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"ALMOST A SEPARATE RACE": RACIAL THOUGHT AND THE IDEA OF EUROPE IN BRITISH ENCYCLOPEDIAS AND HISTORIES, 1771–1830

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This article explores the association between racial thought and the idea of Europe in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain. It begins by noting the complexities surrounding the word "race" in this period, before considering whether—and on what grounds—contemporary race thinkers identify a "European race" or "races". This reveals important ambiguities and correlations between anatomical, genealogical and cultural understandings of human difference. The essay then discusses how some of these ideas find expression in British encyclopedias, histories and geographical books. In this way, it shows how racial ideas are disseminated, not just in dedicated volumes on anatomy and biological classification, but also in general works which purport to summarize and transmit contemporary received knowledge. The article draws upon entries on "Europe" in every British encyclopedia completed between 1771 and 1830, as well as named source texts for those articles, tracing how the word "Europe" was used and what racial connotations it carried. Some entries imply that "European" is either a separate race entirely, or a subcategory of a single human race. Others, however, reject the idea of a distinctive European people to identify competing racial groups in Europe. These complexities reveal increasing interest in the delineation of European identities, an interest which emerges partly from long-standing eighteenth-century debates about the categorization and comprehension of human difference. In addition, they show the diffusion of (contending) racial ideas in non-specialist media, foreshadowing the growing prominence of racial thought in the later nineteenth century.

INTRODUCTION

This essay explores the association between racial thought and the idea of Europe in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain. It begins by noting the complexities surrounding the word "race" in this period, before considering whether—and on what grounds—contemporary race thinkers identify a "European race" or "races". This reveals important ambiguities and

correlations between anatomical, genealogical and cultural understandings of human difference. The essay then discusses how some of these ideas find expression in British encyclopedias, histories and geographical books. In this way, it shows how racial ideas are disseminated, not just in dedicated volumes on anatomy and biological classification, but also in general works which purport to summarize and transmit contemporary received knowledge.[1] The article draws upon entries on "Europe" in every British encyclopedia completed between 1771 and 1830, as well as named source texts for those articles, tracing how the word "Europe" was used and what racial connotations it carried. Some entries imply that "European" is either a separate race entirely, or a subcategory of a single human race. Others, however, reject the idea of a distinctive European people in order to identify competing racial groups in Europe. These complexities reveal increasing interest in the delineation of European identities, an interest which emerges partly from long-standing eighteenth-century debates about the categorization and comprehension of human difference. In addition, they show the diffusion of (contending) racial ideas in non-specialist media, foreshadowing the growing prominence of racial thought in the later nineteenth century.

THE CONCEPT OF "RACE"

To talk of "race" in this period is itself complex and controversial, principally because the term had a number of complex meanings in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. According to Nicholas Hudson, it most commonly referred to "family lines, lineage, extraction . . . or breeds of animal", and thus had both dynastic and classificatory connotations.[2] "Races"—that is, lines of descent or groups of peoples—could be "identified and signified through religion, custom, language, climate aesthetics and historical time, as much as physiognomy and skin colour". For this reason, conceptions of "race" were intertwined with ideas about politics and nation: they "occupied overlapping if not identical cultural and political terrains . . . used to distinguish groups by lineage, common descent or origin and to identify political, social and territorial particularity".[3] In other words, discussion about "race" encompassed various interrelated understandings

[1] For anthologies of such specialist works from this period see H. F. Augstein, ed., *Race: The Origins of an Idea* (Bristol, 1996); Emanuel Chudwuki Eze, ed., *Race and Enlightenment: A Reader* (Oxford, 1997); Peter Kitson and Debbie Lee, eds., *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, vol. 8, *Theories of Race*, ed. Peter Kitson (London, 1999)

[2] Nicholas Hudson, "From 'Nation' to 'Race': The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought", *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29/3 (1996), 247.

[3] Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York, 2003), 11–12, 55.

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of human difference: physical appearance, disposition, environmental influences, descent or origins, religion, cultural mannerisms, and political systems. For this reason, Roxann Wheeler speaks of the "fluid articulation of human variety" and the "elasticity of race" in the eighteenth century. In particular, she warns against anachronistic and essentialist understandings of "race" as a set of fixed physical characteristics.[4] The word "ethnic", for instance, originally meant "heathen, ungodly, irreligious", which emphasizes the importance of religious belief and social practice in distinguishing and categorizing different peoples.[5]

Eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century thinkers were thus preoccupied by "the tenuous ... opposition between nature and society, the innate and the acquired", especially the related problems of how supposedly "natural" characteristics could change, and how acquired behaviours and qualities could come to seem innate. In this sense, the "poles of an essentialised Nature and a capricious Environment" competed and overlapped with one another: ideas about manners and society were ambiguously interconnected with "absolutist notions" of inheritance and non-acquired "essence".[6] Eighteenth-century investigations of human difference "indicate that ideas about "culture" and "biology" do not occupy separate domains, and that they develop in relation to one another.[7] Enquiries into skin colour, for instance, hinged on the relationship between inhabitants' temperament, disposition and bodily humours, and external factors such as climate, commerce and societal development. In this way, environment, mental faculties and bodily appearance were coupled in a "symbiotic relationship".[8] Indeed, given its close relationship with notions of "lineage" and "bloodline", the language of "race" could simultaneously connote class, dynasty and societal organization, as well as biological

4 Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia, 2000), 7, 9–10. George Stocking argues that race did not commonly designate "physical entities unchanged since the beginning of recorded time" until after the publication of Robert Knox's *The Races of Men* (1850). See his *Victorian Anthropology* (New York, 1987), 65.

5 Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1999), 34, 287. Kidd draws upon the definitions of "ethnick" in the *Glossographia* (1656) and Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755), though the word meant "pagan" as early as the 1470s. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1989), "ethnic", sense 1.

6 Wilson, *The Island Race*, 6–8.

7 Ania Loomba and Jonathan Burton, Introduction, in *idem*, eds., *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion* (New York, 2007), 8, 22–3.

8 Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race*, 2–5, 22–4

"blood ties" and "common substance" or essence inherited through physical relations.[9]

Often these variable understandings of human difference coexist in the same text. In *The Spirit of the Laws*, for instance, Montesquieu uses the word "race" to make technical distinctions between social systems across different periods. The "first race" refers to those Franks who followed Salic and Roman law:

> Le pays qu'on appelle aujourd'hui la France, fut gouverné dans la première race par la loi Romaine, ou le code Théodosien, & par les diverses loix des barbares qui y habitoient . . . la loi Salique étoit établie pour les Francs, & le code Théodosien pour les Romains.
>
> the country that today one calls France was governed under the first race by Roman law, or the Theodosian code, and by the various laws of the barbarians who lived there . . . the Salic Law was established for the Franks and the Theodosian code for the Romans.

The "second race" allowed these semi-centralized legal structures to decline amidst the rise of fiefdoms: "Les loix Saliques, Bouguignonnes & Wisigothes furent donc extrêmement négligées à la fin de la seconde race" (The Salic, Burgundian and Visigothic laws were therefore extremely neglected at the end of the second race).[10] Montesquieu thus uses "race" in an administrative and legal sense, though the term also carries dynastic connotations and hence the implications of "lineage" and "(royal) blood": the most recent English translators render "first race" as "Merovingian" and "second race" as "Carolingian" in order to foreground these undertones.[11] Indeed, in distinguishing between peoples—for example, Franks and Romans—who are subject to different laws according to apparent provenance, Montesquieu identifies human groups based upon reputed "descent". Elsewhere in *The Spirit of the Laws*, he classifies peoples according to physical characteristics, which in turn indicates their innate "nature":

> Ceux dont il s'agit sont noirs depuis les pieds jusqu'à la tête & ils ont le nez si écrasé qu'il est presqu' impossible de les plaindre . . . Il est si naturel de penser, que c'est la couleur qui constitue l'essence de l'humanité . . . Il est impossible que nous supposion que ces gens là soient des hommes.

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9 Elizabeth Colwill, "Sex, Savagery and Slavery in the Shaping of the French Body Politic", in Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg, eds., *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 1998), 204.

