tured servants as a means of putting down an Irish Catholic insurrection, sending some 12,000 political prisoners to Barbados between 1648 and 1655, where voluntary indentured servants had been going since 1627.[22] Field laborer was the role of a white underclass in seventeenth-century North America.

It was a handsome business, this transport of the unwilling. And it endured. Faced with an overflowing prison population, Parliament passed the Transportation Act in 1718, allowing for the removal of convicts to the North American colonies. Tens of thousands were corralled under the act, convicts seen as scarcely human, already known as "crackers," and routinely labeled "scum and dregs."[23] Benjamin Franklin, an eloquent spokesman for the colonists' loathing, proposed that in return for the convicts, Americans send the mother country a like number of rattlesnakes. Between the beginnings of the trade and its ending during the American Revolution, some 50,000 convicts were forcibly transported to British North America.[24] Shortly after American independence, Britain, in need of another outlet, began shipping its convicts—some 160,000 before 1868, when the practice ceased—to Australia, continuing the process for another ninety years.

In sum, before an eighteenth-century boom in the African slave trade, between one-half and two-thirds of all early white immigrants to the British colonies in the Western Hemisphere came as unfree laborers, some 300,000 to 400,000 people.[25]* The eighteenth century created the now familiar equation that converts race to black and black to slave.

* Present-day white nationalists resenting the burden of black slavery in terms of white guilt and black demands for redress seek to remind Americans of the history of white slavery. *They Were White and They Were Slaves*, by Michael A. Hoffman II, for instance, begins with the protest, "Today, not a tear is shed for the sufferings of millions of our own enslaved forefathers. 200 years of White slavery in America have been almost completely obliterated from the collective memory of the American People." Drawing on historical scholarship, Hoffman nonetheless blames "professorcrats" and "the corporate media" for hiding information about enslaved whites from the public.

4

WHITE SLAVERY AS BEAUTY IDEAL

As the eighteenth-century science of race developed in Europe, influential scholars referred to two kinds of slavery in their anthropological works. Nearly always those associated with brute labor—Africans and Tartars primarily—emerged as ugly, while the luxury slaves, those valued for sex and gendered as female—the Circassians, Georgians, and Caucasians of the Black Sea region—came to figure as epitomes of human beauty. By the nineteenth century, "odalisques," or white slave women, often appear young, naked, beautiful, and sexually available throughout European and American art. (The odalisque still plays her role as the nude in art history, though her part in the scientific history of white race has largely been forgotten.)

Needless to say, this early scholarship was ethnographically imprecise, pairing as it did Africans with Tartars (increasingly termed Kalmucks) on the ugly side. But, clearly, figuring some as ugly and some as beautiful seemed much more important than ethnographical consistency. The relationship between slavery and racial classification brings the beauty ideal squarely into the history of whiteness.

Note the earliest known human classification scheme, "Nouvelle division de la terre par les différentes espèces ou races qui l'habitent" ("A New Division of the Earth and the Different Species or Races Living There)," originally published anonymously in April 1684 in *Journal des*

Sçavans, the journal of the Académie Royale des Sciences in Paris. The author turned out to be François Bernier (1625–88), a French traveler and personal physician to the last important Mughal (Persian) emperor of India. Bernier put forward an idiosyncratic taxonomy, one keying on four geographical divisions. It was really no odder than the thousands of other racial schemes to follow.

As usual in Western literature, Bernier's four races give pride of place to Europe and extend over a vast area, including North Africa and Asia as far away as Thailand and Indonesia. (For some reason, "a part of Muscovy," i.e., the area around Moscow, is excluded.) More oddly, American Indians belong to Bernier's first, mostly European species. In the second species are people in sub-Saharan Africa, and in the third are those in Muscovy, part of southeast Asia, China, and the vast lands between China and Russia, including Tartars, all around the Fertile Crescent, and into the Levant. Georgians, Muscovites, Tartars, Usbeks, and Turcomans all belong to the third species. Alone in the fourth species are the Lapps. (Race theoreticians stumbled continually over what to do with the Lapps.)

Why such a weird configuration? At least part of Bernier's answer seems to lie in physical appearance. In skin color, the third people (Asians) are "truly white, but they have broad shoulders, a flat face, a small squab nose, little pig's-eyes long and deep set, and three hairs of a beard." The Lapps are "little stunted creatures with thick legs, large shoulders, short neck, and a face elongated immensely; very ugly and partaking much of the bear."

Veering off toward sexual desire, Bernier dedicates more than half his paper to the relative beauty of women, employing phrases that became commonplace and ideas fated for oblivion. Showing a certain relativism, Bernier admits that each people will have its hierarchy of beautiful and ugly women, but, he insists, some peoples really are better looking than others: "You have heard so much said [already of] the beauty of the Greeks," he says, and "all the Levantines and all the travelers" agree that "the handsomest women of the world are to be found . . . [among the] immense quantity of slaves who come to them from Mingrelia, Georgia,

and Circassia." Nothing beyond the commonplace so far. But Bernier continues, speaking, he says, only for himself: "I have never seen anything more beautiful" than the naked black slave girls for sale at Moka, in the Indian Ocean off the coast of East Africa.[1]

While Bernier's paper appeared in a prestigious journal and laid a lot of groundwork, its brevity soon consigned it to history's footnotes. A longer travel account by Jean Chardin appearing five years later gained much wider circulation. Its depiction of the beautiful white slave echoes through the ages.

Jean-Baptiste Chardin (1643–1713)—also known as Sir John Chardin—a French Protestant (Huguenot) whose family were jewelers to the court of Louis XIV, traveled routinely to Persia and India in the 1670s and 1680s seeking rare baubles for the French royal household.* His two-volume account *Journal du Voyage du Chevalier Chardin en Perse & aux Indes Orientales, par la Mer Noire & par la Colchide* (*The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East Indies, 1673–1677*) (1689) describes a trip that deviated from his usual route. Preventing his going via Venice through Constantinople to Asia Minor, local disputes rerouted Chardin north of Constantinople through the wilds of the Caucasus (today's Chechnya) and Georgia. In the seventeenth century, this was untamed country, according to Chardin the lands of "people without Religion, & without Police." A scientist at heart, he took meticulous notes while racked by constant fear.[2] Chardin loathed this chaotic Black Sea region, where brigands controlled the highways, often threatening his goods, his freedom, and his life. As he says of the Circassians,† "it is impossible for them to glimpse an opportunity for thievery without taking advantage of it." They eat with their hands, go to the bathroom right next to where they eat, and then continue eating without washing.[3] Chardin is totally disgusted.

* This Jean Chardin is not to be confused with the French still-life and genre painter Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin (1699–1779). The painter Chardin influenced nineteenth- and twentieth-century impressionist painters such as Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, and the cubist Georges Braque.

