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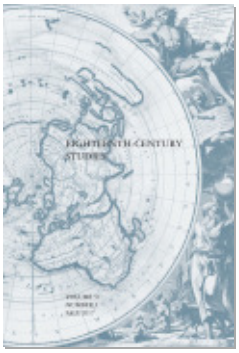

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How Skin Color Became a Racial Marker: Art Historical Perspectives on Race

Anne Lafont

> On sera toujours réduit en dernière analyse aux trois couleurs primitives . . . auxquelles on joint le blanc pour exprimer la lumière & le noir pour en exprimer la privation.
>
> [Ultimately, one has to use primal colors . . . to which white is added to express light and black to express its deprivation.]
>
> —Claude-Henri Watelet, 1788[1]

In 1788 the art theorist Claude-Henri Watelet declared in his entry on color in the *Dictionnaire des Beaux-Arts* that the color white was expressive of light and, consequently, in the age of Enlightenment, of clairvoyance and human intelligence driven by a wish for perfectibility. In the eighteenth century, the metaphor of the Enlightenment to evoke a body of juridical, philosophical, artistic, scientific, and literary projects and debates was already in use.[2] The association on the one hand of the white race with rational progress, and on the other of the black race with its absence and privation—which can be deduced not only from this rather harmless sentence but more generally from the aesthetic discourses of the eighteenth century—corresponded to a widely held conviction that intelligence was divided up among human beings according to a skin color line, a pigmentary demarcation, objective and obvious to the naked eye. Watelet adapted to the aesthetic field Sir Isaac Newton's color theory, which dictated that white is actually composed of the visible spectrum of all colors reflected and that black does not refract light. Newton elaborated on this theory in his *Opticks* treatise of 1704, which was translated into

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French by the physician, journalist, abolitionist, and soon-to-be revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat in 1787, one year before the publication of Watelet's dictionary entry.[3] By appropriating Newton's color theory almost a century later, the French artistic theoretician charged this descriptive analysis of physical evidence with decades of philosophical debates regarding the Enlightenment, slavery, and human diversity. Indeed, it echoed the plurality of skin colors and the prominent bipolarity of Whites and Blacks in the human categorization process and earth mapping.[4]

This article seeks to demonstrate how artistic production and discourse in the eighteenth century produced tools of observation and analysis that allowed human beings to be differentiated as well as implicitly classified on a moral scale, an enterprise that would later veer into explicit racism. I seek to isolate this long, fumbling era of pictorial and pigmentary development because it clearly demonstrates how, by a visual figuration or representation, a natural element—skin color—can be manipulated synthetically to the point of providing evidence or proof of human hierarchies.

The epigraph by Watelet, inspired by the eminent scientific authority Newton, illustrates the construction of race via skin color and points to the visual arts as a fundamental element in early anthropology. This new science of humankind was embedded in the theoretical corpus of the Enlightenment, whose project—comparative, but also categorical—was (among other goals) to write the natural history of the human species. Art, natural history, nascent anthropology, aesthetics, and colonial law converged around 1700 (1685–1745) to establish and then stabilize color as the main racial marker in the inventory of human diversity.

One of the major contributions to the discussion of race from an art historical point of view is David Bindman's seminal book *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the Eighteenth Century*.[5] Bindman writes the history of two parallel and emerging disciplines—aesthetics and anthropology—in the naturalist and artistic texts of the European eighteenth century by following the occurrences of the concept of race.[6] Since writing this book belonging to the history of ideas, Bindman, with Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has overseen the project of *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, in which the main issue is not the question of race but of recollection, on a universal and encyclopedic level, of images with black figures. [7]

In this article I would like to better define the determining role played by the fine arts, especially paintings and drawings, in the surprising imaginary and scientific process that embedded the category of race into that of skin color. My focus will be on (supposed) white and black skin colors, as their comparison draws on a significant ensemble of western artistic and visual material of the eighteenth century, and because, at the very same time, they were the main landmarks in the debates and works of art dealing with race.

In fact, recent scholarship has pointed out how, in the eighteenth century, the intellectual construction of Yellows and Reds as human groups that emerged from Linnaeus and his contemporaries was grounded in diplomatic affairs, trade, and cultural encounters.[8] Yet, unlike written texts, it appears that visual arts did not systematically tend to ethnicize these two supposed human groups.[9] Among a couple of representations of Native Americans in works of art from the final quarter of the eighteenth century (for example, Joseph Wright of Derby's *Indian Widow*,

1784, Derby Museum and Art Gallery, and even in the later *La mort d'Atala* by Girodet, 1808, Paris, Musée du Louvre, which actually shows the Indian Chactas) Amerindians do not look red-skinned at all. Yet it is noteworthy considering that Girodet was the portraitist of Afro-descendant Jean-Baptiste Belley (1797, Versailles) who appeared to be precisely ethnicized in this painting. Consequently, the black man was indeed ethincized in 1797 where the Amerindian was not, even in an academic painting in 1808.

Although the concept of race during the ancien régime has been the subject of remarkable historical and epistemological work in the history of science, political history, and aesthetics, there remains a compelling case to be made for the need to address the role of images and of the fine arts.[10] Their expository and material specificities—their very means and methods—are fundamentally entangled with the anchoring of race and the division of the human species into skin colors.[11] From this perspective, the resources of art history as a discipline of the human and social sciences with specific areas of competence (questions of representation and visibility, politics of the gaze, history of visual form and observation, as well as material and media issues) provide us with remarkable tools for investigating the construction of race and skin color as operative categories in the natural history of mankind, categories which lie at the foundation of the differentiation, comparison, and creation of hierarchies among human beings.

THE 1680S: COLOR OF SKIN, MATRIX OF RACE

In 1682, the painter Pierre Mignard (1612–1695) depicted one of the first African servants to appear in French painting. The young black page alongside a white aristocratic woman forms a pictorial tandem whose success lies in its revelation of the colonial presence in the public and private life of the French and British metropolises of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This early (1682) painting, which portrays Louise de Kéroualle, Duchess of Portsmouth [figure 1], shows the French mistress of the King of England in an environment emblematic of the imperial and maritime dynamic that ruled the destiny of this young aristocrat from Finistère. Through a relationship with Charles II spanning more than fifteen years, Louise de Kéroualle secured the strategic union of French and English powers against the United Provinces and offered a remarkable subject to the portraitist Pierre Mignard in his interpretation of the diplomatic—and fundamental—function of Kéroualle as a French agent in imperial competition. England, which in 1671 was, like France, engaged in a war against the United Provinces (the former on the sea and the latter on land), placed its hopes of dominating maritime commerce on a definitive victory against this rival colonial empire. So ten years later, while Louise de Kéroualle, still the King of England's favorite, was staying in France, Mignard undertook to paint her portrait, lending her an ensemble of symbolic attributes of the secret alliance that she incarnated, and at the heart of which reigned the question of the sea. The coral, the seashell, the pearls, and the smiling young black girl appear as the many natural riches that the seas would deliver to whoever would seize them, namely, to the enduring national pairing, England and France, that Louise de Kéroualle had helped establish a decade earlier.[12]



Figure 1. Pierre Mignard, *Portrait of Louise de Kéroualle, Duchess of Portsmouth*, oil on canvas, 1682, London, National Portrait Gallery.

This portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth signals an augmentation of the European powers' natural resources through their prosperous colonies as well as an exploitation of black labor, presented as docile and consenting. However, the painting also points the way to another iconography: that of an aesthetic pleasure provided by contrasts in flesh, size (the black child is always miniature), and handling, for the white hands seem to enjoy contact with these black "dolls." In France as in England, eighteenth-century portraiture recalled this specific academic painting pattern whose astonishing success tells us to what extent European, mer-

cantile, imperial, and maritime identity was embodied, on an allegorical level, by white aristocratic woman. Moreover, Keroualle's complexion seems all the lighter for being complemented by the presence of a small, manifestly servile dark person.

The *Portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth* is in dialogue with another, later portrait by the same painter: *Portrait of la Marquise de Seignelay* (1691) [figure 2]. Its subject is also represented with coral, shells, and pearls, but without a black page. The kneeling angel on the bottom right corner of the painting seems to have taken on the role embodied by the young African in similar contemporary pictures such as the *Portrait of Madame Claude Lambert de Thorigny* [figure 7]. The Marquise de Seignelay was the widow of Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1651–1690), who had succeeded his father in 1683 to the position of naval secretary of state, in which capacity he enacted the paternal and colonial legal act of the *code noir* of 1685. This legislative text, meant to regulate the rights and duties of masters toward their slaves in the French colonies of the Americas, revealed in the juridical domain the same links unifying European colonists and African slaves or freed servants as did the contemporaneous portraits of white aristocrats and black servants. This genre was inaugurated in France by Mignard as a kind of Atlantic and slavery-informed update of the orientalist Venetian motif of the young black servant with a white adult female mistress, such as in the *Portrait of Laura Dianti* by Titian (1520, Kreuzlingen, Kisters Collection). Mignard appropriated this motif and imported it into a new historical context, from Mediterranean Sea to Atlantic Ocean, from the Oriental trade of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the western human traffic of the eighteenth century.[13] The genre's late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century incarnation was distinguished by the presence of a prepubescent servant likened to a living object or to a pet animal, who serves as a pigmentary repoussoir. This frequently employed schema in early modern art forged the image of the African as eternal minor, forever an immature and childish figure.

During the same time, in the 1680s, François Bernier (1620–1688), physician, traveler, and man of letters, published a text entitled "Nouvelle Division de la terre, par les différentes Espèces ou Races d'hommes qui l'habitent", in the *Journal des Sçavans* of 24 April 1684.[14] In this text, Bernier developed for the first time the concept of partition by color of the diversity of human beings and highlighted two principal groups, Blacks and Whites, although he conceptualized the partition on a global scale into four or five groups (1-Whites; 2-Blacks; 3-Asian Whites; 4-Lapps; 5-Olive-Greenishes). Here is how Bernier explained the urge for a new division of the peoples of the earth, and what was "essential" (his word) to the African Blacks:

> Les Geographes n'ont divisé jusqu'icy la Terre que par les differens Pays ou regions qui s'y trouvent. Ce que j'ay remarqué dans les hommes en tous mes longs & frequents Voyages, m'a donné la pensée de la diviser autrement. Car quoy que dans la forme esterieure du corps, & principalement du visage, les hommes soient presque tous differens les uns des autres, selon les divers Cantons de Terre qu'ils habitent . . . *j'ay neanmoins remarqué qu'il y a sur tout quatre ou cinq Especes ou Races d'hommes dont la difference est si notable, qu'elle peut servir de juste fondement à une nouvelle division de la Terre.*
>
> . . .



Figure 2. Pierre Mignard, *Portrait of la Marquise de Seignelay*, oil on canvas, 1691, London, National Gallery.

Sous la 2. Espece je mets toute l'Afrique, excepté les Costes dont nous venons de parler [celles de la Méditerranée]. Ce qui donne lieu de faire une espèce différente des Africains, ce sont

1. Leurs grosses lèvres & leur nez écaché [*sic*].

2. *La noirceur qui leur est essentielle*, & dont la cause n'est pas l'ardeur du Soleil, comme on le pense; puis que si l'on transporte un noir & une noire d'Afrique en un Pays froid, leurs enfans ne laissent pas d'être noirs aussi bien que tous leurs descendans jusques à ce qu'ils se marient avec des femmes blanches.

[Geographers to this time have only divided the earth according to its different countries or regions. The remarks which I have made upon men during all my long and numerous travels, have given me the idea of dividing it in a different way. Although in the exterior form of their bodies, and especially in their faces, men are almost all different one from the other, according to the different districts of the earth which they inhabit…; *still I have remarked that there are four or five species or races of men in particular whose difference is so remarkable that it may be properly made use of as the foundation for a new division of the earth*.
. . .
Under the second species I put the whole of Africa, except the coasts I have spoken of [Mediterranean ones]. What induces me to make a different species of the Africans, are,
1. Their thick lips and squab noses.
2. *The blackness which is peculiar to them*, and which is not caused by the sun, as many think; for if a black African pair be transported to a cold country, their children are just as black, and so are all their descendants until they come to marry with white women.][15]

Silvia Sebastiani and Claude-Olivier Doron, the two most recent interpreters of Bernier's text, consider the political and intellectual milieu surrounding the 1684 article. Their readings demonstrate that Bernier was neither the inventor nor the forerunner of a taxonomic system, but he did modernize the concept of race by downplaying in the definition of race the preponderant idea of lineage and hereditary transmission. First, he promoted an Atlantic and global (earthly) scale in the categorization of human beings, and second, he highlighted the essentializing feature of blackness in the stabilization and naturalization process of Africans' alterity.[16]

In the middle of the eighteenth century the Swedish savant Linnaeus would take up this division based on groups of people with different skin pigmentation and specify four: white, yellow, black, and red.[17] At the same time, philosophical and naturalist literature was seizing upon the question of the division of the human species, and was forging different categories without stopping at the four color-based races, which did not become well established until the nineteenth century. Thus we find the race of the Lapps in the writings of Buffon, the race of the Pygmies in Abbot du Bos, the human race in Kant, or the Negros, the Hottentots, and the Albinos in Voltaire. Eventually, as late as 1805, Georges Cuvier, appropriating Christoph Meiners's and Johan Heinrich Blumenbach's concept of the Caucasian race in the 1780s, wrote in his *Leçon d'anatomie comparée* that the protrusion of the muzzle[18] is more pronounced with the individuals of the Caucasian race.[19]

The use of the term "race" thus spread throughout the eighteenth century, but initially neither the articulation of the concept of skin color nor the division of the human species into four parts was fixed. Still, the constant recourse to the notion of race to designate an ethnic group (or indeed to designate the human race in its entirety, in distinction to species of animals) shows a process of differentiation founded on the visual perception of anatomic signs (the color of skin, the texture and color of hair, the shape of eyes and nose) shared, to a greater or lesser degree, by the individuals forming a community inhabiting the same territory. The preponderance of color over the other anatomical signs is perceptible in the ironical remark made by Montesquieu that "On peut juger de la couleur de la peau par celle des cheveux" [you can guess the color of the skin by that of the hair].[20]

Race was thus conceptualized as manifested in reliable and legible corporeal signs, revealing itself to sight independently of its bearer's will. It had nothing to do with social availability,[21] but rather served as a distinctive and inescapable anatomical marker. Being of a certain race signified bearing, showing, and transmitting a group of distinctive anatomical elements that, whatever one's individual situation, one could not escape, nor could any observer miss. This context shows how we can enhance our understanding of the notion of race by viewing it through the lens of the history of the visual arts. Namely, the visual arts contributed to the division of humans into races, categories whose foundation—until modern scientific developments enabled human divisions based on genetics—was the color of skin, as primordial marker, echoed in art by the application of pigments: in other words, painting.[22]