10 Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des loix, nouvelle edition, avec les dernieres corrections & illustrations de l'auteur*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1750), 2: 245, 254. The translations are mine. For similar uses of the word "race" see ibid., 1: 421; 2: 400, 433, 452, 454, 466. For further analysis see Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, DC, 1996), 187–90, 200–2.

11 See Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller and Harold Stone (Cambridge, 1987), 537.

Those concerned are black from head to toe, and they have such a flat nose, that it is almost impossible to feel sorry for them . . . It is so natural to think that colour constitutes the essence of humanity . . . It is impossible for us to assume that these people are men.[12]

For Montesquieu, therefore, physical appearance can still facilitate the physical, moral and intellectual categorization of different peoples. In turn, the prospect of these classificatory practices allows the potential identification of a "European race" or "races".

THE "EUROPEAN" RACE(S)

How, then, did eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century thinkers identify European "race(s)"? Broadly speaking, this question encompasses two eighteenth-century debates about human origins and difference. First, it is a part of the monogenesis–polygenesis enquiry into human origins: the scholarly and religious debate about whether humanity is a single species, or whether there are many human species which were created separately.[13] Second, it incorporates related disputes about the extent to which human differences are essentially fixed and unchanging, or whether other factors, such as climate, migration or social structures, can cause diverse human groups to develop and alter over time. These issues reverberate throughout attempts to categorize and distinguish humans.

In his *Systema naturae* (first edition 1735, tenth edition 1758) Carl von Linné (Linnaeus) divides humans into four groups corresponding to continents (*americanus*, *europaeus*, *asiaticus*, and *afer*), as well as giving a fifth category, *monstrosus*, which includes giants and other extraordinary varieties. However, these are not straightforwardly geographical distinctions, since they can be distinguished by physical features (especially skin colour), personality, behaviour and intellect, as well as by their preferred system of government. Europeans, for example, have white skin, are "intelligent" and "inventive" and are governed by "law", whereas the *asiaticus* are "melancholy", "greedy" and ruled by "opinion" (for example by the lawless will of a despot).[14] Linné's system therefore distinguishes between people according to several criteria: geographical location,

[12] Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des loix*, 1: 343. The translation is from *Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Cohler, Miller and Stone, 250.

[13] Related debates have not entirely disappeared. Recent discussions about the origins of *Homo sapiens* encompass the "out-of-Africa" theory, which postulates that modern humans evolved in Africa and spread from there, and the "multiregional" theory, which suggests that the species evolved simultaneously in many locations across the world. See Roger Lewin, *Bones of Contention: Controversies in the Search for Human Origins*, 2nd edn (Chicago, 1997), 323–35.

[14] For an English tabulation of Linné's human varieties see Jonathan Marks, "Systematics in Anthropology", in G. A. Clark and C. M. Willermet, eds., *Conceptual Issues in Modern*

societal differences (e.g. in governmental system) and "natural" non-acquired characteristics. To describe someone as a "European", therefore, is not only to specify their location and to describe their social system, it is also to make assertions about their disposition, moral conduct and intelligence. Linné's classificatory method potentially facilitates what Nancy Stepan calls "typological thinking", whereby individual humans are seen as belonging to "an undying essence or type".[15] This reifies the idea of static differences between homogeneous groups, variations being "fixed eternally by divine will that is also an order defined by hierarchical gradations".[16] From such a basis, it is possible to hypothesize a "European race" in which certain shared mental and physical characteristics are enduringly consistent.

In 1749, Linné's antagonist Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon insisted that there is "une seule espèce d'hommes" ("only one species of man"), and that varieties have emerged "par l'influence du climat, par la différence de la nourriture, par celle de la manière de vivre, par les maladies épidémiques, et aussi par le mélange varié à l'infini des individus plus ou mois ressemblents" ("by the influence of climate, by differences of food, by manner of living, by epidemic diseases, and also by the varied mixing of infinite individuals more or less alike"). In other words, human varieties develop through a combination of environmental factors and hereditary influences. Furthermore, different groups—sometimes referred to by the word "race"—are identifiable by both physical appearance and social practice: "ils se ressemblent par la forme, par la taille, par la couleur, par les moeurs, et même par la bizarrerie des coutumes" ("they resemble each other in form, in height, in colour, in manners, and even in peculiarity of customs").[17] Using these criteria, Buffon includes "les peuples de l'Europe" among a wider category of people "qui habitent sous un climat plus tempéré" ("who live in a most temperate climate"), comprising Moguls, Persians, Armenians, Turks, Greeks and others. This might seem to challenge the idea of a uniquely European "race" by assimilating European peoples into a broader grouping defined by climatological factors. Nevertheless, he still occasionally makes undeveloped remarks about the distinctiveness of different European peoples: "il est aisé de reconnaître un Espagnol de toutes les autres nations européennes" ("it is easy to distinguish a

Human Origins Research (New York, 1997), 46–7. Linné's Latin terms can be seen in *Systema Naturae*, 13th edn, 3 vols. (Vienna, 1767), 1: 29.

15 Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800–1960* (London, 1982), xviii.

16 Henry Louis Gates Jr, "Critical Remarks", in David Theo Goldberg, ed., *Anatomy of Racism* (Minneapolis, 1990), 319–21. See also Hudson, "From 'Nation' to 'Race'", 258.

17 Buffon, *Histoire naturelle* (1749), in *Oeuvres Complètes de Buffon*, 5 vols., ed. M. Richard (Paris, 1837–8), 2: 646–7, 607. The translations are mine. For Buffon's (inconsistent) use of the word "race" see Hudson, "From 'Nation' to 'Race'", 253–5.

Spaniard from all the other European nations"). More significantly, Buffon asserts that the "temperate peoples" are "les plus beaux, les plus blancs et les mieux faits de toute la terre" ("the most beautiful, the most white and the most well made of all the earth").[18] This opens a significant connection between aesthetic judgement and the categorization of humans. In other words, the physical beauty or ugliness of an individual could not only reflect their own "interior moral being", it could also reveal the generalized qualities of whole peoples. This correlation between aesthetic ideas (that is, cultural preferences) and physical difference made sense to contemporaries given the assumption that "human beauty . . .was assumed to be a biological means of creating mutual attraction leading to procreation and the continuation of the species of humanity".[19] In this way, for Buffon, the identification of a "European" is a matter of physical form, aesthetic evaluation, and spatial and environmental designation.

Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, "the most influential theorist of human variety in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century",[20] also identified a human category particular to Europe. In *De generis humani varietate nativa* (1775), he identified four "classes of inhabitants", later adding a fifth class in the second edition (1781):

> The first of these and the largest, which is also the primeval one, embraces the whole of Europe, including the Lapps, whom I cannot in any way separate from the rest of the Europeans . . .; and that western part of Asia, which lies towards us, this side of the Obi, the Caspian Sea, Mount Taurus, and the Ganges; also north Africa; and lastly, in America, the Greenlanders and Esquimaux, for I see in these people a wonderful difference from the other inhabitants of America . . . All these nations, regarded as a whole, are white in colour, and, if compared with the rest, beautiful in form.[21]

In the third edition of this work (1795), Blumenbach labels this group "Caucasian", a term still used in the twenty-first century to describe people with white skin.[22] However, the implications of Blumenbach's classification are multifarious. He describes white people as one variety who inhabit the whole geographical space of Europe. But this variety cannot be described in any straightforward way as

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18 Buffon, *Oeuvres*, 2: 621–4.

19 David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2002), 12, 20.

20 Kitson, *Theories of Race*, 141

21 J. F. Blumenbach, *The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach*, trans. and ed. Thomas Bendyshe (London, 1865), 99–100. This quotation is from the second edition of *De generis* (1781).

22 For Blumenbach's five human varieties (Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American and Malay) see *Anthropological Treatises*, 264–6. For the continuing use of the word "Caucasian", especially by immigration services, see Hannaford, *Race*, 207.