† Chardin uses the Turkish form, *Cherkes*, of Circassian.

The habits of the Mingrelians (Caucasian people on the northeast coast of the Black Sea) are vile. They "and their neighbors are huge drunkards, worse than the Germans and all the northern Europeans when it comes to drink." Not only do Mingrelians consider assassination, murder, and incest as admirable traits, they steal each other's wives without compunction. The women are not much better; they wear too much makeup, and their bodily stench overcomes whatever amorous intention their appearance might have inspired. "These people are complete savages," Chardin rails. "They used to be Christians, but now they have no Religion at all. They live in wooden cabins and go around practically naked. . . . The only people who go there are slave traders."[4]

The hugely profitable slave trade powered the Black Sea economy. Turks made the money, but Mingrelians supplied the goods. Chardin deplores Mingrelians' unbelievable "inhumanity—their cruelty toward their compatriots and even people of their own blood. . . . They sell their wives and children, kidnap the children of their neighbors, and do the same thing. They even sell their own children, their wives, and their mothers." Chardin was appalled to find "these miserable creatures were not beaten down; they seemed not to feel the tragedy of their condition. . . . Knowing their value as slaves, women are erotically adept and entirely shameless when it comes to the language of love."[5]

And a precise value it is, too. The cargo of Chardin's Black Sea vessel sold according to an erotic price scale. Pretty girls aged thirteen to eighteen went for twenty crowns,* plainer girls for less. Women went for twelve crowns, children for three or four. Men aged twenty-five to forty sold for fifteen crowns, those older for only eight or ten. A Greek merchant whose room was near Chardin's bought a woman and her baby at the breast for twelve crowns.

> The woman was twenty-five years old, with a smooth, even, lily-white complexion and admirably beautiful features. I have never before seen such beautifully rounded breasts. That beautiful woman inspired overall sensations of desire and compassion.[6]

* Chardin gives the prices in *ecus* (crowns) worth about £3 silver each. Thus pretty young girls and livestock cost about the same per head.

This particular scene was destined for greatness, but Chardin found other lovely faces and figures among the people of the Caucasus mountains and, especially, in Georgia.

> The blood of *Georgia* is the most beautiful in the Orient, & I would have to say in the world, for I've never noticed an ugly face of either sex in this country, and some are downright Angelic. Nature has endowed most of the women with graces not to be seen in any other place. I have to say it is impossible to look at them without falling in love with them. No more charming faces and no more lovely figures than those of the *Georgians* could serve to inspire painters. They are tall, graceful, slender, and poised, and even though they don't wear many clothes, you never see bulges. The only thing that spoils them is that they wear makeup, and the prettier they are, the more makeup they wear, for they think of makeup as a kind of ornament.[7]

The enduring legend of beautiful white slave women—Circassians, Georgians, Caucasians—dates from Chardin's seventeenth century. (See figure 4.1, "Young Georgian Girl," and figure 4.2, "Ossetian Girl.") However a twentieth-century photo of Georgians shows them as fairly ordinary looking people. (See figure 4.3, Georgians in Tbilisi.)[8]

In fairly short order, Chardin's unflattering descriptions of squalid and smelly Caucasians would fade from race theory, but his image of the powerless, young, disrobed female slave on the Black Sea acquired eugenical power.[9] So well received was the work as a whole that *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East Indies, 1673–1677* gained its author membership in the newly founded Royal Society of London.[10]*

* The great European scholarly societies were a product of the seventeenth century, with the Royal Society of London founded in 1660; the most prestigious of all, the Parisian Académie Royale des Sciences, founded in 1666; and the Berlin Akademie der Wissenschaften founded in 1700. However,

Fig. 4.1. "Young Georgian Girl," 1881.

Fig. 4.2. "Ossetian Girl," 1883.

Within fifty years, Chardin's erotic figure had invaded Western art, whose preferred term, "odalisque," derives from the Turkish *odalk*, meaning "harem room." Georgian, Circassian, and Caucasian were interchangeable names for the figure. Each term refers to young white slave women, and each carries with it the aura of physical attractiveness, submission, and sexual availability—in a word, femininity.[11] She cannot be free, for her captive status and harem location lie at the core of her identity.[12]

Along with a number of others, the philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) picked up this theme. Living in northeastern Germany, now part of Poland, Kant put forward his own ideas of race in *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (*Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, 1763). Here Kant actually attacks the idea that standards

women were not admitted to these gatekeepers of knowledge until the mid-twentieth century: to the Royal Society in 1945, the Berlin Academie der Wissenschaften in 1949, and the Académie des Sciences in 1979. Women were long the subjects of scientific knowledge, but not acknowledged as creators of knowledge.

Fig. 4.3. Georgians reading in the "Square of the Heroes of the Soviet Union in Tbilisi," in Corliss Lamont, The Peoples of the Soviet Union *(1946).*

of human beauty may differ by culture. Beauty ideals are universal, he maintains, for "the sort of beauty we have called the *pretty figure* is judged by all men very much alike." Cueing on Chardin, Kant agrees that "Circassian and Georgian maidens have always been considered extremely pretty by all Europeans who travel through their lands," as well as by Turks, Arabs, and Persians. He even picks up Chardin's statement that Persians beautify their offspring through connection with slave women and deplores the fact that great fortunes could arise from a "wicked commerce in such beautiful creatures" sold to "self-indulgent rich men."[13] Only one ambivalence appears in Kant's analysis: the progeny of such unethical unions often turned out to be beautiful, and clearly, Kant concludes, Turks, Arabs, and Persians (Kant lumps them together in ugliness) could use a lot of genetic help.

Next to weigh in was one of Kant's younger East Prussian colleagues, the philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), who remains almost as influential. Although remembered for questioning the idea of an unchanging, universal human nature, Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (*Ideas for the Philosophy of History of Humanity*, 1784–91) carries on by connecting servitude, beauty, and the Black Sea / Caspian Sea region, "this centre of beautiful forms." Like Kant's treatise, Herder's text—when translated into English—echoes Chardin, but changing Chardin's Persians into Turks, and spelling with a lower-case *T*: "The *turks*, originally a hideous race, improved their appearance, and rendered themselves more agreeable, when handsomer nations became servants to them."[14] In taking note of slavery's alteration of a host

society's personal appearances, Chardin mentions a demographic role that upper-class Europeans and Americans seldom recognized at home.