The first decade of the reign of Louis XIV, an era of centralization of institutions in the kingdom of France, witnessed the convergence of legal, political, and artistic policies that established the concept of a superior and dominant white race

that was European—even French and Parisian, according to Colbert's institutional initiatives. Discourses and theories of art, undertaken notably by the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture, established in 1648, were no exception, and became embroiled in a debate between two aesthetic camps from the 1660's on: the followers of Charles Lebrun, ardent defenders of the supremacy of drawing, and the followers of Pierre Mignard (the portraitist mentioned above), who, conversely, argued for color as the primary element of painting. It is in this political-aesthetic context of theoretical dispute that the emergence of an obsession with race based on skin color must be understood. Montesquieu wrote, "Il est si naturel de penser que c'est la couleur qui constitue l'essence de l'humanité" [it is so natural to think that it is color that constitutes the essence of humanity],[23] thus summarizing the common understanding that individuals revealed themselves "essentially," or in other words fundamentally, by the color of their skin.

ARISTOTELIANISM AND THE AESTHETICS OF DIVERSITY

It seems necessary to sketch, even if summarily, a panorama of the major stakes of the discourse that treated color as the vector of differentiation and the preponderant racial marker in the intellectual and artistic life of the eighteenth century. Around 1700, the debate between partisans of drawing, or Poussinists, and partisans of color, or Rubenists, was being waged in lectures at the French Royal Academy of painting.[24] The arguments proffered by the partisans of color (Mignard's circle) were grounded in a political dynamic of contestation of the stylistic supremacy of Charles Lebrun. He was the head of the lobby advocating a type of drawing that was clear and unequivocal, at the expense of stylistic plurality that would have allowed for a flowering of variegated forms or colors and their peculiar sensory potentials.[25]

In this attempt to weaken drawing's artistic hegemony for the color partisans, and to defend its superiority for the drawing ones, both sides struggled to better define the essence and power of color, giving rise to numerous texts relevant to the cultural connotations of color and of figures in social and political spheres. Among academic painters who elaborated discourses aimed at locating the specificity of painting in its use of color was connoisseur and theoretician Roger de Piles.[26] He went so far as to explain that the color of a body was the condition not only of its visibility, but also of its distinction, given the extent of possible incarnations. Without color, according to Piles, the body was a mere idea, a shape alone, as he explained:

> Dieu en créant les corps a fourni une ample matière aux creatures de le louer et de le reconnaître pour leur Auteur ; mais en les rendant colorés et visibles, il a donné lieu aux Peintres de l'imiter dans toute sa puissance, et de tirer comme du néant une seconde Nature qui n'avait l'être que dans leur idée. En effet, tout serait sur la terre et les corps ne seraient plus sensibles que par le toucher, *si la diversité des couleurs ne les avait distingués les uns des autres*.[27]
>
> [God, in creating bodies, provided ample material to creatures to laude Him and recognize Him as their Creator; but in rendering them colored

> and visible, He gave painters the opportunity to imitate Him in all His might, and to draw as from the abyss a second Nature that had previously existed only as an idea. Indeed, bodies would no longer be sensible except by touch, *if the variety of colors had not distinguished one from the other*].

The variety of skin colors also found a supporter in Jean Nocret, who recalled that the genius of Titian resounded in the "union of colors and their gradations," especially regarding the wonderful carnation of the woman in the *Conjugal Allegory* of the Louvre (1530).[28] The colorist challenge remained a preoccupation of artists throughout the eighteenth century, from Nattier (*Mademoiselle de Clermont en Sultane*, 1733 [figure 3]) to Ingres (*Odalisque with Slave*, 1839 [figure 4]) and, on the theoretical level, from Roger de Piles to Watelet and Lévesque, who, in the article "color" in the *Dictionnaire des Beaux-Arts* of 1788 (already quoted at the beginning of this article), wrote:

> Il faut penser aux nuances différentes qu'exigent les objets divers. Les nuances ne sont pas les mêmes dans les chairs des hommes, des femmes, des enfants; elles varient encore dans les différents individus du même âge et du même sexe, suivant la couleur qu'ils ont reçue de la nature, suivant le climat qu'ils habitent, la profession qu'ils exercent, l'habitude de vivre à l'abri de l'air ou d'être exposés à l'ardeur du soleil, à la rigueur des saisons.
>
> [Attention must be paid to the different shades required by various objects. The shade of flesh is not the same for men, women, or children; it varies as well in different individuals of the same age and the same sex, according to the color that they received from nature, the climate in which they live, the profession they exert, their custom of living sheltered from air or of being exposed to the heat of the sun and the rigor of the seasons.][29]

The colorist issue remained prominent during the eighteenth century, though traditional teaching was based exclusively on drawing in academic institutions, leaving it to private masters to handle in their studios the transmission of knowledge about pigment preparation and application, and, indeed, about the art of painting, as it was considered accessory in the theoretical and official debates.

Nevertheless, at the same time, artistic literature recommended extreme care in the rendering of skin and, in general, of dark and light. For example, in 1670 the painter Philippe de Champaigne gave a lecture at the Academy on the theory of shadows that connected aesthetics and racial issues:

> pour faire une figure avec entente, il faut qu'il y en ait une partie ombrée, aussi une ordonnance ne peut bien réussir qu'il n'y en ait aussi une partie dans l'ombre, laquelle, outre le repos qu'elle donne à la vue, fait avancer les figures que l'on dispose sur le devant, qui ne peuvent jamais faire un effet extraordinaire sans cet agréable artifice.
>
> [to create an agreeable figure, one part must be in shadow; a composition also cannot succeed without one part in shadow, which, in addition to the repose that it provides to the eye, makes the figures in the foreground emerge; an extraordinary effect cannot be made without this agreeable artifice].[30]



Figure 3. Jean-Marc Nattier, *Mademoiselle de Clermont en Sultane*, oil on canvas, 1733, London, Wallace Collection.

The pictorial success of introducing a black figure acting as an essential foil to the white figure—here called an agreeable artifice—echoed hierarchies of individuals in the racialized, that is, black and white, society of the ancien régime. From this perspective, one can better understand the popularity of the iconography of the black page accompanying a white aristocrat. The page's intrusion into the pictorial field is doubly opportune in at once illustrating a social reality of 1700—the presence of black servants in European metropoles[31]—and in serving the artistic project of harmony and coloristic impact introduced by the theory of the pictorial efficacy resting on the contrast of light and dark.

There was a common argument expressed in formal academic *Conférences during this period:* the lecturers were appropriating the Aristotelian concept of specific difference and applying it to the realm of painting. In effect, as Jacqueline Lichtenstein has argued, there was a "close affinity . . . between, on the one hand, Platonism and artistic theories that attempted to impose on representation [in the instance of painting] the homogeneity of an order founded on an abstract ideal



Figure 4. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Odalisque with Slave*, oil on canvas, 1839, Cambridge, Fogg Art Museum.