"European", because it encompasses people from outside the continent. Moreover, Blumenbach suggests that "the cradle of the human race lay in the Caucasus whence the species had dispersed over the globe, climactic differences bringing about human variations".[23] In other words, he argues for the unified origins of the human race by refusing to identify separate human species, while simultaneously asserting the aesthetic and historical primacy of one particular variation. In this respect, Blumenbach strives to demonstrate the original unity of all human peoples, while also legitimizing the separation of those peoples into various groups. By definition, Blumenbach's theory could not imply the permanency of differences, since it was premised upon deviation from an original norm. Nevertheless, his categorizations downplay variety within groups in order to underscore "distinctions between groups", an implication which could encourage a "larger effort to fix racial types".[24]

Clearly, then, questions about human difference reverberated unresolved throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In his lecture "On the Causes of the Varieties of the Human Species", William Lawrence summarizes these contemporary debates: "are distinctions coeval with the origins of the species, or as the result of subsequent variation", and, in the latter case, are they caused by "external physical and moral causes, or [by] native or congenital variety"?[25] This statement is partly a development of the monogenesis–polygenesis inquiry, but it also demonstrates burgeoning interest in the relationship between environment and congenital inheritance. In the mid-eighteenth century, Pierre-Louise Moreau de Maupertuis had begun to explore the problems of biological inheritance. He noted that children usually resemble their parents and concluded that some unknown biological mechanism causes characteristics to be passed on through the generations. He also realized that, in animals and birds, certain natural variations could be deliberately bred and accentuated to create creatures with slightly different characteristics. But how do such variations arise? Maupertuis speculated that environmental factors have an influence:

Je n'exclus pas l'influence que le climat & les alimens peuvent y avoir. Il semble que la chaleur de la Zone torride, soit plus propre à fomenter les parties qui rendent la peau

[23] H. F. Augstein, "From the Land of the Bible to the Caucasus and Beyond: The Shifting Ideas of the Geographical Origins of Humankind", in Waltraud Erst and Bernard Harris, eds., *Race, Science and Medicine, 1700–1960* (New York and London, 1999), 64.

[24] Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science*, rev. edn (New Brunswick, 2004), 118–19.

[25] William Lawrence, "On the Causes of the Varieties of the Human Species", in *idem*, *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, and the Natural History of Man*, 3rd edn (London, 1823), 431.

noire, que celles qui la rendent blanche. Et je ne sais pas jusqu'où peut aller cette influence du climat ou des alimens, après de longues suites de siécles.

I do not exclude the possible influence of climate and food. It would seem that the heat of the torrid zone is more favourable to the particles that compose black skin than to those that make up white skin. And I simply do not know how far this kind of influence of climate and food may go after many centuries.[26]

For Maupertuis, then, environmental circumstances give rise to variations which then become hereditary: "Ce n'est que par quelque accident que le noir est devenu une couleur héréditaire aux grandes familles qui peuplent la Zone torride" ("It is only by some accident that black has become a hereditary colour in the great families which populate the torrid zone").[27] Lawrence follows a similar line of thinking: humans are of one species, but have undergone changes "by the influence of climate, food, mode of living, epidemic diseases". Such changes are then "transmitted from generation to generation", "by the continual action of the same causes". Like Maupertuis, Lawrence fuses environmentalism with hereditary biology, proposing a solution based on "race", which he uses in the sense of "congenital variety of a single species". Thus there are three "races" in Europe: Celts, Germans and Slavs, all part of the same species, but congenitally different from one another. Races are distinct in a moral sense too: the Negro disposition is "cruel and barbarous", though Lawrence is undecided whether this is a cause or an effect of congenital variation. For him, it is entirely legitimate to speak of a single human species and culturally and biologically distinct races.[28]

A related idea is evident in James Cowles Prichard's *Researches into the Physical History of Man* (1813). He speaks of "Negroes" and "Europeans" as dissimilar variations of a single human species. This "obvious gradation" is identifiable "in the shape of the skull, from the European to the negro, bearing a ratio to the degree of colour". However, such physical variation is dependent upon circumstantial influences: "in races which are experiencing the effects of civilisation, a temperate climate increases the tendency to the light variety [of skin colour]". In other words, the development of (European) civilization directly causes physical variation. In the same way that "local causes" form new "races" from existing animal species—for example, white mice will be produced if their parents are kept in the dark—so too do new human varieties emerge from changes in social organization. For this reason, the original pair were black, and "the progress of nature has been

[26] Maupertuis, *Venus physique, contenant deux dissertations, l'une sur l'origine des hommes et des animaux; et l'autre sur l'origine des noirs* (La Haye, 1746), 144–5. The translation is from *idem*, *The Earthly Venus*, trans. Simone Brangier Boas, introduction by George Boas (New York, 1966), 80.

[27] Maupertuis, *Venus*, 149.

[28] Lawrence, "On the Causes", 434–7.

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the gradual transmutation from the Negro to the European . . . whenever we see any progress towards civilization, there we also find deviation towards a lighter colour". Humans change according to environmental and societal circumstances, but then settle into hereditary (and thus near permanent) differences of intellect, cultural refinement and physical appearance. Those consolidated differences, in turn, facilitate further distinctive change: "the influence of moral causes in modifying the efficacy of natural causes is . . . very considerable".[29] Prichard's ideas act as a bridge between social and biological theories of difference: culture and climate initiate change, but also legitimize the distinction and description of various congenital "races".[30] In this way, Prichard makes it possible to identify essential differences from observation of social practice.

For Prichard, as well as the other thinkers I have examined so far, the primary intellectual challenge is to maintain an orthodox monogenetic perspective while still adequately explaining human difference. Polygenesis offers a different solution, though it still encompasses similar questions about climate and human adaptability. In 1778 Lord Kames, for instance, had used "race" in the sense of "species": there are many distinct human races, he says, each "fitted for different climates" and with different "tempers and dispositions". These "races" are permanently hereditary and do not change according to social or spatial factors: a European can "for years expose himself to the sun in a hot climate, till he be quite brown, [but] his children will nevertheless have the same complexion with those in Europe". In this way, Kames reconfigures climatological arguments: human forms and behaviours are not shaped by climates; instead humans are created with different appearances and qualities in order to fit particular environments better. Unlike Prichard, Kames separates human categories absolutely: there is no possibility of change and a limited capacity for interaction between races. Horses, he suggests, can breed together, because they are of "one kind". But "men are not all of one kind; for if a White mix with a Black" the result will be "a mongrel breed differing from both parents".[31] Kames's theories make "European" into a distinctive biological category, identified principally by skin colour and other physical features. Polygenesis, of course, remained a relatively unorthodox theory, not least because it contradicted the Genesis creation story.[32] It still

[29] James Cowles Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man* (London, 1813), 231–3, 206–9, 236, 209.

[30] See Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 295–6. For more on the importance of aesthetics in Prichard's ideas see Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 133–4.

[31] Henry Home, Lord Kames, "Preliminary Discourse, Concerning the Origin of Men and of Languages", in *idem*, *Sketches of the History of Man*, 2nd edn. 4 vols. (London, 1778), 1: 3–26, 72–9.

[32] Kitson, *Theories of Race*, xiii.

held appeal, however, for thinkers looking to justify imperialism by reference to supposed differences between humans. In his *History of Jamaica* (1774), for example, Edward Long edges towards polygenesis when he suggests,

> When we reflect on the nature of [black people], and their dissimilarity to the rest of mankind, must we not concluded that they are a different species of the same genus? . . . Every member of the creation is wisely fitted and adapted to their certain uses, and confined within their certain bounds.

