, the flatness of the base of her nose, and her narrow eye slits, she resembled a Mongol. Her ears, he felt, resembled those of several different kinds of monkeys. When finally, in the spring of 1815, she agreed to pose nude for a painting, Cuvier reported the truth of the stories about the enormity of her protruding buttocks and breasts—enormous hanging masses[15]—and her barely pilous pubis.

When she died, on December 29, 1815, the police prefect gave Cuvier permission to take the body to the museum, where his first task became to find and describe her hidden vaginal appendages. For a page and a half the reader learns of the appearance, folded and unfolded, of the vaginal lips, of their angle of joining, the measurements of their length (more than four inches—although Blumenbach reportedly had drawings of others whose apron extended for up to eight inches) and thickness, and the manner in which they cover the vulval opening. These he compared to analogous parts in European women, pointing out the considerable variation and stating that in general the inner vaginal lips are more developed in women from warmer climates. The variation in vaginal development had, indeed, been recognized by French anatomists, but a mere ten years earlier, medical writers failed to connect differences in vaginal structures to either southern races or nonwhite women. In a straightforward account of "over-development" of vaginal lips, Dr. M. Baillie, a British physician and member of the Royal Society of Medicine of London (whose book was translated into French 1807), wrote matter-of-factly of this variation, listing it among a number of genital anomalies, but not connected to non-European women (Baillie 1807). As Gilman (1985) points out, however, by the middle of the nineteenth century elongated labia had taken their place in medical textbooks alongside accounts of enlarged clitorises, both described as genital abnormalities, rather than as part of a wide range of "normal" human variation.

Cuvier acknowledged the great variation in length of the inner vaginal lips found even among European women. But nothing, he felt, compared to those of "negresses" and "abyssynians," whose lips grew so large that they became uncomfortable, obliging their destruction by an operation carried out on young girls at about the same age that Abyssinian boys were circumcised. As an aside that served to establish a norm for vaginal structure and a warning to those whose bodies did not conform, we learn that the Portuguese Jesuits tried in the sixteenth century to outlaw this practice, believing that it was a holdover from ancient Judaism. But the now Catholic girls could no longer find husbands because the men wouldn't put up with such "a disgusting deformity" (Cuvier

1817: 267), and finally, with the authorization of the Pope, a permission was made possible by a surgeon's verification that the elongated lips were natural rather than the result of manipulation, and the ancient custom resumed.

Cuvier contrasts the vaginal lips of Bushwomen with those of monkeys, the near invisibility of which provided no evidence to link them to these primitive humans. But the steatopygia was another matter. Bartmann's buttocks, Cuvier believed, bore a striking resemblance to the genital swellings of female mandrills and baboons, which grow to "monstrous proportions" at certain times in their lives. Cuvier wanted to know whether the pelvic bone had developed any peculiar structures as a result of carting around such a heavy load. To answer the question, he made use of his well-established method of comparative anatomy, placing side by side the pelvises of "his bushwoman", those of "negresses," and those of different white women. In considering Bartmann's small overall size, Cuvier found her pelvis to be proportionally smaller and less flared, the anterior ridge of one of the bones thicker and more curved in back, and the ischial symphysis thicker. "All these characters, in an almost unnoticeable fashion, resemble one another in Negro women, and female Bushwomen and monkeys" (Cuvier 1817: 269). Just as the differences themselves were practically imperceptible, amidst a welter of measurement and description, Cuvier imperceptibly separated the tamed and manageable European woman from the wild and previously unknown African.

But something worried Cuvier. In his collection he had also a skeleton of a woman from the Canary Islands. She came from a group called the Guanche (extinct since shortly after the Spanish settlement), a people who inhabited the islands before the Spanish and who, by all accounts, were Caucasians. An astonished Cuvier reported to his colleagues that he found the most marked of Bartmann's characters not in the skeleton of Negro women but in that of the Canary Islander. Since he had too few complete skeletons to assess the reliability of these similarities, he turned finally to more abundant material. In the last part of his account, he compares the head and skull (which "one has always used to classify nations" [Cuvier 1817: 270]) of "our Bushwoman" with those of others in his collection.