[drawing], and on the other, between Aristotelianism and theories that demanded representation to be a space of desire and of heterogeneity where nature expressed itself in its variety [color]."[32] This binary theory of drawing and color in the sphere of representation could be compared with universalist republican theories that were discussed by the deputies during the debates over the definition of the new citizen in the French revolutionary assemblies. Political arguments advocated downplaying differences and promoting a common unity (the Republic, one and indivisible, or the French language against the regional dialects) and proved a precursor to the challenge of considering difference within the community. Relatedly, the feminine register of color in academic discourses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was often emphasized: the feminine was a perversity that threatened the normative—that is, the masculine—temperament of drawing.[33]

The connoisseur Roger de Piles further claimed that "[certains] disent que les ouvrages de Rubens, quand on les examine de près, que les couleurs et les lumières y sont exagérées, que ce n'est qu'un fard, et qu'enfin ce n'est point ainsi que l'on voit ordinairement la Nature. O le beau fard!" [(some) say that in the works of Rubens, upon close examination, the colors and light are exaggerated, that it is mere makeup, and that finally that is not at all how one usually sees Nature. But oh, what beautiful makeup!].[34] With this concept of "makeup" comes a point of divergence, indeed, an ontological difference, between pictorial color and human color, for the latter was a color without makeup, that is to say, without artifice and distancing, and the tinting of the skin (as with makeup or tattoos) was so naturalized and absorbed into the flesh as to become part of it.[35]

TEXTILES AND TATTOOS: ENHANCING THE COLOR OF THE SKIN

In a study on questions of race as conveyed and conceptualized by the visual arts in the eighteenth century, the understanding of skin color can be supplemented by an inquiry into textiles, colored fabrics, dyes, and the new, light cotton cloths printed in various patterns. Their variety stemmed from the globalization of the natural resources used in creating colors, such as indigo, the roucou plant, madder root, and mahogany. The canvases created by artists who were ostensibly seizing upon the nuances of shades offered by an expanded and mobile world—in Paris as well as in Martinique or Barbados, by the forced transfer of populations and colonial interbreeding—call for an analysis of a sort of continuum from skin to fabric, which reinforced the social distinction already established by pigmentation. Artists often echoed this range of complexions by playing with the fabrics in which they dressed their models. The *Indienne*, a cotton cloth imported, as its name suggests, from India, or an imitation made in European factories, pervaded textile consumption.[36] In Europe as in the colonies and in Africa, all social classes snapped up these gaudy, light, fantastical clothes, whose range of prices allowed the class-signifying function of the garment to be maintained.[37]

From 1733, Jean-Marc Nattier magisterially introduced this overlap in the colors of skin and of accessories. This dappling pattern was present in the fantasy of the seraglio, the harem over which presided the white body of the Sultana, Mademoiselle de Clermont [figure 3]. The layering of colors went from the lightest complexion—seated in majesty in the center—to the darkest, pushed to the edges of the canvas. The most outstanding place, however, is given to the mulatto woman. Her outstretched arms highlight the long white fabric (and vice versa), while her turban and clothing are depicted in shades of cream, beige, and brown, and allow a glimpse of her right breast. She seems to be crowned by the illuminated arched ceiling, which represents the architectural form of a halo.

This painting launches a visual crossing of corporeal and clothing materials, which echoed a belief, widely held in some spheres, that certain populations altered their skin color with tattoos and cosmetics. The Jesuit missionary Joseph-François Lafitau articulated this view in his 1727 cultural anthropology, in which he explained the origin of the color of the "Reds" by claiming that they had applied tattoos and other colored cosmetics to their skin. Imagining that the authors of antiquity knew America, he described three elements that he believed to be at the origin of the color of "savage" skins:

> Ce récit d'Euphémus me paraît assez vraisemblable, et la description de ces Insulaires convient parfaitement aux Caraïbes qui étaient maîtres des Antilles, de la plus grande partie desquelles ils ont été chassés par les Européens en ces derniers temps. La chair de ces Peuples est fort rougeâtre : elle l'est naturellement ; & c'est moins un effet du climat, que de l'imagination des Mères, qui trouvant de la beauté dans cette couleur, la transmettent à leur fruit ; elle l'est aussi par artifice : car ces barbares se font peindre tous les jours avec le rocou qui leur tient lieu de vermillon, et les fait paraître rouges comme du sang.

> [The story by Euphemus seems to me credible, and his description of the islands populations fits perfectly with the Caribbeans who were masters of the Antilles, the majority of whom were more recently chased out by Europeans. The flesh of these people is starkly red; it is naturally so; and this is less an effect of the climate, than of the imagination of the Mothers, who finding beauty in that color transmitted it to their fruit; it is also there by artifice, for these barbarians paint themselves every day with the rocou plant which they use in place of vermilion, and which makes them appear red like blood.][38]

Lafitau thus proposed two explanations for the red of the "redskins": first, that the imagination of a mother can be transmitted by will onto the fetus—a widespread theory in the early modern world[39]—and second, that the absorbent capacity of the skin allows an artifice to become natural, an artificially red makeup to become the organic complexion of the skin. Both arguments are extremely important because they contradict the idea of a racialized understanding of skin color according to which the primary definition of race lies in its hereditary transmission. Maternal imagination and skin contamination are not the traditional vehicles of race transmission, which were understood to be fluids such as blood and sperm. Lafitau's arguments, anchored in an emerging cultural anthropology, did in a way broaden the definition of race, and extend it to the concept of ethnic groups.

Thus, Lafitau indirectly offered a contextualization of the craze for textiles evidenced in the artistic imagination of painters like Nattier. Lafitau's interpretation illuminates how, in paintings of the populations of various races, pictorial techniques and artistic logic demanded the convergence of all possible metamorphoses of natural pigmentary resources—and that these materials be transformed, and then deposited, onto the supports of textile and flesh. Pigments for coloring and tinting became embodied, eventually contributing to the complexion of the skin; they seemed to be the cause of the color of diverse populations on the earth. The New World was thus one of the colors of every type—natural, artisanal, human—for nature enabled the exploitation of these pigments, local natural resources whose manufactured transformation altered the appearance of humans' skin as well as of their accessories.

It was thus evident that artists, the colorists *a fortiori* of the eighteenth century, echoed these sentiments via the interweaving of bodies and decors as they handled the figures in their canvases. This was undertaken with a manifest pleasure in the ornaments surrounding the protagonists: their turbans, carpets, clothing, and the upholsteries. This was somewhat different in the case of *fard* [makeup], even if it belonged as well to the lexical field of makeup, tattoos, and dyes; the term fard served to designate above all the symbolic tool of whiteness. The notion of tattoos corresponded to the color of people of color (obtained by natural coloring agents that supposedly penetrated the skin) rather than to the notion of *fard*, which designated an operation of exacerbation of white—conceived, by monogenists like Buffon, as a *non-color*—as the original color of skin prior to maculation.[40] As such, it was capable of being reinforced by the addition of gummy or creamy powders that acted as whitening agents, occasionally with the aid of highlights of pink or red on (especially) the cheeks.

IS WHITE A COLOR? AND HOW WAS IT RACIALIZED IN PAINTING?

The construction of European identities in relation to a distinct anatomical element—white skin—corresponded to a period of intensified maritime expeditions, echoed by the growing number of black figures in Venetian painting in the sixteenth century, to the establishment of French and British empires, paralleled by the notable proliferation of black pages in the portraits of Largillière, Zoffany, and others.[41] In the fine arts, these young African figures participated in the performative apparatus of European whiteness. Within the realm of painting, Europeans pursued two additional explorations of the pigmentary constitution of race: first, the curious scientific and artistic obsession with albinism, and second, the uses of sophisticated make-ups, powders, and blushers by the European aristocracy.