Long insists on permanent and innate differences in physical appearance, and social and intellectual capacity: black people, he says, are "void of genius, and seem incapable of making any progress in civility or science", an assumption which legitimizes their exploitation by purportedly superior Europeans.[33]

Most racial thinkers, however, step back from the unconventional doctrinal implications of polygenesis. John Bigland, writing in 1816, suggests that "race"—in the sense of "bodily and mental faculties . . . perpetuated in hereditary descent", such as "strength, courage, genius and other gifts of nature'—is a more accurate way of dividing peoples than social custom, since "we are sometimes unable to discover any difference in government, laws or religion". Accordingly, he decides that "Europeans . . . are a visible distinction of race" in comparison to Asiatics, Africans and Americans, although, in a nod to orthodoxy, it is "not improbable" that all are descended from Noah. However, he immediately admits that "among the European nations . . . all distinctions of race, which might once have existed, are long since confounded"—Greeks and Romans are a mixture of Egyptians, Phoenicians, and Celts; Franks and Saxons a blend of Gauls, Celts, Britons and Normans.[34] Bigland proposes an overarching European identity, but then instantly collapses this into competing factions. Despite his own principle not to divide by social custom, he also uses civilizations ("Greek", "Roman") as the foundation for racial groupings, a strategy which shows how, for Bigland and other racial thinkers, societal and essential differences between peoples are interdependent and mutually illuminating.

In summary, then, discussion of human difference—and the identification of "European" people—is related to several recurring and interlocking debates about human "nature", hereditary qualities, climatic influence, and aesthetic judgements. The key question, however, concerns the extent to which these

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[33] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 3 vols. (London, 1774), 2: 356, 374–5, 353. Long's terminology is occasionally indistinct: sometimes he uses "race" in the sense of "classes of human creatures", which might imply varieties of a single group; at other moments he talks about orang-utans as a "race of beings", which would suggest a meaning closer to the modern "species". See ibid., 2: 371, 375–6.

[34] John Bigland, *An Historical Display of the Effects of Physical and Moral Causes on the Character and Circumstances of Nations* (London, 1816), 75–80, 90–6.

debates extend more widely outside familiar specialist works on anatomical, biological and social classification. There is evidence that such disputes were part of wider public discourses about human categorization. For example, Charles White's *Account of the Regular Gradation in Man* (1799) reports that there "subsists a characteristic difference in the bony system betwixt the European and the African", that "there are material differences in the corporal organisation of various classes of mankind" and that the European stands "at the head, as being the farthest removed from the brute creation".[35] A reviewer in the *Monthly Review* censures this conclusion the following year, attacking White for falsely assuming that Europeans embody a more advanced "gradation" of humankind.[36] This review is significant because it shows that the questions under dispute during this period—particularly whether there are specifically European forms of behaviour and physical appearance—were not restricted to specialist works but also received serious attention in review magazines and other books targeted at a general readership. There are several potential places to examine the dispersal of racial thinking in this period, periodicals, travel narratives and imperial documents perhaps being the most obvious.[37] Here, however, I wish to show how uncertainties about the European race(s) recur throughout encyclopedias and their source texts.

ENCYCLOPEDIAS AND THE "EUROPEAN RACE"

Encyclopedias are a useful way to assess a period's culture and assumptions: they purport to summarize received knowledge and can thus reveal much about contemporary "intellectual, political, economic and social life", particularly the "extent of the reception and diffusion" of certain key ideas.[38] That said, one must be careful not to assume a direct correlation between encyclopedic content and the zeitgeist. As Frank Kafker observes, some encyclopedias presented information in an idiosyncratic manner: the first edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1768–71), for example, avoided discussion of biography and "mechanical arts", while

[35] Charles White, *An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man, and in Difference Animals and Vegetables; and from the Former to the Latter* (London, 1799), 55, 83. For more details about White see Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, 214–19.

[36] Anonymous review, "*An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man and in different Animals and Vegetables, and from the former to the latter*. By Charles White, 1799", *Monthly Review* 33 (new series) (1800), 360–64.

[37] For discussions of empire and race see Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race*, 10–14; Colwill, "Sex, Savagery and Slavery", esp. 207; Wilson, *The Island Race*, esp. 90–91, 151.

[38] Frank Kafter, ed., introduction to *Notable Encyclopaedias of the Late Eighteenth Century: Eleven Successors of the Encyclopédie*, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century 315 (Oxford, 1994), 1–2.

focusing intensely on Scottish legal history. By contrast, others could be unadventurous and conventional in seeking to uphold "dominant religious, political and social institutions".[39] Nevertheless, according to Richard Yeo, encyclopedias were a key means by which important ideas were transmitted to a wider audience: Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* (1728), for instance, was central in the dissemination of Lockean and Newtonian ideas "to a readership that extended beyond elite scholars". In this sense, encyclopedias were key components in the expanding "public character of information" since they were pitched at "the majority of educated, but not necessarily university-educated, readers . . . rather than only specialists".[40] It is, of course, difficult to determine the precise audience of encyclopedias. They were expensive: the first edition of *Britannica* appeared in a hundred weekly instalments costing between sixpence and eightpence each, and the whole set cost between £2 10s and £3 7s (fifty to sixty-seven shillings) depending on paper quality. A labourer in this period would be fortunate to earn ten shillings per week, meaning that the encyclopedia would cost about five to seven weeks' income. Even for a gentleman with an income of five pounds (a hundred shillings) per week, an encyclopedia was a significant purchase.[41] Despite this, *Britannica* reached print runs of five thousand—ten thousand by the late eighteenth century—and, as reference books, encyclopedias probably had many more readers than purchasers: *Britannica* especially became "virtually a compulsory acquisition for any self-respecting multi-disciplinary institution".[42] In what follows, I have consulted entries on "Europe" in every British encyclopedia completed between 1771 and 1830 (as well as named source texts for those entries) in order to show how certain racial ideas about "Europe" and "Europeans" were disseminated in general reference texts.[43]

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39 Kafker, "William Smellie's Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*" and *idem*, "The influence of the *Encyclopédie* on the Eighteenth-Century Encyclopaedic Tradition", both in *Notable Encyclopaedias*, 155–7, 395.

40 Richard Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge, 2001), 158–9, 163–6, xiii, 51.

41 Kafter, "William Smellie's Edition", 148; William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge, 2004), 193–6. There were twenty shillings in a pound, and twelve pence in a shilling.

42 Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, 51; David Allan, *A Nation of Readers: The Lending Library in Georgian England* (London, 2008), 194 For more on reading societies and lending libraries, see also St Clair, *The Reading Nation*, 235–67.

43 Identifying encyclopedic source material is extremely difficult because articles rarely employ references. I have, however, investigated every occasion when an article on "Europe" mentions a work or an authority by name. These materials often name other influences not acknowledged directly by encyclopedias. The *Encyclopaedia Londinesis* (1810–24), for example, cites John Pinkerton's *Modern Geography* (1802), which in turn draws upon the anonymous *Complete System of Geography* (1747), Fenning and Collyer's

In their articles on "Europe", some encyclopedias argue that Europeans can be considered collectively as a distinctive human variety. The second edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1777–84) declares that European "inhabitants are all white; and incomparably more handsome than the Africans, and even most of the Asians", echoing the aesthetic arguments of Buffon and others.[44] *The English Encyclopaedia* (1802) proclaims that Europeans "are much *better made* than the Africans, or even the Asiatics" (emphasis added), which implies a distinctiveness and superiority from the moment of creation rather than acquired advantages.[45] Due to vagaries of vocabulary, it is not always clear whether these texts are arguing, in the polygenist manner, for a separate European race or for a distinctive subdivision of the whole human race. The latter is perhaps more likely in most cases: Silvia Sebastiani suggests that eighteenth-century encyclopedias are usually monogenist in order to be doctrinally orthodox.[46] Either way, the articles identify unique physical features particular to Europeans (skin colour, physical beauty).

Crucially, however, this identification often accompanies an assertion of social superiority. *The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia* (1808–30) suggests that European "progress in knowledge and arts raised them above the inhabitants of other divisions, that they seem almost a separate race".[47] The key word here is "almost", for shortly afterwards the writer reiterates the monogenist theory that the human race emerged from Asia and that all peoples are traceable to the same genesis. In this respect, he is working firmly within established traditions which lent Asia Minor and the Caucasus considerable ideological resonance. Not only was it the apocryphal location of the Garden of Eden, Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece and Prometheus' punishment by Zeus, it was also the reputed place where the Ark came to rest, and was hence the wellspring for the repopulation of the world by Noah's sons.[48] Yet the *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia* does not believe that all these descendents have the same innate capabilities: Europeans excel in "activity

New System of Geography (1765–6) and Middleton's *New and Complete System of Geography* (1777). See *Encyclopaedia Londinensis*, 24 vols. (London, 1810–24), 7: 83; John Pinkerton, *Modern Geography*, 2 vols. (London, 1802), 2: 782.