By early in the nineteenth century, these iconic notions of beauty and its whereabouts had moved steadily westward, across France and over the English Channel into British literature. In *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa* (1810), the prolific scholar-traveler Edward Daniel Clarke (1769–1822) considers the notion of Circassian beauty an established truth. The contrast between handsome Circassians and ugly Tartars appears prominently in Clarke's narrative: "Beauty of features and of form, for which the *Circassians* have so long been celebrated, is certainly prevalent among them. Their noses are aquiline, their eye-brows arched and regular, their mouths small, their teeth remarkably white, and their ears not so large nor so prominent as those of *Tahtars* [*sic*]; although, from wearing the head shaven, they appear to disadvantage, according to our *European* notions of beauty." And once again, Circassian beauty resides in the enslaved: "Their women are the most beautiful perhaps in the world; of enchanting perfection of features, and very delicate complexions. The females that we saw were all of them the accidental captives of war, who had been carried off together with their families; they were, however, remarkably handsome."[15]

Also in play were military rivalries that broke out around the Black Sea region, pitting the Russian and Ottoman empires against each other first during Greece's war for independence in the 1820s and then during the Crimean War in the 1850s.* Both hostilities brought white slavery increased attention in the West, especially once word spread that Turkish slave dealers were flooding the market with Circassian women slaves before the Russians cut off the supply. Even Americans followed the Crimean War closely, picking up European culture's enthrallment with the beautiful Circassian slave girl. This was only natural, given the American slave system, with its fascination for beautiful, light-skinned female

*The Crimea is the Ukrainian peninsula between the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea.

slaves and growing sectional tensions, as exemplified in the figure of Eliza in Harriet Beecher Stowe's best-selling *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851–52).[16]*

Fig. 4.4. Winslow Homer, "Circassian Girl," 1883–1910. Ink on paper drawing, 5¾ x 8¾ in.

The New York impresario P. T. Barnum, never one to ignore a commercial opportunity, took note of this purported glut of white slaves, and in 1864, as the Civil War raged, directed his European agent to find "a beautiful Circassian girl" or girls to exhibit in Barnum's New York Museum on Broadway as "the purest example of the white race." In the American context, a notion of racial purity had clearly gotten mixed up with physical beauty. Barnum cared a lot less about ethnicity than about how his girls looked, advising his agent that they must be "pretty and will pass for Circassian slaves."

Barnum's "Circassian slave girls" all had white skin and very frizzy hair, giving them the appearance of light-skinned Negroes. This combination reconciled conflicting American notions of beauty (that is, whiteness) and slavery (that is, Negro). In light of this figure's departure from straight-haired European conceptions of Circassian slave girls, it was probably for the better that Barnum never imported the real thing. In truth, few in the United States knew what a Circassian beauty would actually look like. But by the late 1890s Barnum's formulation had jelled sufficiently for Americans that the idly doodling artist Winslow Homer

*William Short, so good a young friend that Thomas Jefferson called him his "adoptive son," wrote Jefferson that amalgamation would ultimately resolve American race problems, for many mixed-race women were very beautiful. Sally Hemings—Jefferson's enslaved, long-term consort—her mother, and her daughter with Jefferson were all reputed to be very beautiful. Jefferson never replied to Short's letter.

captured her essences of white skin and Negro hair. (See figure 4.4, Homer, "Circassian Girl.")[17]

The durable notion of Circassian beauty invaded even the classic eleventh edition (1910–11) of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, which fulsomely praised Circassians as the loveliest of the lovely: "In the patriarchal simplicity of their manners, the mental qualities with which they were endowed, the beauty of form and regularity of feature by which they were distinguished, they surpassed most of the other tribes of the Caucasus."[18]

An intriguing disjunction dogs this literary metaphor—few images existed of actual people, whether in photographs, in paintings, or in the works of anthropologists. Such a deficit left nineteenth-century artists of the odalisque dependent on four sources: the eighteenth-century tradition of erotic art, all those sexually titillating scenes invented for aristocratic patrons; Napoleon's time in Egypt from 1798 to 1801, which yielded a bounty of plundered objects and triggered a harvest of scholarly books; the early nineteenth-century French conquest of Algeria, which opened a window onto the Ottomans; and the Italian career of one of France's greatest painters.[19]

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), a wildly successful French painter when the French dominated Western fine art, began his career in Italy, a country rife with Eastern influences. His odalisques, epitomes of *luxe et volupté*, lounge languidly amid the splendor of the Turkish harem. They look like the girl next door, always so white-skinned that they could be taken for French. The result was a sort of soft pornography, a naked young woman fair game for fine art voyeurs. Witness *Grande Odalisque* (1814), an early Ingres work painted in Rome, which established his reputation. (See figure 4.5, Ingres, *Grande Odalisque*.) Typical of the Orientalist genre, *Grande Odalisque* depicts an indolent, sumptuously undressed, white-skinned young woman with western European features. Her long, long back to the viewer, she looks over an ivory shoulder with a come-hither glance.

Grande Odalisque portrays the subject by herself, surrounded by

Fig. 4.5. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Grande Odalisque, *1819. Oil on canvas, 91 x 162 cm.*

heavy oriental drapery, but many other works feature a spacious harem full of beautiful young white women. Even when "odalisque" does not figure in the title, characteristic scenery and personnel designate the scene as the Ottoman harem and the naked white woman as a slave. Now and then black characters appear as eunuchs or sister slaves. *Le Bain Turc* (1863), painted when Ingres was eighty-three years old, displays a riot of voluptuous white nudes and one black one lounging about the bath and enjoying a languid musical pastime. (See figure 4.6, Ingres, *Le Bain Turc*.)

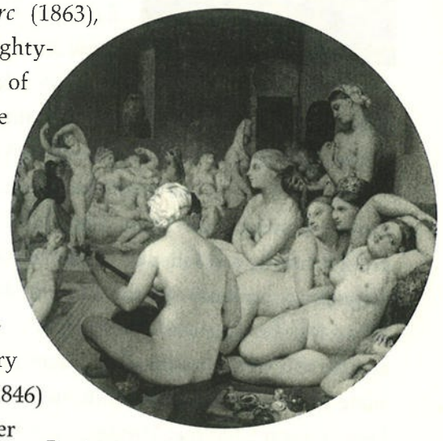

Fig. 4.6. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Le Bain Turc, *1862. Oil on wood, 110 x 110 cm. diam. 108 cm.*

American art was not far behind. The country's most popular piece of nineteenth-century sculpture was *The Greek Slave* (1846) by Hiram Powers (1805–73). Larger than life and sculpted from white marble, it depicts a young white