While philosophers and naturalists such as Buffon, Maupertuis, Le Cat, Voltaire, and Blumenbach speculated about the origins of the blackness of Africans as well as the dominant morphological qualities of black populations,[42] artists participated in this endeavor by exploring in detail the forms and borders of humanity. Consequently, many painters were drawn to the artistic challenge represented by the "white negro" inasmuch as the academic system of training and appreciating the art of drawing relied principally on the evaluation of the illusionist skills in regard to anatomy and skin, as explained at length by Antoine Leblond de Latour (1635–1706), an artist and theoretician from Bordeaux. In his dissertation on painting, Leblond de Latour dedicated a long passage to the representation of white skin in its feminine and masculine forms, after having affirmed that nothing was as necessary "à la perfection de notre Art que la science des proportions du corps humain . . . En effet les corps de l'homme, de la femme et du petit enfant, sont les plus beaux objets de nos sens et la plus vaste matière de cet art divin et merveilleux" [to the perfection of our Art as the science of proportions of the human body . . . In effect, the body of the man, woman, and small child are the most beautiful objects to our senses and provide the widest possible subject matter for this divine and marvelous art].[43] The supreme artistic exercise was the representation of the human body, so much so that when this took peculiar forms, as in the case of albinos, the artistic challenge became that much greater and required increased knowledge and imagination. Jean-Baptiste Perronneau met the challenge with an amazing pastel, *Portrait of Maponde* (1745), which has resided ever since in Drottningholm's Castle in Sweden [figure 5].[44]

Perronneau's is one of the many drawings and paintings that eighteenth-century artists dedicated to the iconography of albinos—who were thought of as monsters by some contemporary naturalists like Buffon—as a propitious model through which to explore pictorial exception. This young model gave the artist the opportunity to paint an unusual skin with specific artistic tools since pastel, in contemporary art theory, was supposed to be the most adequate medium in rendering skin, whatever color it was. Perronneau did not overplay this doubly pigmentary occasion and, even if the model wore sophisticated clothes and a hat, the artist chose sobriety and figured a distant and dignified model.

The construction of European identity, as evidenced by the proliferation of black servants in the portraits of white aristocratic women and the interest in



Figure 5. Jean-Baptiste Perronneau, *Portrait of Maponde*, pastel, 1745, Drottningholm's Castle, Sweden.

albino figures, was founded symbolically on a relationship of the French and British with the African as the Other: absolutely, partially, or even temporarily.[45] From this perspective, acknowledging a sort of obsession among Europeans for keeping this Other—the black man, woman, or child—so close, at the borders of oneself, helps us to understand the totemic role of albinos (especially the strange, white African) in the philosophical and naturalist culture of Enlightenment Europe.[46] For, in these individuals who were so resistant to categorization, Nature seemed to be playing with certain morphological criteria that were supposed to be infallible (black skin

and black "wool" for hair in the expressions of the time) but not others (thick lips or flat nose), such that the presumably obvious markers of self and of other became weakened, bringing about a blurring of the borders delimiting Blacks and Whites. The case of the albino in the eighteenth-century raised a question: how to resolve the categorization of human beings by the criterion of skin color, if the race farthest from white Europeans, the black race, could very occasionally but nonetheless undeniably become white?

PERFORMING WHITENESS

Having considered natural whiteness (the European complexion), reversible whiteness (according to Buffon's suggestion that black skin is a temporary deterioration of the original white skin), and a whiteness either pathological or monstrous in the understanding of the time (albinism), I would like to turn to the forms of artificial whiteness obtained by makeup or masks, and to how they were used and depicted in painting. In this regard, *Portrait du Comte d'Orsay*, a pastel by Joseph Boze [figure 6], is particularly evocative, as the painter insistently makes visible this line of color on his model, the demarcation between the white of the powder and the white of the skin. Artificial whiteness was also performed by the masks in the Commedia dell'arte, in which the malicious Harlequin wore the black mask while Pedrolino (Pierrot), the innocent, wore a white costume and makeup in the form of powder or flour, and was in love with a washerwoman, or *blanchisseuse*—literally, white-maker in French—Colombine, which in English means "little-female-dove."

The meticulous work of Catherine Lanoë on the history of cosmetics informs us precisely about the almost alchemical preparations of the master perfumers, and about the medical risks of the unguents and other creams designed to adorn aristocrats at court.[47] Her research teaches us that, for the most part, these primers served to brighten the complexion, acting directly on the dermis to whiten the skin, physiologically. In other words, as Lanoë explains, the white skin tone, whether natural or artificially obtained, carried a social value, and was coveted and sought through a thousand products, which gave rise to how-to manuals. This taste for the whitening of the skin was very clearly echoed in paleness in paintings, as in the feminine portraits of Nicolas de Largillière [*Thorigny*, figure 8], which often also depict the black servant as repoussoir of the white aristocratic woman. This format is well explained by the art theoretician Leblond de Latour:

> Lors que nous voulons exprimer les traits d'une belle Princesse, d'une Reyne, ou d'une Imperatrice, nous avons accoustumé de leur donner pour Suivantes, sur qui elles s'appuyent d'ordinaire en marchant, des femmes un peu bazannées & de vieilles moresques, des Pages avec des gestes fort libres, & et de petits Nains fort difformes, pour donner plus de Grace & de Majesté au sujet principal.
>
> [When we wish to express the traits of a beautiful Princess, or a Queen, or an Empress, we usually give them as attendants, those on whom they lean while walking, somewhat swarthy women and old Moors, servants with strong and free gestures, and greatly deformed little dwarfs, to lend more Grace and Majesty to the principal subject.][48]



Figure 6. Joseph Boze, *Portrait du comte d'Orsay, de profil, poudré*, pastel, before 1793, Paris, musée du Louvre.

Angela Rosenthal and Elsa Dorlin, by different means, have demonstrated that the white woman incarnated the matrix of the race: for one, the seat of the nation; for the other, the citadel rendered imperatively inaccessible to the soiling of shade, to the risk of tan, and simply to the dark.[49] In this context, it seems obvious that in the eighteenth century whiteness was seen not only as a social value, but also and perhaps especially as a racial value. In this century of accelerated contacts with black populations in the colonies as well as in Europe, aesthetic patterns promoted

whiteness, positing it as the summit in the hierarchy of human beings according to racial criteria, both in British society, as aptly described by Rosenthal, and in French society, as seen for example in the *Portrait of Madame Claude Lambert de Thorigny* [figure 7]. This painting, from 1696, is contemporary with the similar portraits painted by Mignard, all of them demonstrating whiteness as a superior value. The face and décolleté of the young woman offer up a milky complexion, subtly enhanced with pink on the lips and cheeks. Indeed, this almost imperceptible alteration of the cheeks by emotion was perceived as a guarantee of the superiority of the race. The few discrete touches of color, reminiscent of tan, participate in the efficacy of the whiteness—to borrow the expression of Louis Marin, a racial efficacy:[50] whiteness, the seat of identity, must be animated, and natural blushing accomplishes this. Meanwhile, the powdered hair, the alabaster forearms, and the transparency of the water, as well as the skin—at once veil and sponge on which are printed the movements of the soul—and the marble whiteness of the legs of the statue in the background (all variegated white elements) work in conjunction to demonstrate metaphorically a sophisticated racial color with numerous plastic echoes and avatars. Conversely, in a well-known pictorial dynamic, the black boy with the slave collar carries a small dog and, formally, acts as pendant to the parrot, whose brightly colored feathering evokes the diverse and the various—in short, the contrary of white. Also, the garland of animated domestic ornaments (the dog, the parrot, and the black slave) furnish the decorative counterpoint to this deployment of white and, implicitly, the nonhuman counterpoint to this demonstration of superior humanity.