44 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2nd edn, 10 vols. (Edinburgh, 1777–84), 4: 2860. For the importance of aesthetics in Prichard's and Lawrence's racial ideas see Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 133–4.

45 *The English Encyclopaedia*, 10 vols. (London, 1802), 3: 351.

46 Silvia Sebastiani, "Race as a Construction of the Other: 'Native Americans' and 'Negroes' in the Eighteenth-Century Editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*", in Bo Stråth, ed., *Europe and the Other, Europe as the Other* (Brussels, 2000), 224.

47 *The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, 18 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1808–30), 9: 238.

48 Augstein, "From the Land of the Bible", 66; Daniel Drioxhe, *La linguistique et l'appel de l'histoire (1600–1800)* (Geneva, 1978), 86–7; Maurice Olender, "Europe, or How to Escape Babel", *History and Theory* 33/4 (1994), 17.

of mind", and this has enabled them to attain the "most perfect form".[49] For this encyclopedia, therefore, Europeans' mental and moral advantages facilitate their social advances, which in turn leads to further "progress in knowledge". *The Modern Encyclopaedia* (1816–20?) repeats the *Britannica*'s suggestion that Europeans are "incomparably . . . handsome". Additionally, "Europeans surpass [Africans and Asians] in arts and sciences . . . in trade, navigation, and in military and civil affairs, being, at the same time, more prudent, more valiant, more generous, more polite and more sociable than they".[50] Similarly, the *Encyclopaedia Edinensis* (1816–27) declares that, in Europe, "the state of civilisation, of science, literature, arts, military tactics, and commercial enterprise, is more perfect, and on a more extensive scale . . . and the moral character more dignified and pure than any other quarter of the globe".[51] Moral qualities (valour, generosity) are associated with the advantages of an allegedly superior civil system. In this respect, "European" does not just denote a kind of society or behavioural code, it also signifies a type of person: these texts fuse together developmental progress with the concept of an unchanging European nature: Europeans have distinguished themselves through their "inborn faculties" or "natural abilities" and the sociological application of those talents. The roots of this fusion are evident in eighteenth-century geographical works. The 1747 *Complete System of Geography* claims that Europeans have asserted themselves through social triumphs (military conquests, "Scholastic Sciences", "the Invention and Improvement of many useful and ingenious Arts") and their innate "Genius". According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, in the eighteenth century the word "genius" meant, amongst other things, "natural ability or capacity", "natural aptitude" and "characteristic disposition" of a person or people.[52] Europeans, in other words, have distinguished themselves in both "Genius and Industry"—through their "inborn faculties" or "natural abilities" *and* the application of those talents.[53] These two factors are intimately connected: pre-eminent civic structures reveal the capabilities of "Genius" and those same social forms enable the demonstration of further innate brilliance.

As with the racial thinkers I examined above, these accounts reveal an attempt to integrate "innate" and "acquired" qualities in identifying "Europeans". *Britannica*'s fourth edition (1800–9) proclaims that the "benevolent Parent of the universe" granted Europeans "greater bodily vigour and intellectual strength". This implies that Europeans have always been more intelligent, vigorous and

49 *The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, 9: 238, 235.

50 *The Modern Encyclopaedia*, 10 vols. (London, [1816–20?]), 5: 77.

51 *Encyclopaedia Edinensis*, 6 vols. (Edinburgh, 1816–27), 3: 433.

52 *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn, "genius", senses 3 and 4.

53 *Complete System of Geography*, 2 vols. (London, 1747), 1: 1.

advanced, because they were created that way. However, it also describes the long European drive towards progress in "diffusion of knowledge, the extension of industry and the civilisation of manners".[54] "Europe" is thus understood partly as a developmental process of ideas, conventions, discussions and discoveries, and partly as a static entity, granted certain benefits by God. Europeans are both dynamic participants in a superior social network, the agents and subjects of "progress", and unchanging created beings, made with specific characteristics or advantages which are never lost. As well as revealing divergent ideas about "Europeans", this tension also reflects broader eighteenth-century debates about how to understand human difference in terms of societal participation, developmental progress, and unchanging "natural" qualities.

As part of this wider debate, other works explore how "racial" notions of Europe interact with ideas about space and migration. In his *System of Geography* (1777), Charles Middleton suggested that "when the Asiatics and African regions became the seats of tyranny and despotism", more "liberally-disposed" Asian and African peoples migrated "northwards and sought for that liberty in less prolific climates". For this reason, "Europe, the less extensive and wealthy, became more polished and powerful than the other two parts of the world".[55] The theory is dependent upon essential difference: early Europeans were distinguished from ordinary Asians by their "liberal" disposition and were thus distinct even before they moved into European space. When Middleton says that Europeans are "better made" or that in Europe "the human mind has made the greatest progress", he means that their innate abilities have inclined them towards particular social systems: Europeans were identifiable long before "Europe" became a social or spatial term.[56] The *Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (1806–7) also identifies dispositional differences between Asians and Europeans. Having concluded that no obvious spatial boundary between Asia and Europe exists, the distinction is instead "ethical, as the manners of the Asiatic subjects of Russia, and even Turkey, differ considerably from those of the European inhabitants of those islands".[57] This might seem to suggest contrasting forms of customary behaviour, but in fact the implication is more complex. According to the author, Asian and European peoples in the same community or locale still behave differently, which suggests that Asian and European "manners" are partly related to dispositional and not

54 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 4th edn, 20 vols. (Edinburgh, 1801–9), 8: 350–1.

55 Charles Middleton, *A New and Complete System of Geography*, 2 vols. (London, 1777), 1: ii. According to Roberto Dainotto, the "Arabist theory" (the idea that "European" civilization originated in Asia) became more prevalent from the 1770s onwards. See Dainotto, *Europe (in Theory)* (London, 2007), 6, 130–2.

56 Middleton, *System of Geography*, 2: 3.

57 *A Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, 2 vols. (London, 1806–7), 1: 349.

just circumstantial factors. In this sense, the words "Asian" and "European" signal capabilities and behaviours not fully explicable by social or geographical context—an implicit rejection of environmental theories of difference.

Some texts, however, express doubts about this alleged Europe-wide racial unity. Like some of the texts above, the 1824 *Supplement* to *Britannica* suggests that European denotes mental capacity:

> It is only in Europe ... that the powers of the human mind ... have developed that principle of progressive improvement ... It is only in Europe that knowledge and the arts seem to be indigenous. Though they have appeared at times among some of the nations of Asia, they have either stopped short after advancing a few steps, or they have speedily retrograded and perished, like something foreign to the genius of the people.[58]

These sentences postulate that European social achievements depend upon inherent capabilities not possessed by other peoples. Moreover, they imply that "European" is a single "racial" category: Europeans can be identified as a collective because they all have broadly similar "indigenous" talents. In this sense, therefore, "European" alludes to a person's "nature", and not just their circumstances or acquired skills. Later, however, it talks of the "different races of inhabitants" of Europe, distinguishing them by "language, manners or physical constitution". South-western Europeans are, for instance, naturally "more inventive and less persevering".[59] This establishes a Europe in which a variety of distinct tribal groups compete with one another, weakening the racial totality formerly implied. The *Supplement* thus presents contending understandings of Europe's people: are they "by nature" alike, or driven to competition because they are essentially distinct? The next section explores some of these challenges to European racial wholeness presented in other contemporary historical and geographical books.

ENCYCLOPEDIAS AND THE EUROPE OF MANY RACES

Many encyclopedia articles reject the idea of a single European people in order to identify competing ethnic groups in "Europe". These works use the word "European" to refer collectively to all these groups, not to mark out a single European "race". This usage invests the idea of Europe with spatial connotations: dissimilar groups are connected only because they share the same space. Several works argue that there are three "ancient peoples of Europe": Celts, Finns and Laplanders. Subsequently, these tribes were pushed westwards by migrating

[58] *Supplement to the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Editions of the Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 6 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1824), 4: 181.