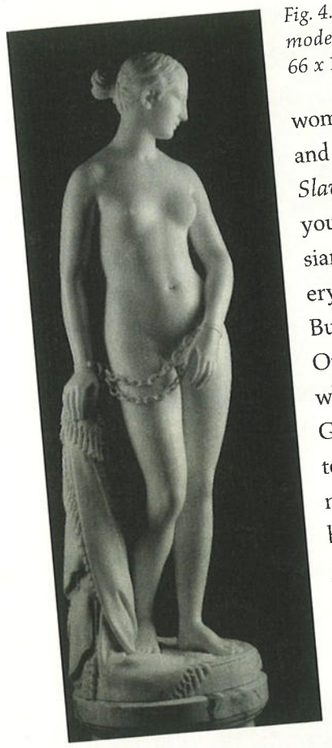

Fig. 4.7. Hiram Powers, The Greek Slave, *modeled 1841–43, carved 1846. Marble, 66 x 19 x 17 in.*

woman wearing only chains across her wrists and thigh. (See figure 4.7, Powers, *The Greek Slave*.) Granted, Powers's title makes the young woman Greek not Georgian/Circassian/Caucasian, and a cross within the drapery makes her Christian rather than Muslim. But even so, *The Greek Slave* demonstrates Orientalist whiteness in its material, the white Italian marble so critical to notions of Greek beauty. When this monumental piece toured the United States in 1847–48, young men unused to viewing a naked female all but swooned before it. To be sure, *The Greek Slave* was no ordinary naked woman; Powers deemed his sculpture historical, the image of a Greek maiden captured by Turkish soldiers during the Greek war for independence. Only a few abolitionists drew connections between Powers's white slave and the white-skinned slaves of the American South, where no measure of beauty or whiteness or youth sufficed to deliver a person of African ancestry from bondage.[20]

Back in France, the odalisque retained her allure. The popular and prolific painter Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904) occupied the visual art summit as a teacher at the Académie des Beaux Arts in Paris and frequent contributor to the Académie's influential annual salon. His *Slave Market* (ca. 1867) replaces the usual harem with another characteristic Orientalist location. Standing before us is a beautiful white slave girl stripped for examination by buyers. (See figure 4.8, Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Slave Market*.) Once again, a black figure (here an official in the market) reinforces the painting's exotic and erotic character.[21] Not until well into the twentieth century did the genre lose

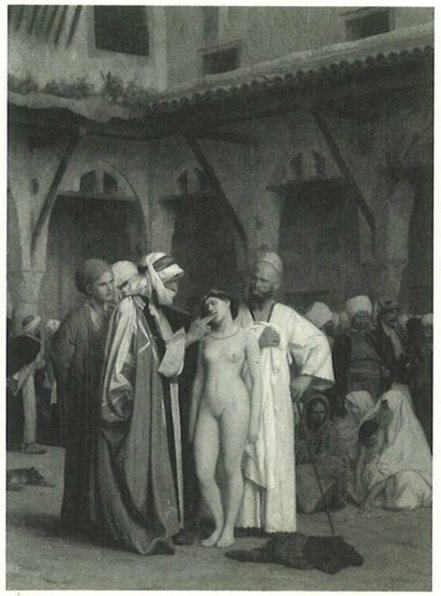

Fig. 4.8. Jean-Léon Gérôme, Slave Market, *1866. Oil on canvas, 33¼ x 25 in.*

its attraction, as colonial populations began pressing for independence following the First World War. Oblivious to anticolonialist rumblings, Henri Matisse (1869–1954) painted a score of odalisques in the 1920s, some of the last nonironic odalisques in art history. (See figure 4.9, Henri Matisse, *Odalisque with Red Culottes*.)[22]

Where culture goes, there goes critical theory. Thus, in the late twentieth century, a new field of cultural studies called Orientalism began to explore Western fascination with the exotic East and the feminization of Muslim peoples. Although this new Orientalism squared off against the voyeurism and stereotypes of nineteenth-century Western Orientalism, it remained in the thrall of Gérôme's overpowering white slave iconography. Book jackets on two classic texts—the field's foundational work, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), and Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather* (1995)—both feature details from paintings by Gérôme:

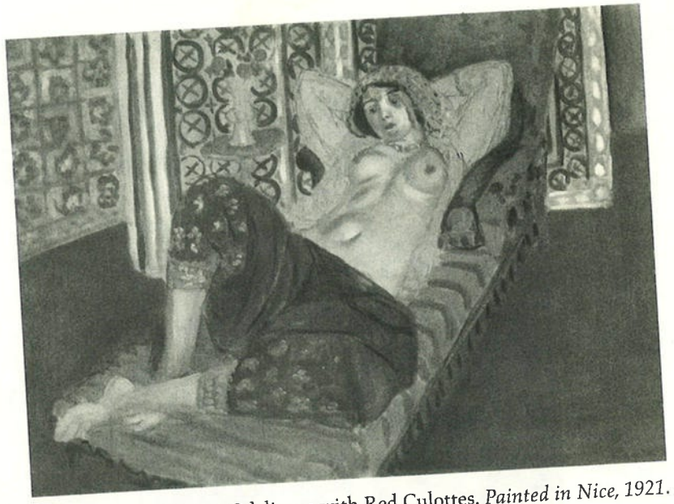

Fig. 4.9. Henri Matisse, Odalisque with Red Culottes. *Painted in Nice, 1921. Oil on canvas, 26⅜ x 33⅛ in.*

Said's jacket does depart from the usual female odalisque to show a naked slave boy. (See figure 4.10, *Orientalism* jacket.) McClintock's stays with a detail from one of Gérôme's harem bath scenes. (See figure 4.11, *Imperial Leather* jacket.) Here we see more white female nakedness, black figures, and interior settings, all hallmarks of the odalisque. Yet, despite the white slave iconography of their covers, the content of neither book dwells on white slavery. Late twentieth-century American scholars seemed unable to escape Gérôme or confront slavery that was not quintessentially black.[23]

Today's Orientalism no longer caters to Europeans and Americans who might gaze lustily at naked white women. Scholars have rediscovered commentary from Ottomans quite able to speak for themselves, such as Zeyneb Hamm's *A Turkish Woman's European Impressions*, whose letters subject the West to scrutiny, and Melek Hamm's *Abdul Hamid's Daughter*, the harem as seen from inside, both published in 1913.[24] Furthermore, in 2005 an international coalition of individuals and organizations set up a "Circassian World" website to strengthen

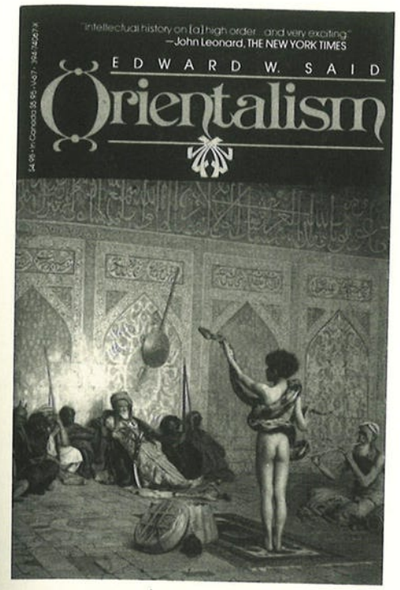

Fig. 4.10. Jacket of Edward W. Said, Orientalism *(1978), showing a detail of Jean-Léon Gérôme,* The Snake Charmer, *early 1860s. Oil on canvas, 84 x 122 cm.*