The subject is slightly modified in the 1720 *Portrait of the Princess Charlotte-Amelia Rákóczi* [figure 8], in which the main subject is pictured once again with a young black man. To understand the meaning of this painting, it is helpful to recall some of the propositions of Rosenthal, who, in her study of whiteness in painting (essentially British,[51] but adaptable to the painting of Largillière, who was trained in England), outlines a first stage, that of an alterity exterior to the white body (the small servant as a sort of repoussoir); a second stage, in which alterity, internalized in the white body, corresponds to an influx of blood on the cheeks (the first painting of Largillière, [figure 7]); and finally, a third stage, at which the necessary contrast is insufficiently natural and must be obtained artificially. The lipstick and the blush on the cheeks, especially pronounced in this painting, compensate for a flaw in the natural whiteness of the princess, who is no longer effective as a national or racial citadel. For, looking at most of the paintings, it is clear that these milky white complexions, guarantees of the inviolability and the purity of the blood, also rely on the idea of youth. Unlike Madame Thorigny, the princess Rákóczi was no longer young, and either she or her portraitist had to exaggerate the subtle white-pink mix by darkening and intensifying the red makeup.

In both cases, the young black slaves (they wear the distinctive collar, even if legislation did not officially and directly allow slavery on metropolitan ground),[52] pushed to the edges of the paintings, and smaller than their mistresses, gaze at them in adoration, as if the painter felt compelled to show their agreement regarding the authority of the white race. These submissive and admiring looks respond to a frequent strategy put in place to remove, I believe, the moral embarrassment regarding this violent hierarchy of populations. Thus, the adherence of



Figure 7. Nicolas de Largillière, *Portrait of Madame Claude Lambert de Thorigny*, oil on canvas, 1696, New York, Metropolitan Museum.

the Blacks—although impossible to estimate, in such a context of violence—was often a guarantee, a release, and a necessity, which took the form of a simulacrum to assuage the consciences of slave owners such as the American Thomas Jefferson, who expressed it by writing that the Blacks' "own judgment in favour of the whites, declared by their preference of them, as uniformly as is the preference of the Oran-ootan for the black women over those of his own species."[53] This example, among many others, invites us to pay attention to an emblematic Atlantic issue that makes



Figure 8. Nicolas de Largillière, *Portrait of the Pincess Charlotte-Amelia Rákóczi*, oil on canvas, 1720, London, National Gallery.

the different aspects of racial whiteness a western and intercontinental construct. For, in my opinion, Jefferson embodies the relationship of aesthetics and politics.

AESTHETICS AND POLITICS: RACIALIZED COLOR

During his stay in France from 1784 to 1789, Thomas Jefferson frequented literary salons and even helped Jean-Nicolas Démeunier write his articles on the United States for the *Encyclopédie méthodique* of Panckoucke, who was also responsible for the *Dictionnaire des Beaux-Arts* from which the epigraph is excerpted. Jefferson also became close with Maria Cosway, an Anglo-Italian painter living in Paris who would become involved in the ambitious editorial adventure of engraving the masterpieces of the Louvre. This twenty-seven-year-old painter and the sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon, portraitist of Jefferson in 1789,[54] befriended the American politician and shared with him their knowledge of art. In 1785 Jefferson succeeded Benjamin Franklin as United States ambassador, and in the same year published his first version of his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in which he wrote that the cohabitation of Blacks and Whites was unthinkable for numerous reasons, notably because, between the two races and from a visual point of view, "the first difference which strikes us is that of colour."[55] He followed with theoretical ramblings on the fact that "whether the black of the negro resides in the reticular membrane between the skin and scarf-skin, or in the scarf-skin itself; whether it proceeds from the colour of the blood, the colour of the bile, or from that of some other secretion, the difference is fixed in nature, and is as real as if its seat and cause were better known to us. And is this difference of no huge importance?"[56]

Skin color was thus the essential difference between Blacks and Whites, and, as we shall see, the cause of the impossibility of empathy of Whites toward Blacks, an emotional and yet undeniable dynamic at the foundation of the political community. As Jefferson asked,

> Is [the racial difference] not the foundation of a greater or less share of beauty in the two races? Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of colour in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immoveable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race?[57]

Blacks were thus relegated to a non-shareable alterity, which excluded them from the community of white men (in America, Europe, the West) and prevented them from sharing equally their rights and responsibilities. The source of this fundamental distinction Jefferson drew between Blacks and Whites was aesthetic theory:

> Add to these [advantages of the white man], flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, their [the Black people's] own judgment in favour of the whites, . . . The circumstance of superior beauty, is thought worthy of attention in the propagation of our horses, dogs, and other domestic animals; why not in that of man?[58]

Thus, according to Jefferson—certainly aware of naturalist theories on Blacks, including the origins of skin color as well as the proto-evolutionary theories of Petrus Camper (1722-1789)[59]—beauty is white, as acknowledged even by Blacks. He invokes a second element that equally established the aesthetic theory defending the superiority of drawing over color: the expression of passion. This artistic parameter, like color, made its appearance in the political domain.

Following contemporary physiognomic teachings by Johann-Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801) on the possible reading of an individual's soul through the observation of his body and face, Jefferson based the establishment of trust among individuals—instrumental in the construction of a political community—in their capacity to "read" each other. Whiteness was perceived as transparency of the soul, whereas blackness was impenetrable and led to defiance. In Jefferson's text, adapting Newton's theory of light and color, whiteness was associated with emotional transparency and blackness with emotional opacity that led to invisibility and, consequently, to mistrust.

CONCLUSION

I hope to have shown the extent to which the racial category was forged in the visible world, in visual perception, and was based on the existence of an intuitive limit of the self and of the other in which the sense of sight was preponderant. From the beginning of the eighteenth century onward, skin color seems to have been the major site of division of the human species. Since then, it has acted as a natural, non-contestable border due to its visible obviousness and its symptomatic nature, as Montesquieu expressed it in his striking reduction: "you can guess the color of the skin by that of the hair." It meant that black skin meant more than just black skin; it was considered a symptom and a sign of the black race in all its supposed specificities and manifestations.

In this context, the means and ends of art history (studies of visual and material culture, institutional histories of art worlds, and the intellectual history of artistic theory) show themselves to be remarkably efficient tools in critical race studies. Deep, informed knowledge about art and images proves essential for

discerning what prepared, equipped, and accompanied our gaze, both in the past and today, to the "othering" of certain bodies and to the creation of hierarchies of human beings. And these hierarchies, in the Enlightenment era, were most of the time based on a *unicum*, seen as first, original, and superior: White Man, or its idealistic model, the antique Greek male sculpture.

NOTES

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1. The primal colors are red, yellow, and blue in Watelet's article. Claude-Henri Watelet and Pierre-Charles Lévesque, *Dictionnaire des Beaux-Arts* in *l'Encyclopédie méthodique*, ed. Charles-Joseph Panckoucke (Paris, 1788), 1:160. Translations of French quotations are Jennifer Donnelly's, unless otherwise noted.