[59] Ibid., 4: 187.

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Asians, specifically Goths and "Sclavonics" (Slavs).[60] The encyclopedias seek to build divergent European identities on these movements and confrontations: "European" alludes both to a complex ethnographic mixture caused by millennia of such interactions and to distinct groupings identifiable throughout history and in the modern period.

These analyses bear significant resemblance to the racial ideas of John Pinkerton, the historian, poet and geographer.[61] The encyclopedias employ the theory, expressed in Pinkerton's *Modern Geography* (1802), that most modern Europeans are descended from Asian Goths (also known as Scythians).[62] This was not in itself a unique hypothesis: the idea that the human race originated in Asia, and that Noah's son Japhet fathered peoples who migrated westwards, was derived from ancient sources and became relatively conventional in the early eighteenth century.[63] Pinkerton, however, disconnects this premise from its monogenist, theological connotations. His thesis is outlined most fully in *A Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths*, the primary purpose of which is to trace the movements of the Goths, who, Pinkerton contends, are the founders of nearly all European societies (including Greece and Rome). However, it also identifies four "Grand Races of Men" in ancient Europe: Celts ("who were to the other races of men what the savages of America are to the Europeans"), Iberi ("who had past from Africa"), Sarmatae or Sclavonics (who occupied Russia and Poland) and Goths–Scythians.[64] These reflections place heavy emphasis on migration since only one people, the Celts, are indigenous to European space. He also speaks explicitly about biological categories, not social groups:

> the Scythians were neither Celts, Sarmartians, nor Tartars, no more than a horse is an elephant, a lion or a tiger . . . A Tartar, a Negro, an American, &c., &c, differ as much from a German, as a bull-dog, or lap-dog, shepherd's cur, from a pointer. The differences are radical; and such as no climate or chance would produce.

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60 This theory appears in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 4th edn; *The Cyclopaedia; or Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences and Literature*, 39 vols. (London, 1802–19); *Encyclopaedia Londinensis*, 24 vols. (London, 1810–24).

61 For details of Pinkerton's life see Sarah Couper, "Pinkerton, John (pseuds. Robert Heron, H. Bennet) (1758–1826)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), available at www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22301, accessed 21 February 2009.

62 Pinkerton, *Modern Geography*, 1: 8. Versions of his argument appear in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* , 4th edn; *Cyclopaedia, or Universal Dictionary*; *Encyclopaedia Londinensis*; and *The Oxford Encyclopaedia*, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1828–31).

63 Droixhe, *La linguistique*, 86–88. See also Kidd, *British Identities*, 9–11.

64 Pinkerton, *A Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths, Being an Introduction to the Ancient and Modern History of Europe* (London, 1787), 17–18.

These theories edge towards polygenism: "the author of nature . . . gave various races of men as inhabitants of several countries"—in other words, each human variety was created separately to suit particular circumstances.[65]

Pinkerton himself confirmed that these unorthodox views derived indirectly from "ancient accounts".[66] The Scythians were a familiar presence in classical texts: brief allusions in Homer and Hesiod identify them as nomadic horsemen, and later accounts by Herodotus, Strabo and Juvenal comment on their hardy frugality, as well as their uncivilized cruelty. In attempting to reconcile classical and Jewish history, early church chronologers integrated the Scythian tradition with biblical genealogy: in the first century AD, Josephus argued that the Scythians descended from Japhet's son Magog. Furthermore, because their traditional homeland in the Caucasus was the reputed place where the waters of the Flood receded, the Scythians were necessarily one of the most ancient peoples on earth from whom others derived.[67] Importantly, too, Tacitus' *Germania* had legitimized a connection between German peoples and the ancient Scythians and Sarmatians of central Asia: his account of German society and behaviour closely matches Posidonius' and Herodotus' much earlier descriptions of the Scythians.[68] Later, in the sixth century, Jordanes and Isidore of Seville amplified this relationship, arguing that Scythians and German Goths shared a common ancestry and that they had populated all Europe following widespread migrations. "From this time onwards", says James Johnson, "the Scythian enjoyed new glory as the parent of virtually every nation in Europe". He goes on to suggest that, by the eighteenth century, the Scythian–Gothic theory had fallen into "obscurity", although Pinkerton's use of a related idea, as well as its presence in other contemporary books, instead suggests its ongoing resonance.[69]

It would be misleading, of course, to ascribe artificial uniformity to these various retellings of Scythian–Gothic ancestry. Jordanes, for example, argued that the Scythians derived from Scandinavia and moved from there to central

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65 Pinkerton, *Dissertation*, vii, 33–4.

66 Pinkerton, *Dissertation*, iii. Pinkerton specifically mentions Tacitus, Isidore of Seville, Jordanes and Bede.

67 James William Johnson, "The Scythian: His Rise and Fall", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20/2 (1959), 250–55.

68 Johnson, "The Scythian", 255; Martin Thom, *Republics, Nations and Tribes* (London, 1995), 218–20. Thom draws upon Eduard Norden's *Die Germanische Urgeschichte in Tacitus Germania* (1920) to suggest that these resemblances were perhaps the consequence of generic conventions in classical ethnographic writing, rather than an attempt to posit direct descent from the Scythians to the Germans.

69 Olender, "Europe, or How to Escape Babel", 12; Droixhe, *La linguistique*, 87; Johnson, "The Scythian", 256–7.

Asia.[70] Furthermore, there was significant controversy regarding the relationship of the Scythians to other ancient groups. Scythians and Celts were often conflated, creating what Colin Kidd calls "a recipe for ethnological confusion". In his *Germania antiqua* (1616) Philip Cluverius grouped Scythians and Celts together, but, unlike Tacitus, distinguished them sharply from the Sarmatians or Slavs. By contrast, Leibniz separated Celtic–Germans from Scythian–Slavs, since the two groups were apparently descended from different branches of Japhet's family.[71] Despite these bewildering complexities, caused partly by vague and shifting terminologies, the Scythian–Gothic theory has one particularly significant implication. By assuming that most peoples in Europe are traceable to a common (biblical) ancestry, the theory presumes that Europeans are closely interrelated. In the eighteenth century, it was therefore possible to speak about "Europe's shared Gothic origins": "historians agreed that most of the political nations of Europe shared common ethnic origins. The people of Europe, they argued, were largely the descendents of libertarian Gothic peoples".[72] Furthermore, the Scythians' migrations even posited connections between European and Asian peoples: eighteenth-century travellers and geographers even associated the Chinese with the "ancient Scythians".[73]

These implications make Pinkerton's use of the Scythian–Gothic theory all the more startling. His identification of Europe's Gothic heritage is motivated not by a straightforward conception of European racial unity, but by a virulent distaste for Celts and an urge to account for the separate derivation of European peoples. In contrast with earlier thinkers, he firmly separates Scythians–Goths from Celts, arguing that the former, in the guise of Picts and Saxons, displaced the barbaric Celts in England and lowland Scotland.[74] This has an Anglophile purpose in that Pinkerton tries to "blur the differences between Scots Lowlanders and the English nation, and to sharpen differences between Highlanders and Lowlanders within the Scottish nation".[75] However, by railing against authors who have mistakenly

[70] Johnson, "The Scythian", 256.

[71] Kidd, *British Identities*, 187–191; Droixhe, *La linguistique*, 133; *idem*, *De l'origine du language aux langues du monde* (Tübingen, 1987), 73–4.

[72] Kidd, *British Identities*, 227–31; *idem*, "Ethnicity on the British Atlantic World, 1688–1830", in Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840* (Cambridge, 2004), 275.

[73] Kitson, *Romanticism, Race and Colonial Encounter* (New York, 2007), 153. Kitson cites Cornelius de Pauw's *Philosophical Dissertations on the Egyptians and Chinese* (1795) and John Barrow's *Travels in China* (1804).

[74] [Pinkerton], "An Essay on the Origin of Scottish Poetry", in *Ancient Scottish Poems, Never Before in Print*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1786), 1: xxii–xxxvii.