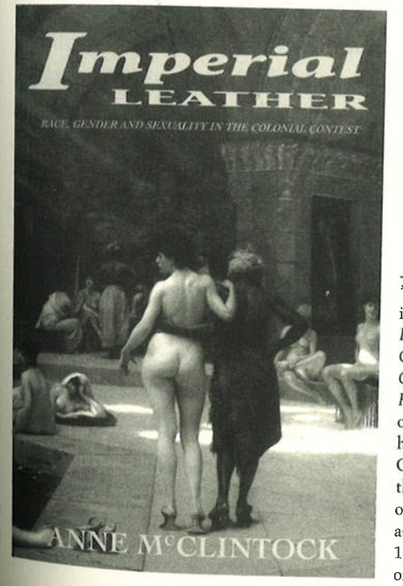

Fig. 4.11. Jacket of Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather *(1995), featuring detail of Jean-Léon Gérôme,* The Great Bath at Bursa, *1885. Oil on canvas, 27.6 x 39.6 in.*

Circassian "national" identity and teach about its past. The website includes photographs of Circassians, otherwise still hard to find.[25]

Nowadays, both the reality of harem white slavery and the figure of the odalisque have largely disappeared, gone the way of that slavery itself.* Just as the Norman conquest of England's small

*That slavery still exists in the present day is chronicled in works such as Kevin Bales's *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (1999), *Understanding Global Slavery* (2005), and *Ending Slavery: How We Free Today's Slaves* (2007). The odalisque has not disappeared entirely, however, as twenty-first century artists use Orientalist iconography ironically. In 2005 the American artist Ellen Gallagher created one example, in which she arranges herself as one of Matisse's odalisques from the 1920s and places Sigmund Freud in front of her with a sketchpad.

kingdoms dampened slavery there, so European and Turkish imperial power closed down long-range slaving out of the Black Sea region. In the west, an abolitionist movement ended the Atlantic slave trade by the mid-nineteenth century. In the east around the same time, Russia abolished slavery and severely curtailed the eastern European and Caucasian slave trade. As this slavery faded, so did its iconography, but ideals of white beauty endured. They had become firmly embedded in the science of race.

5

THE WHITE BEAUTY IDEAL AS SCIENCE

Historians reckon Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68) to be the father of art history, a fitting tribute to his importance to the field. And while Winckelmann did not contribute directly to theories of race, he does play a large role in this story by passing along assumptions on the ideal form and color of human beauty that inspired much eighteenth- and nineteenth-century racial theorizing. The hard, pure, white aesthetic that Winckelmann popularized rested on the authority of the Renaissance, making the issue of whiteness versus color more than simply a question of taste. (See figure 5.1, Anton Raphael Mengs's Johann Joachim Winckelmann.)

Born a poor cobbler's son in Prussia, Winckelmann began his career as a librarian in Dresden, the capital of Saxony in eastern Germany. Converting to Catholicism in order to study ancient art in Rome, he lived with and worked for Alessandro Cardinal Albani, a politically powerful aristocrat and renowned collector of ancient art. At that time the study of art history was centered in Rome, for access to the glories of Egypt and Greece was severely constricted by Ottoman imperial control. Travel was perilous. Moreover, Italy was a sunny, welcoming place, and a great deal of fun, all of which appealed to eighteenth-century German scholars.

Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums (*History of the Art of Antiquity*,

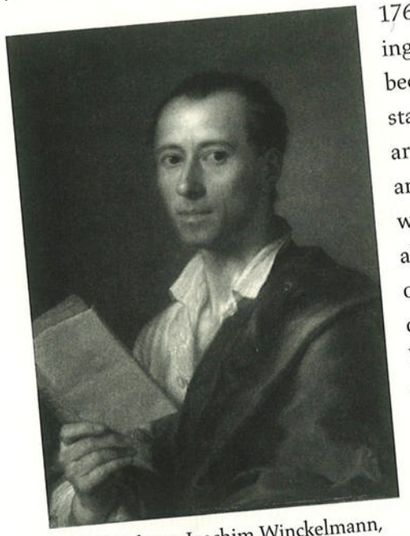

Fig. 5.1. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *by Anton Raphael Mengs, shortly after 1755. Oil on canvas, 25 x 19 3/8 in.*

1764–67), Winckelmann's towering, two-volume work, quickly became the international gold standard in the history of ancient art. This book, both a chronology and a canon of ancient art loaded with Winckelmann's knowledge, also seeks to correlate differences of style with history and archaeology. Such ambition laid the basis for scientific art historical investigation and lasted far longer than the details of his dating.

Winckelmann's main thesis held that Greek art, the finest of all time, grew out of the freedom of its culture. Going further, Winckelmann advanced the notion that modern Westerners should embrace the Greek way of life and freedom, to achieve Greek excellence in art and, presumably, all of culture. Not only did he establish a chronology and a canon of ancient art; he also championed an ideology of ancient Greek beauty based on his own gay male aesthetic.[1] At the heart of this work were beautiful boys, themselves central to making ancient Greeks into timeless, universal paragons of beauty.

The fetishization of ancient Greek beauty is not of Winckelmann's invention. But as the icon of cultural criticism, he quite easily deepened it. For instance, Winckelmann declared the *Apollo Belvedere*, already the most famous statue in Europe, *the* embodiment of perfect human beauty. (See figure 5.2, *Apollo Belvedere*.)

Like many of his contemporaries, Winckelmann had to balance his Eurocentrism against a certain cultural relativity.[2] He admits that various peoples display different body types, thus causing tastes to vary. Clearly, human beings find people like themselves beautiful. Even so,

trapped in his German-Italian aesthetic, he pronounces Chinese eyes "an offense against beauty" and Kalmucks' flat noses "an irregularity" equal to deformity.[3] In the final analysis, however, relativity loses out as he adopts the Kantian notion of a single ideal figure for all humanity—"the Greek profile is the first character of great beauty in the formation of the visage." White skin, he adds, makes bodily appearance more beautiful. Throughout the Western world, these rules soon became as carved in stone as the statues that inspired them.