2. Much has been written on *Les Lumières* or *Siècle des Lumières*; see especially the synthesis of Dan Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010).

3. See the recent French version of Isaac Newton's *Optique*, extensively introduced by Michel Blay (Paris: Dunod, 2015), 1–69; original French edition trans. Jean-Paul Marat (Paris: Leroy, 1787).

4. I am following the convincing argument of James Delbourgo regarding the appropriation of Newton's theory in the understanding of the origin of skin color, especially of black skin color. Delbourgo bases his article on examples such as the Virginian physician John Mitchell and abolitionists like Thomas Clarkson and Olaudah Equiano. Delbourgo, "The Newtonian Slave Body: Racial Enlightenment in the Atlantic World," *Atlantic Studies: Literary, Cultural and Historical Perspectives* 9, no. 2 (2012): 185–207.

5. David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2002).

6. For a contextualization of David Bindman's instrumental work, see my article "Zoomorphismes avant Darwin," *Perspective* (2009, no. 3): 461–66.

7. For this specific project at Harvard, see http://www.imageoftheblack.com. See also my article, "La représentation des Noirs : quel chantier pour l'histoire de l'art?," *Perspective* (2013, no. 1): 67–73.

8. See Nancy Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to be Red," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (1997): 625–44; and Michael Keevak, *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2011). I thank Silvia Sebastiani for these references.

9. Even if, as Linda Nochlin has pointed it out, the Asian figures in Poussin's *St Francis Xavier* (1641, Paris, musée du Louvre) have a yellowish complexion. Linda Nochlin, Anne Lafont, and Todd Porterfield, "Entretien avec Linda Nochlin," *Perspective* (2015, no. 1), put online 31 January 2017, consulted 17 July 2017: http://perspective.revues.org/5800; DOI: 10.4000/perspective.5800.

10. Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*. See also the pioneering collective work in French under the direction of Sarga Moussa from a colloquium in Lyon in 2000. The proceedings were published as *L'idée de "race" dans les sciences humaines et la littérature (XVIIIe et XIXe siècles)*, ed. Sarga Moussa (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003). See also Claude Blanckaert, "La classification des races au XVIIIe siècle. L'anthropologie naturaliste entre méthode et anti-méthode," in "L'invention et la représentation des races au XVIIIe siècle," ed. Isabelle Baudino, special issue, *Lumières* 14 (2009): 13–41; Andrew Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science and Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2011); Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Jean-Frédéric Schaub, *Pour une histoire politique de la race* (Paris: Seuil, 2015).

11. In the Iberian world, the Casta paintings were the main medium through which the question of skin colors and their mixing was approached, explained, and described. They have been treated in

several revealing studies, building on Ilona Katzew's pioneering book *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2004).

12. Catharine Macleod and Julia Marciari Alexander, *Painted Ladies: Women at the Court of Charles II* (London: National Portrait Gallery in association with Yale Center for British Art, 2001), 149. David Williamson, *Kings and Queens* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2010), 116.

13. See Paul H. D. Kaplan, "Italy 1490–1700," in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, ed. David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., vol. 3, *From the "Age of Discovery" to the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2010–11), 93–189 (esp. 109–15 for Tiziano).

14. François Bernier, "Nouvelle Division de la terre, par les différentes Espèces ou Races d'hommes qui l'habitent," in *Journal des Sçavans*, 24 April 1684, 133–40.

15. *Ibid.*, 133–35 (emphasis mine). François Bernier, "New Division of Earth by the Different Species or Races of Men," *Journal des Savants*, 24 April 1684; trans. T. Bendyshe in *Memoirs Read before the Anthropological Society of London* (London: Trübner, 1863–64), 1:360–64, and edited in *The Idea of Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy L. Lott (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2000).

16. See Silvia Sebastiani, "François Bernier," in *Dictionnaire historique et critique du racisme*, ed. Pierre-André Taguieff (Paris: PUF, 2013), 206–07; and Claude-Olivier Doron, "Le cas Bernier," in *L'homme altéré: races et dégénérescence* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2016), 429–33.

17. It is in the tenth edition of *Systema Naturae* (orig. 1735) from Stockholm, 1758–59, tome 1, that Linneaus endorses a classification of the human species that placed the white man at the top of the scale and the black man at the bottom.

18. What is interesting here is that "muzzle" is not usually used for humans but for animals. In French, Cuvier wrote "*museau,*" which is meant to evoke animals' jaws, mouths, and noses. Georges Cuvier, *Leçons d'anatomie comparée* (Paris, 1805), 3:17.

19. These examples tend to prove the original and durable instability of the concept of race as argued by Sebastiani, "Bernier," and Doron, "Le cas Bernier," and further in Aaron Garrett and Silvia Sebastiani, "David Hume on Race," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Race*, ed. N. Zack (forthcoming). Abbot Jean-Baptiste Dubos, *Réflexions critique sur la poésie et la peinture* (Paris: Mariette, 1719), 2:294; Georges Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, *Histoire naturelle* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1749), 3:319; Voltaire, "Des différentes races d'hommes," in *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* (1756; Paris: Classique Garnier, 1990), 1:6; Immanuel Kant, I-*Des différentes races humaines*, 1775 et IV - *Définition du concept de race humaine*, 1785 in *Opuscules sur l'histoire* (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1990), I: 47–67 and IV: 123–44. Cuvier, *Leçons*, 17.

20. Montesquieu, *L'Esprit des lois*, book 15 (Paris, 1748), chap. 5, "De l'esclavage des Nègres." (Paris: Nourse, 1772) 15–V, 305. Curran, *Anatomy of Blackness*, 130–37, comments on Montesquieu's famous chapter and contextualizes the ironical bias used by the French essayist.

21. Concepts of availability and unavailability are borrowed from Schaub, *Pour une histoire politique de la race*. The author means the impossible dissimulation of the race's stigmata, which is quite different from the social signs.

22. Mechthild Fend has explained the semantic migration of the term *pigment* from the field of painting to medical discourse at the end of the eighteenth century. Fend, "Flesh-tones, Skin-color and the Eighteenth-Century Color Print," in *Aesthetics of the Flesh*, ed. Felix Ensslin and Charlotte Klink (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 211–33.

23. Montesquieu, "*De l'esclavage des Nègres*," (Paris, 1772) 15–V, 305.

24. Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *La couleur éloquente: Rhétorique et peinture à l'âge classique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989).

25. For a more comprehensive history, see Bernard Teyssèdre, *Roger de Piles et les débats sur le coloris au siècle de Louis XIV* (Paris/Lausanne: La bibliothèque des arts, 1965); Nathalie Heinich, *Du peintre à l'artiste: Artisans et académiciens à l'âge classique* (Paris: Minuit, 1993); Jacqueline Lichtenstein and Christian Michel, eds., *Les conférences de l'Académie royale de peinture de sculpture (1648–1792)*, 6 vols. (Paris: ENSBA, 2006–15).

26. Lichtenstein and Michel, *Les conférences*, vol. 1, book 1, 436–39.

27. Roger de Piles, *Conversations sur la connaissance de la peinture* (1677, in Lichtenstein, *La couleur éloquente*, 179–81, my italics).

28. Jean Nocret, conference of 1 September 1668, in Lichtenstein and Michel, *Les conférences*, vol. 1, book 1, 258.

29. Watelet and Lévesque, *Dictionnaire des Beaux-Arts*, 1:162.

30. Lecture of 7 June 1670, in Lichtenstein and Michel, *Les conférences*, vol. 1, book 1, 371–73.

31. Érick Noël, *Dictionnaire des gens de couleur dans la France moderne* (Geneva: Droz, 2011).