Bartmann's skull, he wrote, mixed together the features of the Negro and the Mongol, but, chiefly, Cuvier declared that he "had never seen a human head more similar to those of monkeys" (Cuvier 1817: 271). After offering more detailed comparisons of various bones in the skull, Cuvier returned in the last few pages of his paper to the problem that concerned him at the outset—did the Bushmen really exist as a legitimate people, and just how far into the interior of Africa did they extend? Here he relied once more on travelers' reports. Although modern voyagers did not report such people in northern Africa, Herodotus and others described a group that seemed in stature and skin color to

resemble the Bushmen. According to some sources, these people invaded Abyssinia, although the evidence in Cuvier's view was too prescientific to rely on. But he could be sure of one thing: Neither the

> Bushmen, nor any race of Negros, gave birth to the celebrated people who established civilization in ancient Egypt and from whom one could say that the entire world had inherited the principles of law, science and perhaps even religion. (Cuvier 1817: 273)

At least one modern author suggested that the ancient Egyptians were Negroes with wooly hair, but Cuvier could be sure that this, too, was in error. All he needed to do was compare the skulls of ancient Egyptians with those of the pretender races. One can picture him, as he spoke, dramatically producing from beneath his dissecting table the skulls of Egyptian mummies, those very same ones brought back by Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire from the Napoleonic incursion into Egypt.

Cuvier studied the skulls of more than fifty mummies. These, he pointed out, had the same skin color and large cranial capacity as modern Europeans. They provided further evidence for "that cruel law that seems to have condemned to eternal inferiority those races with depressed and compressed crania" (Cuvier 1817: 273). And finally, he presented to his museum colleagues the skull of the Canary Islander whose skeleton had so troublingly resembled Bartmann's. This too "announced a Caucasian origin" (Cuvier 1817: 274), which is the phrase that concludes his report. In this last section of his paper we watch him struggle with his data. First, he realized that he had a Caucasian skeleton that looked identical to Bartmann's. If he could not explain this away (what modern scientists call eliminating outliers—data points that don't neatly fit an expected graph line), his thesis that Bushmen represented a primitive form of humanity was in trouble. But that wasn't all that worried him: If his thesis was in trouble, so too was the claim of European superiority on which European and American colonization, enslavement, and disenfranchisement so depended. Thus, he went to considerable trouble to explain away the Guanche skeleton; ultimately he succeeded by using the scientific spoils of colonial expansion—the Egyptian mummies captured during Napoleon's Egyptian campaign.

Conclusion

This chapter places the scientific study of nonwhite women in several contexts. The investigations were, to be sure, part of the history of biology and, especially, a component of the movement to catalogue and classify all the living creatures of the earth. But this movement was in turn embedded in the process of European capitalist expansion. Not only did traders and conquerers, by col-

lecting from around the world, create the need for a classification project, they also required the project to justify continued expansion, colonialism, and slavery. Further entangling the matter, the vast capital used to build the museums and house the collections came from the economic exploitation of non-European goods—both human and otherwise. This entire essay has been an argument against a narrowly constructed historiography of science; instead, I more broadly socialize the history of Euro-American biology in the first quarter of the nineteenth century by exposing its intersections with gender, race, and nation.

If one looks at the process less globally, one sees Cuvier and de Blainville as significant actors in a period of scientific change. From the perspective of the history of Euro-American biology, parochially extracted from its role in world expansion, one can say that the biologists of this period, and Cuvier in particular, made enormous scientific progress with the "discovery of the great information content of the internal anatomy of the invertebrates" (Mayr 1982: 183). According to this view, Cuvier "discovered" the importance of the nervous system as a way to organize animals. But "Cuvier's vision of the animal world was deeply coloured by that of the human society in which he was forced to make his way" (Outram 1984: 65). Far from reflecting some underlying natural system, Cuvier's use of the nervous system in his classification schemes had a homocentric starting point. The ideas formed a meshwork. Cuvier gave the focus on the nervous system and brain (obtained from his conviction that classification should proceed from the most complex—in this case human—structure to the simplest) the status of scientific fact by developing a reasonably coherent story about how the structure of the nervous system enabled him to classify all animals. Once scientists agreed on the validity of Cuvier's animal classification scheme, it fed back on the question of human classification. It seemed only "natural" to focus on the structure of the brain (as reflected in cranial and facial characteristics) to obtain evidence about the relative standing of the human races.