[75] Kidd, "Race, Theology and Revival: Scots Philology and Its Contexts in the Age of Pinkerton and Jamieson", *Scottish Studies Review* 3/2 (2002), 22.

confounded Scythian–Goths with Celts, Sarmartian–Slavs and Tartars, Pinkerton also asserts the intractable racial diversity of peoples in Europe.[76] This leads him into still more unorthodox territory. Pinkerton proclaims himself dissatisfied with biblical genealogy: he argues that Jewish traditions and holy books are superseded by Christianity and are therefore "not binding on our faith". Indeed, understandings of ancient chronology have been "ruined" by desperate attempts to "force it to Scripture": "if we have recourse to Scripture for accounts of the origins of men, or of nations, we shall be shockingly deceived". Liberated from the orthodox presumption of a common origin for all peoples, Pinkerton instead embraces polygenesis. "Nature", he argues,

> not only produces different classes of animals, but also great varieties in each class, not only dogs, but forty or fifty kinds of dogs, which no mixture, elevation, decline, or any other cause, will ever fabricate; for no clime, art, or chance can give the size of the mastiff to the lap dog.

Assuming that such variations are fixed, he goes on to speculate that "so far from all nations being descended of one man, there are many races of men of quite different form and attribute". "To suppose all races of men descended from one parent", he concludes, "is as absurd as to suppose that an ass may become a horse, or an ouran-outan".[77]

Several scholars have shown how Pinkerton's writings reflect wider contemporary interest in articulating and constructing national identities.[78] However, what makes him remarkable is that he takes the Scythian–Gothic idea, with its implications of common origins, and combines it with explicit polygenesis to argue for absolute and unchanging biological distinctions between different peoples in Europe. This unorthodox perspective makes it all the more intriguing that versions of this basic thesis—the displacement of Celts by migrating Goths—should be reproduced in mainstream reference encyclopedias well into the nineteenth century. Of course, the encyclopedias are not so openly heterodox, but the theory's dissemination through Pinkerton's *Modern Geography* lends an underlying ambiguity as to whether, in identifying different groups, the encyclopedias are arguing for variations of a single European race or for distinctive and separate groups.

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76 Pinkerton, *Dissertation*, vi–vii.

77 Pinkerton, "Essay", xxiv–xxvi; *idem*, *Dissertation*, 186, 33.

78 Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740–1830*, rev. edn (London, 1997), 115; Robert Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography: The Political Languages of British Geography, 1650–1850* (New York, 2000), 188–9; *idem*, "British Geography's Republic of Letters: Mapping an Imagined Community, 1600–1800, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65/2 (2004), 261–73.

The problem is heightened because Pinkerton's ideas both confirm and unsettle the principle of European racial totality. He argues that one race has shaped Europe above all others: the Goths are "the real foundation of almost all European nations", because the previous Celtic inhabitants were savage. But he also shows how migration and social interaction complicate this apparent wholeness. The *Dissertation* opens with a map entitled "State of the Nations at the Christian Æra", which roughly depicts the spread of socio-racial groups across Europe, Asia and north Africa.[79] No borders are shown—the names merely stretch across regions and over each other—providing a complex and imprecise picture of Europe's "racial" identities. The Scythians spread from France to the Crimea, and Celts are confined to western France, Switzerland and Ireland. There are also a large number of Iberian and German peoples, but only one Italian group; and there are no Europeans further east than the Urals or the Black Sea. It is unclear how this map impacts upon Pinkerton's wider purpose: does he intend to group these peoples as Europeans, resolving disparate factions into one composite European identity, or does he privilege the competitive drive that allowed one group to overwhelm others in an ancient struggle for the heart of Europe? Perhaps these intentions are not in conflict: in *Modern Geography*, Pinkerton constructs a common identity from difference, arguing that shared "nature" connects all Germans and all Italians—despite political fragmentation, these peoples are united by intrinsic similarity.[80]

By arguing that Europeans possess a Gothic–Scythian heritage Pinkerton may be continuing this same strategy, arguing that Europe can be considered as a whole precisely because one particular race has rendered it distinct—its unity predicated on the existence of "others", notably Celts and Slavs. However, Pinkerton continually complicates his own insistence on the centrality of Goths. The *Dissertation* describes "the most prodigious and important [conflict] ever joined in Europe", when Attila's Huns, joined by Ostrogoths, fought Romans, Visigoths, Saxons and other groups. "Had Attila conquered", Pinkerton speculates, "all Europe would now have been Hunnish or Turkish, instead of Scythic or Gothic".[81] Despite attempting to polarize European racial history into a face-off between Huns and Turks, and Goths–Scythians, Pinkerton confuses this division, first by describing so many groups interacting in Europe, and second by having Gothic peoples fight on both sides. Goths are both invaders and defenders of Europe against alien Huns. This "Gothic" Europe is its own "other", defined by generations of Gothic–Scythian "nations" competing with each other, as well as outsiders and different "Europeans" (for instance, Celts). The emphasis on

79 Pinkerton, *Dissertation*, frontispiece.

80 Pinkerton, *Modern Geography*, 1: 591–2, 625.

81 Pinkerton, *Dissertation*, 196.

migration also causes conceptual problems. If, as *Modern Geography* asserts, Slavs and Scythians originated in Asia, then the racial, social and linguistic identities of Europe are consequently the result of migrating Asians. Clearly, this complicates any racial definition of Europe, suggesting that spatial movement and inhabitancy, rather than intrinsic abilities, make one European.[82]

Pinkerton's formulation is not the only vision of a divided Europe. Fenning and Collyer's *New System of Geography* (1765–6) investigates how different nations behave according to "Manners and Disposition", a phrase which suggests the interdependency of dispositional and socially acquired differences. For this reason, when they discuss "Saxons, Picts and Britons" in ancient England, the distinctions are simultaneously innate (dispositional) and social (related to cultural mannerisms).[83] The 1747 *Complete System* also identifies differences between and within states—Frenchmen, for example, are "brisk, gay and airy". The work constructs innate explanations for social differences: it says that the British are naturally brave, as if Britishness is an ancient trait, extant before the state existed and thus not entirely traceable to social development. Importantly, this assertion connects racial identity with political states, suggesting that inhabitants of different state systems are essentially distinct from one another. The *System* devotes considerable space to formulating complex racial histories, making differentiations based on complexion and mythological origins (for example, descent from Noah, which might imply the unity of humankind). Paradoxically, however, the work also stresses the multiplicity of "ethnic" groups within one country: modern Britain, for example, contains Celts, Britons, Saxons, Danes, Picts, Irishmen, and Welshmen. Faced with this vast array of different peoples, the work makes no categorical distinction between Asians and Europeans: there are so many "racial" groups that it is a hopeless generalization to speak of dichotomous Asian or European ethnicities.[84]

EUROPEAN LANGUAGES, EUROPEAN RACES

Thus far this article has demonstrated the complexities of "Europe" as a homogenizing (racial) category in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This concluding section will reflect on how the identification of multiple European "races" in the period closely matches the philological categorization of language families. In some respects this is not surprising, given that investigation into the origins and derivation of peoples and languages grew

82 Pinkerton, *Modern Geography*, 1: 10.

83 D. Fenning and J. Collyer, *A New System of Geography; or, A General Description of the World*, 2 vols. (London, 1765–6), 2: 495.