Winckelmann's appreciation of whiteness initially sprang from his distance from Greece. In Rome, he had near at hand a great many Roman copies of ancient Greek sculpture translated into an Italian sculptural medium. Unaware that the Greek originals were often dark in color, he did not know—or glossed over the knowledge—that the Greeks routinely painted their sculpture. He saw only Roman versions of beautiful young men carved of hard Italian marble that shone a gleaming white. Thus, Winckelmann elevated Rome's white marble copies of Greek statuary into emblems of beauty and created a new white aesthetic. It would apply not only to works from antiquity, not only to Greek art, but to all of art and all of humanity.*

Fig. 5.2. Apollo Belvedere (detail). *Roman marble copy of Greek bronze original.*

For Winckelmann and his followers, color in sculpture came to mean barbarism, for they assumed that the lofty ancient Greeks were too sophisticated to color their art. The equation of color with primi-

*In 1873, Walter Pater maintained that Winckelmann's admiration of the bodies depicted in ancient Greek statuary "was not merely intellectual. . . . Winckelmann's romantic, fervent friendships with young men [brought] him into contact with the pride of the human form." Winckelmann disdained art depicting women, for he considered the "supreme beauty" of Greek art "rather male than female."

tivism meant that experts often suppressed and removed color when they found it in the Greeks. Even now, the discovery of ancient Greek polychromy can still make news, for the allure of Winckelmann's hard, white, young bodies lives on.[4]*

Long after Winckelmann, students and museums all over the world copied classical art for purposes of education. Copying Greek art perforce employed a more common medium—white plaster—which, following Winckelmann, they purposefully left unpainted. Thus Winckelmann's white aesthetic marched on, trampling the fact that smooth white Italian marble was neither the original medium nor the original color of ancient Greek statuary.[5]†

We owe this knowledge to a Scot, Thomas Bruce, the Earl of Elgin, British ambassador extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to the Ottoman court at Constantinople. Bruce's admiration of Winckelmann's Greeks extended to decorating his new house in Fife, Scotland, with Greek art in order, he said, to elevate the standard of British art. On his way to Constantinople in 1799, he stopped at Athens, then a neglected Ottoman backwater, intending to draw and to take away a few smaller sculptures. But Bruce's desire soon grew into lust for larger pieces, and he started removing sculpture from the Parthenon, Greece's symbol of Athenian democracy.

When local Turkish authorities balked, Bruce appealed to central Ottoman authorities far away in Constantinople. Swayed by his argument that the Parthenon was already prey to vandals, the Ottoman court finally allowed him to pry off and ship huge pieces of the Parthenon's architectural sculpture—metopes, friezes, and pedimental figures—between 1802 and 1806. The cost ultimately exceeded Bruce's pocketbook, forcing him to sell the sculpture to the British government

*The white marble ideal seduced just about everybody, especially race-minded experts such as the most prominent academic painter in England, Sir Frederick Leighton. In 1880 Leighton painted his self-portrait with uncolored Parthenon statuary in the background, presumably according to the plaster casts in his studio. Even Winckelmann probably realized his ancient Greeks may have painted and gilded sculpture, but he kept that suspicion to himself.

†White plaster casts of ancient Greek statuary still figured as examples of the best in art in New York City in the 1920s and 1930s. Artists like Arshile Gorky and George McNeil worked from Greek casts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and such plaster casts served as decoration in a coffeehouse catering to artists.

in 1816 for exhibit in the British Museum, where it remains, despite Greek campaigns for its return.

The Parthenon marbles Elgin took to Britain do consist of marble, but a darkly pitted Greek marble rather than the smooth, snowy white variety more common in Italy. Here lay an aesthetic problem: whiteness versus color. The alarming history of European marble "cleaning" includes a chapter on this statuary describing a drive to make ancient Greek art white that nearly destroyed the art itself. In the 1930s workers in the British Museum were directed to remove the dark patina with metal tools on the mistaken assumption that their proper color should be white. Such a "cleaning" seriously damaged the Parthenon marbles, prompting an inquiry by the museum's standing committee that halted the work.[6] Clearly, Winckelmann's obsession with whiteness had a large and lingering downside.

Winckelmann was murdered in Trieste in 1768 under questionable circumstances on his way back to Dresden from Rome. His most recent biographer contends that the murder occurred in the course of a robbery that Winckelmann was resisting, but other authorities suspect that Winckelmann, an older gay man with a taste for adventure, ran afoul of rough trade.[7]

When Winckelmann died, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), Germany's towering intellectual and the quintessence of German romanticism, was twenty-one years old. Before Goethe, German aristocrats had studied the ancient Greek language as one facet of a classical education. But Greek culture overall lacked mythic status, and after centuries of Ottoman rule, modern Greeks were considered little more than Turks. Sharing Winckelmann's love of ancient Greek beauty, Goethe eventually added to it an adoration of Greek intellectual superiority in what an English scholar termed the "Tyranny of Greece over Germany."[8]* Goethe's dear friend Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805)

*Goethe compared Winckelmann to Christopher Columbus and concluded, "One *learns* nothing when one reads him, but one *becomes* something." Winckelmann's birthday (9 December) has been celebrated as a holiday in Berlin since 1828 and in Rome since 1829. Inspired by Goethe, the English intellectual Walter Pater included an essay on Winckelmann in *The Renaissance* (1867).

wrote several poems on Greek themes, notably *Die Götter Griechenlandes* (*The Gods of the Greeks*, 1788), and Goethe published *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert* (*Winckelmann and His Century*, 1805). Over time, Goethe's prestige made ancient Greek intellectual superiority so dominant that German intellectuals began to claim ancient Greek bodies and culture as their true ancestors.

Goethe first encountered Winckelmann's work as a student in Leipzig in the mid-1760s. During his 1786–88 visit to Italy, Goethe employed Winckelmann's letters and books as guides, just as Ralph Waldo Emerson would rely on Goethe's *Italienische Reise* (*Italian Travels*, 1817) half a century later. Also like Winckelmann, Goethe never actually went to Greece; in the same way, Emerson adored Goethe and the Saxons without ever setting foot on German soil.

In his own work, Goethe repeatedly addressed Greek themes, such as those in *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1787) and in the unfinished *Achilleis*, abandoned in 1800. *Faust* (1808, 1832), his masterpiece, includes an implausible section featuring Helen of Troy, herself an embodiment of perfect human beauty. In *Faust*'s second part, Helen takes refuge from an angry Menelaus in Germany. There she meets Faust, who seduces her, and they have a son, Euphorion, an allegorical Lord Byron. The most famous of the English Romantics and a martyr to the Greek war for independence, Byron synthesized Nordic and Greek ideals. Like Lord Byron, Euphorion must die. Helen follows Euphorion back to the underworld, and Faust returns to Germany.* Here we see in Goethe how the mythologies of Germany and ancient Greece tightly intertwine and how, through Goethe, Winckelmann's aesthetic dominated nineteenth-century German thought.

In this Grecomanic epidemic the anthropologists of Europe played a big role. Anthropological charts proliferated during the eighteenth century, many featuring images of whiteness borrowed from fine art. Two of the

* *Faust* and the Helen episode of act 3 caused Goethe great difficulty and took him more than a quarter of a century to write. Its achievement signaled Goethe's realization that Winckelmann was wrong: Germans could not re-create the beauties of ancient Greece, no matter how fine their poetry. Goethe did not invent the Helen episode in the Faust myth. He was reworking older Germanic themes and Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*.

best-known illustrators—Petrus Camper (1722–89) of the Netherlands and Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801) of Switzerland—intended their elaborately illustrated books for artists as well as for natural scientists.