Sarah Bartmann's story is shocking to modern sensibilities. The racism of the period seems obvious—even laughable. But in the rush to create distance between nineteenth-century racist science and our modern, putatively less racist selves, even highly sophisticated scholars often lose sight of an important point. The loss becomes evident when I am asked (as I frequently am) what the *real* truth about Bartmann was. Just how big were those forbidden parts? The question reflects an ongoing belief in the possibility of an objective science. It suggests that, now that we have escaped all that silly racism of the nineteenth century, we ought to be able to get out our measuring tapes and find the real truth about other people's bodies. In this essay I argue that Bartmann's bodily

differences were constructed using the social and scientific paradigms available at the time. The historical record tells us nothing about her agency; we can only know how Europeans framed and read her. Were she somehow magically alive today, contemporary biologists or anthropologists might frame and read her differently, but it would be a framing and reading, nevertheless. One contemporary difference might be that the varying worldwide liberation movements could offer her a context in which to contest the constructions of Euro-American science. In fact we see such contestations regularly in debates over such questions as brain size, race, and IQ (Maddock 1992; Schluter and Lynn 1992; Becker, Rushton, and Ankney 1992), brain shape and gender, and genetics and homosexuality (Fausto-Sterling 1992).

In *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison (1992) makes her intellectual project "an effort to avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers. . . ." (Morrison 1992: 90). By analogy I look at the fears and anxieties of the scientists, rather than worrying about the (in)accuracies of their descriptions of Sarah Bartmann and other people of color. To quote further from Morrison:

> The fabrication of an Africanist persona is reflexive; an extraordinary meditation on the self; a powerful exploration of the fears and desires that reside in the writerly conscious. It is an astonishing revelation of longing, of terror, of perplexity, of shame, of magnaminity. It requires hard work NOT to see this. (Morrison 1992: 17)

For our purposes we need only substitute the word "scientific" for the word "writerly." What can we glean of the fears, desires, longings, and terrors that perfuse the works we've just considered? And how are race, gender, and nationality woven into the story? In the accompanying chart I have listed some of the paired contradictions that emerge from my reading of Cuvier and de Blainville.

The simultaneous anxiety about European women and the savage Other is especially clear in de Blainville's account. He identified Bartmann as a woman because she menstruated. But she also drank, smoked, and was alleged to be sexually aggressive—all masculine characteristics. And if Bartmann, a woman, could behave thus, why not French women? Furthermore, the soap opera dramas about Bartmann that played in contemporary Paris suggested that French men, despite their "civilization," actually desired such women; civilization kept the European woman under control, decreasing the danger of rebellion, but thwarting male desire. Minute scientific observation converted the desire into a form of voyeurism, while at the same time confining it to a socially acceptable location.

conquest	resistance
human	animal
surface	interior
tame	wild
sexually modest	libidinous
civilized	savage
compliant	angry
ruler	subject
powerlessness	hidden power
male	female
white	nonwhite
colonizer	colonized

Cuvier most clearly concerned himself with establishing the priority of European nationhood; he wished to control the hidden secrets of Africa and the woman by exposing them to scientific daylight. The French Revolution had frightened him, and certainly the prospect of resistance from other peoples must have seemed terrifying (Outram 1984; Appel 1987). Hence, he delved beneath the surface, bringing the interior to light; he extracted the hidden genitalia and defined the hidden Hottentot. Lying on his dissection table, the wild Bartmann became tame, the savage civilized. By exposing the clandestine power, the ruler prevailed. But one need only look at the list of anxieties glossed from the scientific literature to know how uneasy lay the head that wore a crown.[16]

Notes

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1. In 1992 the Musée de l'Homme had removed the remnants of the Bartmann exhibit. In its place was a modern one entitled "All relatives, all different," celebrating human genetic diversity. Discussion of Bartmann could still be found in a part of the exhibit devoted to the history of scientific racism.

2. There is also a book of poetry featuring the Venus Hottentot in the title poem: Elizabeth Alexander, *The Venus Hottentot* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia), 1990.

3. The Dutch word for Bushman is *bosjeman*, which translates as "little man of the forest." This is also the translated meaning of the Malay word *orangutan*.

4. This is in perfect accord with Latour's account of how scientific knowledge is constructed.

5. All translations from works cited in the original are mine.

6. In fact, de Blainville's break with Cuvier came over just this question. He devised a different classificatory system based on external, rather than internal characters, but he linked his divisions by creating intermediate groupings.

7. The question of the racial origins of European thought has been raised in our own era by the work of Martin Bernal (1987).

8. The detailed ins and outs of her sale and repurchase may be found in the references in note 11.

9. In contrast to the family groupings of Laps, Eskimos, and Zulus, the displays of Bartmann, Tono Maria, and Zip made no attempt to present a working culture.