84 *Complete System* (1747), 1: 2, 596; 2: 68.

from both theological study and the interpretation of biblical history (especially the stories of the Flood and the Tower of Babel). Indeed, even today theories about early language development are closely related to those concerning human physical evolution, cognitive development, genetic relationships and ancient migratory patterns. The terminology even overlaps: the linguist Steven Roger Fischer speaks of certain languages as being "genetically related".[85] According to Ivan Hannaford, late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century inquiries into the origins and classification of humans developed in two directions: comparative anatomy and physical anthropology on the one hand, and a search for the "fundamentals" of speech and language on the other. William Jones's linguistic studies cast these related enquiries into a more secular disciplinary framework: he suggested that "the methods and classification systems developed in physical anthropology could be applied to the scientific study of language".[86] In this way, some thinkers—Pinkerton among them—sought to establish connections between language (or philological groups) and "communal racial origins".[87] Discussing the development of nineteenth-century philology, H. F. Augstein notes how linguistic theories were employed to justify rivalries between ancient races: Franks and Gauls in France, Anglo-Saxons and Celts in Britain.[88] In the early 1830s, J. G. Lockhart uses Ernst Jäkel's *The Germanic Origin of the Latin Language and the Roman Peoples* (1831) to identify five "races" or "nations of Christendom" in Europe based on language: Celts, Teutons, Sclavonics, Laplanders/Finns, Greeks/Romans. Celts, for example, can be distinguished by their language and dialect: they call themselves "Erse", which signifies not only their language, but also their racial identity.[89] Encyclopedias of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also employ philological theory to identify and classify Europeans. *The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia* says that "the resemblance of languages" indicates the unity of European peoples and that they should cooperate through political agreement.[90] More commonly, however, works identify linguistic divisions in Europe. Mid-eighteenth-century works favour a sixfold partition: the *Complete System*, Middleton and William Guthrie's *New System of Modern Geography* all list Greek, Latin, Teutonic, Celtic, Slavonic and Gothic as the

[85] Steven Roger Fischer, *A History of Language* (London, 1999), 35, 53–4, 60.

[86] Hannaford, *Race*, 241–2. See also Sir William Jones, "On the Origins and Families of Nations, delivered to the Asiatick Society, 23 February 1792", in *idem*, *Discourses*, 2 vols. (London, 1821), 2: 1–35.

[87] Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, 115–16. See also Wilson, *The Island Race*, 3.

[88] H. F. Augstein, *James Cowles Prichard's Anthropology: Remaking the Science of Man in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, 1999), 170–73.

[89] [J. G. Lockhart], "*The Germanic Origin of the Latin Language and the Roman People* by Ernst Jäkel", *Quarterly Review* 46 (1831–2), 336–9.

[90] *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, 9: 239.

principal language groups.[91] Early nineteenth-century encyclopedias, however, generally prefer three such "language families": Latin, Teutonic and Slavonic.[92]

What I wish to emphasize is that classification of languages closely follows the terms used to differentiate "races". The same terminology is therefore used to identify intrinsically distinct human groups and developmental social characteristics like language. To put it differently, acquired characteristics and essentialist ideas about "nature" are seen in terms of one another. The *Encyclopaedia Londinensis*, for example, defines "European" as both "an inhabitant" and "a native" of Europe, suggesting that "Europeanness" is both hereditary and socially acquired, both permanent and transitory.[93] From a twenty-first-century perspective, this equation of the acquired and the innate is troubling, since it risks confusing social practice with alleged ethnic essentialisms. As this essay has shown, however, such apparent conceptual tension is partly a reflection of an eighteenth-century intellectual environment in which Maupertuis, Lawrence and others saw social causation and inherited "essence" as inseparably, though mysteriously, interdependent. This relationship has its roots in theological enquiry, where scriptural exegeses of "racial, national and linguistic division" were considered to be interrelated and mutually illuminating branches of theology and sacred history. Kidd suggests that, as the eighteenth century developed, racial discourse gradually became more secularized, but, crucially, it continued to combine "biological, climatic and stadialist interpretations of racial and cultural difference".[94] In other words, it was possible for environmental or societal factors to indicate (or even cause) "essential" hereditary characteristics, and for innate disposition to define social development.

This background explains why it made sense in this period to connect discussions of "race" with analysis of language. For Prichard, ethnological theories of human variety could be supplemented and refined by linguistic study: "the history of languages was the key to the history of the human species".[95] Pinkerton's methodology in the *Dissertation* is also very revealing, since he distinguishes and delineates racial groups (especially Goths from Celts and Slavs) according to "identity of language", "familiar manners" and "the testimony of ancient authors". Later he claims that "language is a most permanent matter, not even total revolution in nations can change it . . . When

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91 *Complete System* (1747), 1: 1; Middleton, *New and Complete System*, 2: 5; William Guthrie, *A New System of Modern Geography*, 5th edn (London, 1792), 60.

92 *The English Encyclopaedia*, 3: 351; *The Modern Encyclopaedia*, 5: 77; *The London Encyclopaedia*, 22 vols. (London, 1826–9), 8: 677.

93 *Encyclopaedia Londinensis*, 7: 85.

94 Kidd, *British Identities*, 22–4.

95 Augstein, *Prichard's Anthropology*, xv.

a speech changes, it is in many centuries; and it only changes clothes, not body and soul".[96] This is significant because it highlights how eighteenth-century racial thought is dependent upon textual study and classical authority as much as upon biological classification. But it also demonstrates that human societal developments and essential qualities are, to some extent, defined by one another, and that "race" can be extrapolated from language.

In this way, Pinkerton's formulations, despite their unorthodox content, reflect long-standing eighteenth-century problems regarding the understanding and categorization of physical and social differences between humans. However, by closely associating "essential" characteristics with language and other societal developments, early racial ideas also potentially legitimize later nineteenth-century nationalist discourses about the unbridgeable divides between speakers of different languages. Maurice Olender notes that by the mid-eighteenth-century "it had become impossible to speak of nations or national histories without discussing the instrument with which they maintained their identity over time and conveyed ancestral values from generation to generation: namely language".[97] Condillac, for instance, identified language with the "genius" of a people and asserted that languages express the character of those who speak them: "Le caractère des Peuples influe sur celui des Langues"; "Par cette Histoire des progrès du langage, chacun peut s'appercevoir que les Langues . . . seroient une peinture du caractère & du génie de chaque peuple" ("the character of peoples influences that of languages"; "from this history of the development of language, everyone can perceive that languages are like a painting of the character and genius of each people").[98] By the later nineteenth century, Olender continues, "comparative philology frequently neglected history"; it regarded linguistic systems as "rigid structures that could not be eroded by time" and through which one could "stereotype" civilizations and behaviour. The connection between language and permanent human difference culminated in the idea of the "linguistic race", where biological categories were identified by language, "intellectual aptitude" and "moral instinct", rather than by physical features. Ideas about the Indo-European language family, for example, would eventually mutate into theories about the "white race". In particular, the search for the non-Hebrew origins of European languages would become closely related to anti-Semitic theories about

[96] Pinkerton, *Dissertation*, xxi, 109.

[97] Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion and Philology in the Nineteenth-Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA, 1992), 5.

[98] [Etienne Bonnet de Condillac], *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1746), 2: 197, 221. My translation.

the "Aryan" racial purity of certain European peoples.[99] Martin Thom uses the terms "word-nation" and "tribe-nation" to indicate that, in the nineteenth century, "culture, language and race" were often assumed to be "isomorphic" or homologous concepts. In other words, (national) language and culture could identify "racial" types—that is, unchanging forms of behaviour and appearance guaranteed "by the continuity of a lineage".[100]

While racial thought in this period thus remains indebted to eighteenth-century parameters—for example the influence of biblical and classical study—it eventually leads to later nineteenth-century associations of language, nation and biology. This is not an inevitable or straightforward process; after all, the Scythian–Goth theory could easily legitimize transnational understandings of European commonality. However, the texts examined here contain multiple implications: sometimes they argue for a unified European race, and sometimes they detail competing racial groups coexisting in Europe. This unresolved debate broadens the scope for theorizing racial identity in the nineteenth century. It can facilitate a "white-man's-burden" perspective, in which all white-skinned Europeans share a common superiority and purpose. But it can also justify European racial rivalry in which particular groups—Teutons, Aryans, Goths—dominate inferior European peoples as well as non-Europeans. In this way, early disputes about the "European race" sustain several ideological trajectories. But more widely, they show how eighteenth-century racial inquiry, which combines complex and diverse ideas about anatomical classification, climate, societal analysis, philology and ancient tradition, can, under certain circumstances, crystallize into the most reductive categorizations.

[99] Olender, *The Languages of Paradise*, 15–16, 57–63; *idem*, "Europe, or How to Escape Babel", 5–9, 22–4.

[100] Thom, *Republics, Nations and Tribes*, 224–7, 266.