Camper's solid academic background in anatomy and art at the University of Leiden made him a formidable figure in both worlds. Over time he taught at the Universities of Franeker, Amsterdam, and Groningen and traveled widely to demonstrate the theoretical soundness of his facial angle, an angle between two lines drawn on a face. One line ran vertically from the forehead to the teeth; the other line went horizontally across the face through the opening of each ear. The result was a quantification of the relationship between the projection of the forehead, mouth, and chin, a relationship that was visual rather than functional.* The popularity of so simple and beautifully illustrated a method of human classification took Camper quite a long way. Welcomed in England, he was made a fellow of the Royal Society.

Camper's most famous chart (likely drawn in the 1770s but not published until 1792, after his death) delivers sharply conflicting messages in a deeply confusing manner.† (See figure 5.3, Petrus Camper's chart of contrasted faces.) Apparently comparing faces and skulls as viewed straight on with lines drawn through several points on each skull and face, the chart is intended to depict the "facial angles" of an orangutan (chimpanzee), at top left, a Negro, a Kalmuck, over to a European, and *Apollo Belvedere*, in that order. One source of confusion lies in the use of frontal views to illustrate measurements reckoned in the profile. The facial angles shown are 58 degrees for the orangutan/chimpanzee, whose mouth projects beyond his forehead; 70 degrees for both the Negro and the Kalmuck, whose faces are more vertical; 80 degrees for the European; and 100 degrees for the Greek god. Camper's order introduces a further, crucial ambiguity.

As an advocate of human equality, Camper held all along that this chart demonstrates the near parity of the human races. The numbers asso-

* Nineteenth- and twentieth-century racial scientists later termed the characteristic Camper measured "prognatism" and linked it to skin color and racial worth.
† On the PetrusCamper.com website of Camper's biographer Miriam Claude Meijer, this is the only image associated with Camper's work.

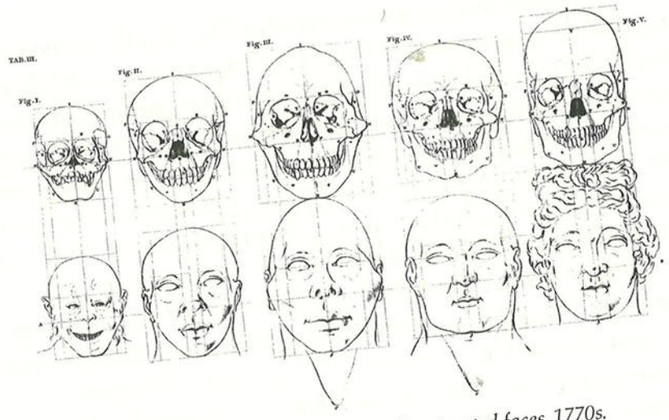

Fig. 5.3. Petrus Camper's chart of contrasted faces, 1770s.

ciated with the chart—58, 70, 80, and 100—do, in fact, reveal Negro and Kalmuck facial angles closer to the European than to the orangutan/chimpanzee and less separate from the European than the European is from the Greek god. This, Camper maintained, was his message, whose fundamental meaning lay in his numbers. He insisted on the unity of mankind, even going so far as to suggest that Adam and Eve might well have been black, because no one skin color was superior to the others. Brotherhood, however, was not the meaning the chart conveyed to others.

A far different message emerges from Camper's chart's visual layout, one that completely undercut his egalitarian beliefs. Circulating at the height of the Atlantic slave trade in the late eighteenth century, his image places the Negro next to the orangutan/chimpanzee and the European next to the *Apollo Belvedere*. Position, not relative numbers, came across most clearly. The apparent pairing in this visual architecture soon embodied anthropological truth among laymen.

European scholars, meanwhile, were asking harder questions.* In France and Germany, Camper faced mounting criticism, and in the long

* In 1779 Camper presented his ideas to skeptical learned men in Göttingen, including the young Johann Friedrich Blumenbach. Over the years, Blumenbach grew ever more doubtful of the validity of Camper's system, rejecting it as too simple to provide scientific data. Lavater outlived Camper and also came to harbor reservations regarding the usefulness of the facial angle.

run his paltry record of publication hindered his scholarly reputation. While he produced hundreds of papers and drawings, he published no one dominant book, and the "facial angle" lost credibility in academic science. By the mid-nineteenth century, methodical measurers of skulls had denounced Camper's simplistic reliance on a single head measurement. But even as Camper lost scholarly standing in continental Europe, scientific racists in Britain and the United States such as Robert Knox, J. C. Nott, and G. R. Gliddon went on reproducing his images as irrefutable proof of a white supremacy that Camper himself had never embraced. Johann Kaspar Lavater of Switzerland traveled a somewhat parallel trajectory.

As a Protestant clergyman and poet in Zurich, Lavater firmly believed that God had decreed one's outer appearance, especially the face, to reflect one's inner state. His illustrated books *Von der Physiognomik* (*On Physiognomy*, 1772) and *Physiognomische Fragmente, zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntis und Menschenliebe* (*Essays on Physiognomy Designed to Promote the Knowledge and Love of Mankind*, 1775–78) were immediately translated and widely circulated. Familiar among scholars and laymen alike, these works lavishly demonstrate the supposed correlation between personal beauty and human virtue, between outer looks and inner soul—an attractive and simpleminded notion.

Lavater amplified Winckelmann's views on the ancient Greeks, dedicating sections of his masterwork, *On Physiognomy*, to "the Ideal Beauty of the Ancients." He also repeated the commonplace that modern Greeks differed fundamentally from the ancients: "The Grecian race was then [in antiquity] more beautiful than we are; they were better than us—and the present generation [of Greeks] is vilely degraded!"[9] Although Lavater, like Camper, saw Greek beauty as typically European, he disagreed with Camper over the ideal facial angle, and this was an important feature in their minds. The forehead of Lavater's Apollo sloped backwards rather than rising vertically. Of course, none of these (to us) trivial disagreements undermined the central concept of white beauty's embodiment in the same Greek god.

Opinions swept back and forth across Europe on these racial matters. At first Lavater (like Camper) impressed practically everyone, including the young Goethe, with his vivid illustrations, and his books became best sellers. But Goethe and other supporters soon fell away as Lavater faced critics led by Blumenbach's friend, the Göttingen intellectual Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742–99), known then for his witty epigrams (none understandable in English and now remembered mainly in Germany). Lichtenberg had excellent reasons for mistrust. According to Lavater's theories, he—being humpbacked and uncommonly ugly in the popular view—would thereby lack inner worth: there was nothing Grecian about Lichtenberg. Camper, too, viewed Lavater's work skeptically, even though the two men shared the same conceptual weaknesses.