10. Nonwhites were not the only "others" constructed. I plan to address the use of "freaks" in the construction of the Other in a book-length account of the construction of race and gender by biologists, anthropologists, and sociologists.

11. All the details cited here may be found in Altick (1978), Edwards and Walvin (1983), Gould (1985), Kirby (1949, 1953), and Lindfors (1983). Remarkably, prurient interest in the figure of the Hottentot continues to this day. Gould (1985) discusses a 1982 cover of the French magazine *Photo* that features a naked woman named "Carolina, La Vénus hottentote de Saint-Domingue." In the copy of the Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier held by the Brown Library, the frontal drawing of Bartmann (which exhibited her breasts in full form) has been razored out. The mutilation was first noticed by librarians in 1968. This is not the first time I have encountered such mutilation of material of this sort.

12. Although the bustle was not invented until 1869, various fashions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries accentuated the backside of middle- and upper-class white women (Batterberry and Batterberry 1977). The relationship between these fashions and scientific accounts of the body has yet to be detailed.

13. There were at least seven articles, falling into three chronological groupings, published in scientific journals in England, France, and Germany. The first two, by Henri de Blainville and Georges Cuvier, exclusively on Sarah Bartmann, were published in 1816 and 1817, respectively. The second group, containing two by German biologists, appeared in the 1830s. The first of these was written by Johannes Müller (1801–58) (Müller 1834), a physiologist and comparative embryologist, while the second, written by Frederick Tiedemann (1781–1861) (Tiedemann 1836), Professor of Anatomy and Physiology at the University of Heidelberg and Foreign Member of the Royal Society of London, appeared in 1836. Müller's article is about a Hottentot woman who died in Germany, and is in the same scientific style as the French papers. Tiedemann's work, on the other hand, represents a scientific departure. Although Bartmann's is among a wide variety of brains obtained from museum collections, it is not the focus of the article. From a scientific point of view, Tiedemann's study represents a transition from a period in which scientists offered detailed examinations of the outside of the body, while focusing on a single individual and describing all body parts. Tiedemann awarded priority to one organ—the brain. A comparison of the brains of Europeans, Negroes, and orangutans convinced him

that there was no difference among the humans. He used his results to condemn the practice of slavery. His method, though, is primitive compared to the approach of the scientists working in the 1860s (Marshall 1864; Flower and Murie 1867), whose work provides a useful contrast to the changing scientific and political times. In this paper I will consider the first two exemplars, reserving detailed examination of the other works for a future occasion.

14. Outram (1984) documents Cuvier's dispute with Franz Joseph Gall over the scientific nature of phrenology. But Cuvier clearly believed in the principle that the face could be read for deeper meaning.

15. In the seventeenth century, breasts—as natural and social objects—had undergone a transformation, as male social commentators launched a successful campaign to do away with wetnursing and reestablish the breast as an object that connected women to nature through the act of nursing. For middle- and upper-class white women, doing the right thing with the right kind of breasts hooked them into a growing cult of domesticity, which exploded as the nineteenth-century ideal for gender relationships for the middle and upper classes in Europe and America. This naturalization of motherhood worked hand in glove with the desexualization of white women (Schiebinger 1993; Perry 1991). Perry cites Thomas Laqueur (1986) as explaining "this cultural reconsideration of the nature of women's sexuality as part of a process . . . committed to sweeping clean all *socially* determined differences among people" (Perry 1991: 212), instead relocalizing difference in the biological body. No part of the body escaped unscathed from this process.

16. In one of the lovely ironies of history, Cuvier himself was dissected when he died (in 1832), and his brain and head measurements were taken. In a ranking of 115 men of note, Cuvier's brain weight came in third (Turgenev's was first). The French as a group ranked behind Americans and the British. The author of this 1908 paper concluded that "the brains of men devoted to the higher intellectual occupations, such as the mathematical sciences . . . [or] those of men who have devised original lines of research [Cuvier] and those of forceful characters, like Ben Butler and Daniel Webster, are generally heavier still. The results are fully in accord with biological truths" (Spitzka 1908: 215). In a second, larger sample, Spitzka included four women—mathematician Sonya Kovaleskaya, physician Caroline Winslow, actress Marie Bittner and educator and orator Madame Leblais—who ranked 134th–137th, in brain weight.

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