32. Lichtenstein, *La couleur éloquente*, 65.

33. Even in the middle of the nineteenth century, Charles Blanc could write that "Le dessin est le sexe masculin de l'art; la couleur en est le sexe féminin . . . La couleur joue dans l'art le rôle féminin, le rôle du sentiment; soumise au dessin comme le sentiment doit être soumis à la raison, elle y ajoute du charme, de l'expression et de la grâce." [Drawing is the male sex of art; color is the female sex . . . Color plays the feminine role in art, the feeling role, submitted to drawing as feeling is submitted to reason, it improves charm, expression and grace to the composition.] Blanc, *Grammaire des arts du dessin* (Paris, 1867), 22–24.

34. Roger de Piles, "Dialogue sur le coloris," in *Dissertation sur les ouvrages des plus fameux peintres* (Paris, 1681), 59.

35. I am indebted to Melissa Hyde's extensive work on the concept of *fard*. See Hyde, *Making Up the Rococo: François Boucher and his Critics* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2006).

36. See the definition of Nicole Pellegrin in *Les vêtements de la Liberté: Abécédaire des pratiques vestimentaires françaises de 1780 à 1800* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinea, 1989), 103.

37. Danielle C. Skeehan, "Caribbean Women, Creole Fashioning and the Fabric of Black Atlantic Writing," *The Eighteenth Century* 56, no. 1 (2015): 105–23. See as well Madeleine Dobie, "The Fabric of the Two Worlds," in *Trading Places: Colonization and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century French Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2010), 89–124. Daniel Roche, though he does not include colonial societies in his instrumental history of clothing in the eighteenth century, writes that "une problématique renouvelée de l'histoire du vêtement est un moyen direct d'aller au cœur de l'histoire sociale" [a renewed problematized history of clothing is a direct tool to go straight to the heart of social history]. Roche, *La culture des apparences: Une histoire du vêtement (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 13.

38. Joseph-François Lafitau, *Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps* (Paris: Saugrain, 1724), 29. The whole argument is discussed and contextualized in Dobie, *Trading Places*, 108–09. See as well Voltaire, *Abrégé de l'histoire universelle* (Paris, 1753), 1:29; Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des Nations* (1756–1771; Paris: Bordas, 1990) 2:330–44; or Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Bechot, 1840), 15:36 ff. and 43:368) and Raynal, *Histoire des deux Indes* (Paris, 1780), 15:11–12.

39. In 1765, Claude-Nicolas Le Cat, who collected theories regarding the origin of black skin, mentions the ancient one of the maternal imagination in his *Traité de la couleur de la peau humaine en général et de celle des Nègres en particulier* (Amsterdam, 1765). See Anne Lafont, "Étrange étrangeté: la science au cœur de la représentation de l'Africain," in *L'artiste savant à la conquête du monde moderne*, ed. Anne Lafont (Strasbourg: PUS, 2010), 141–56.

40. This unusual term means "staining": macula is stain in Latin. I chose this term because it dialogues with the idea of immaculate conception referring to the virginity of Mary. The stain is not pure, as it spoils the supposed purity of whiteness in both a physical and spiritual sense.

41. See Bindman and Gates, *Image of the Black*, vol. 3, *From the "Age of Discovery" to the Age of Abolition*, and also Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff ed., *Weisse Blicke: Geschlechtermythen des Kolonialismus* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2004).

42. Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis, *Dissertation physique à l'occasion d'un Nègre blanc* (Leyde, 1744); Claude Nicolas Le Cat, *Traité de la couleur de la peau humaine en général, de celle des nègres*

en particulier et de la métamorphose d'une de ces couleurs en l'autre, soit de naissance, soit accidentellement (Amsterdam, 1765); Johann-Friedrich Blumenbach, *De l'unité du genre humain et de sa variété* (in Latin in 1795 and in German in 1798, French edition: Paris: Allut, 1804), 211–13.

43. Antoine Leblond de Latour, *Lettre de Le Blond de la Tour à un de ses amis contenant quelques instructions touchant la Peinture* (Bordeaux, 1669), 24. I thank Mechthild Fend for mentioning this reference to me.

44. Paul Ratouy de Limais and Léandre Vaillat, *Jean-Baptiste Perronneau (1715–1783), sa vie et son œuvre* (Paris/Bruxelles: Librairie nationale d'art et d'histoire, 1923), 10–13, plate 3.

45. These discourses had two major philosophical axes: first, Buffon's monogenism, and second, polygenism, for example, Voltaire's. These two conceptions decided the fixity or instability and relativity of racial markers. Actually, according to Voltaire, polygenism explained a variety of species. Voltaire, *Traité de métaphysique* (1734) in *Oeuvres complètes*, (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1879), *Mélanges*, 1: 181–93, "Des différentes espèces d'hommes." For his part, Buffon assumed that this variety depended on climate: "Dans l'espèce humaine l'influence du climat ne se marque que par des variétés assez légères, parce que cette espèce est une, et qu'elle est très-distinctement séparée de toutes les autres espèces; l'homme, blanc en Europe, noir en Afrique, jaune en Asie, et rouge en Amérique, n'est que le même homme teint de la couleur du climat" [Climate informs lightly the variation of human species because it is one, firmly separated from all other living species; white man in Europe, black in Africa, yellow in Asia, and red in America, he is the same only and single man tanned by the color of climate]. Buffon, *Histoire naturelle* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1761), 9:1–2.

46. Andrew Curran, "Rethinking Race History: The Role of the Albino in the French Enlightenment Life Sciences," *History and Theory* 48, no. 3 (2009): 151–79; and Curran, *Anatomy of Blackness*, 74–115.

47. Catherine Lanoë, *La poudre et le fard: une histoire des cosmétiques de la Renaissance aux Lumières* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2008).

48. Leblond, *Lettre*, 59.

49. Angela Rosenthal, "Visceral Culture: Blushing and the Legibility of Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century British Portraiture," *Art History* 27, no. 4 (2004), 563–92; and Elsa Dorlin, *La Matrice de la Race. Généalogie sexuelle et coloniale de la Nation française* (Paris: Découverte, 2006).

50. Louis Marin, "L'être de l'image et son efficace," in *Des pouvoirs de l'image, gloses* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), 9–21.

51. See Rosenthal, "Visceral Culture," for pictorial material, and see Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, for a more general British literary, intellectual, and economic context.

52. See the works of Frédéric Régent and Jean-François Niort regarding the French law and Colored People's rights in France and its colonies. Among them: F. Régent, J.-F. Niort, and P. Serna, eds., *Les colonies, la Révolution française, la loi* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014).

53. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (London: John Stockdale, 1787), 230. The first edition, in English, was published anonymously in Paris in 1785 and the second one, a French translation, the year after: Thomas Jefferson, *Observations sur la Virginie* (Paris: Barrois, 1786). The referenced English edition of these notes is the one published in London by Stockdale in 1787. All quotations come from this one, available online: https://books.google.bg/books?id=KlbAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=fr&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=judgment%20in%20favour%20of%20the%20whites&f=false.

54. A marble version of the bust is kept in the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston.

55. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 229.

56. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 229–30.

57. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 230.

58. *Ibid*.

59. See Lafont, "Étrange étrangeté."