Scholars also ultimately rejected Lavater's views as too simplistic, yet his conceits—that the skull and face, in particular, reveal racial worth and that the head deserves careful measurement—lingered on among natural scientists.[10] Lavater, for his part, went much further, publishing books filled with portraits of the illustrious and the lowly in order to document what he deemed the close relationship between head shape and character. Both Camper and Lavater correlated outer appearance with inner worth through the instinct of "physiognomonical sensation," and both used images of Greek gods to stand for the ideal white person; others they took from people off the street. Their theories and images, a huge extension of the association of whiteness with beauty, soon reverberated through the work of authors writing in English, as Camper's and Lavater's images moved across the English Channel through the learned lectures and publications of John Hunter and Charles White.[11]

Dr. John Hunter (1728–93), an overbearing, arrogant, unpolished Scot, had served as a surgeon in the British army during the Seven Years'/French and Indian War in North America. Returning to London in 1763, and now possessed of much practical knowledge, he gained high patronage positions (surgeon extraordinary to the king, surgeon general of the army, inspector of army hospitals) through advantageous political connections in prosperous Hanoverian London. By the

mid-1780s Hunter also enjoyed the recognition conferred by membership in several learned societies.*

Scholarly communication between Europe and England flourished. Hunter knew Camper's work and, like Camper, had analyzed a series of human and animal skulls to illustrate gradations of the vertical profile, an exercise rather similar to Camper's work on the facial angle. Hunter compared various human skulls (*the* European, *the* Asian, *the* American, *the* African) to the skulls of an ape, a dog, and an alligator. And although he specifically denied any hierarchical intent, Hunter's imagery inspired the obstetrician Charles White (1728–1813) to think about race as physical appearance.

Like Hunter, White had made his reputation as an innovative surgeon. Specializing in obstetrics, he was known as a "man midwife" and initially practiced alongside his physician father.† As eighteenth-century industrial Manchester grew in wealth and power, White's social and intellectual reputation soared. Long interested in natural history, he increased his study of the links between various kinds of humans and animals in the 1790s. One of White's illustrated 1795 lectures to the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester (of which he was a founding member) appeared in print in 1799 as *An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man, and in Different Animals and Vegetables; and from the Former to the Latter.*‡ (See figure 5.4, Charles White's chart.)

Following Camper, White arranges his human heads (skulls and

*Not least was the London Royal Society, over which the wealthy naturalist Sir Joseph Banks, baronet, presided. Hunter so cherished his membership in the Royal Society that he named his only surviving son John Banks Hunter. After Hunter's death, in 1793, Banks refused the gift of Hunter's painstakingly collected 13,682 dried and wet animal specimens, not considering it to be "an object of importance to the general study of natural history." After being shifted from place to place in London following Hunter's death, two-thirds of the collection disappeared in the Nazi bombing of London in 1941. Like many others interested in presenting humanity hierarchically, Hunter was a conservative who "would rather have seen his museum on fire than show it to a democrat."

†White advocated natural childbirth; his *Treatise on the Management of Pregnant and Lying-in Women*, published in 1773, was translated into French and German and appeared in an American edition as well. White had studied medicine in London with John Hunter's brother William, to whom he dedicated the treatise.

‡A well-respected medical doctor in his own right, White also published notes from John Hunter's lectures in anatomy, as well as treatises on gynecology and obstetrics.

faces in profile) hierarchally, left to right, and names them by race, status, and geography. The "Negro," whose mouth juts far out in front of the rest of his face, sits next to the ape. On the other side of the Negro are, in ascending order, the "American Savage," the "Asiatic," and three "Europeans," one the model of a "Roman" painter. At the far right, next to the "Roman" painter's model sits the "Grecian Antique," whose nose and forehead hang far over his mouth. White's text crucially departs from Camper's, however, by questioning the descent of all people from a single Adam-and-Eve pair. Occasionally employing the word "specie" rather than "race," White surmises that different colored humans grew from separate acts of divine creation. This view, soon known as polygenesis, traced humanity to more than the one origin of Genesis. Polygenesis went on to flourish in the mid-nineteenth century among racists of the American school of anthropology. While the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859 much reduced the allure of creationism of all kinds, Darwinism did not kill off polygenetic thinking entirely.

White correlated economic development with physical attractiveness, joining the lengthening lineage of those who considered the leisured white European not only the most advanced segment of humanity but also "the most beautiful of the human race." To close his *Account of the Regular Gradation in Man*, White poses a series of rhetorical questions focused on two persistent themes of racial discourse: intelligence and beauty.

White asks, "Where shall we find, unless in the European, that nobly arched head, containing such a quantity of brain . . . ?" The mention of brain leads to a physiognomy of intelligence that recalls Camper's facial angle; White continues, "Where the perpendicular face, the prominent nose, and round projecting chin?" He ends with a soft-porn love note to white feminine beauty that incorporates the fondness for the blush found in many a hymn to whiteness. White and Thomas Jefferson shared with many others this enthusiasm for the virtuous pallor of privileged women.* White asks, "In what other quarter of the globe

* In Query XIV in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, written in the early 1780s, Jefferson asks rhetorically, "Is not the foundation of greater or less share of beauty in the two races [of importance]? 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 immovable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race?"

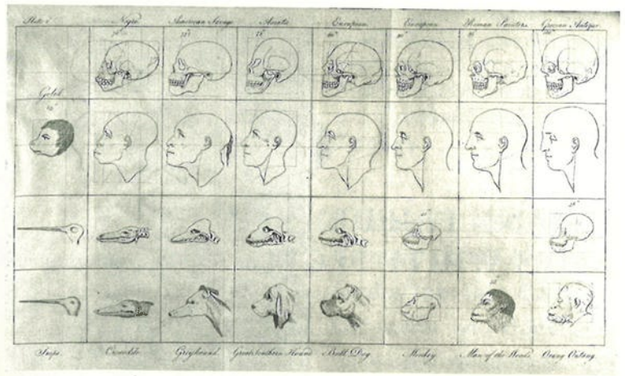

Fig. 5.4. Charles White's human chart, 1799, in Charles White, An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man, and in Different Animals and Vegetables; and from the Former to the Latter *(1799).*

shall we find the blush that overspreads the soft features of the beautiful women of Europe, that emblem of modesty, of delicate feelings, and of sense? Where that nice expression of the amiable and softer passions in the countenance; and that general elegance of features and complexion? Where, except on the bosom of the European woman, two such plump and snowy white hemispheres, tipt with vermillion?"[12]

In gushing prose or in drier scientific utterance, beauty early rivaled measurement as a salient racial trait. While scholars seldom approached White's exuberance of language, others of much greater influence got the science of race barreling along, with beauty steadily rising as a meaningful scientific category.