CHAPTER 3

Renaissance Body Myths and the Spectacle of Strangeness

Consider the following descriptions of the inhabitants of 'Ethiopia'. The first appeared in a late-sixteenth-century version of Isidore of Seville's sixth- and seventh-century *Etymologies*[1] under the heading 'On Men and Monsters' (Sharpe/Isidore 1964: 38):

> 12. Just as among individual races there are certain members who are monsters, so also among mankind as a whole, certain races are monsters, like the giants, the Cynocephali, the Cyclopes, and others ...
>
> 17. It is believed that the Blemmyae in Libya are born as headless trunks, that they have both eyes and mouth in their chests; and that there are others, born without necks, having eyes in their shoulders ...
>
> 20. The Artabitae in Ethiopia are reported to walk on all fours like beasts, and none of them passes the fortieth year of age ...
>
> 23. The race Sciopedes is said to exist in Ethiopia, with only one leg but marvelous speed withal: the Greeks call them SKIOPEDES because in the summertime they stretch out on their backs, covering themselves with the shadows of their huge feet.
>
> 24. The Antipodes in Libya have their soles turned around behind their legs, and have eight toes on their soles. (Sharpe/Isidore 1964: 51–3)

Two centuries later, in the first edition of *Systema Naturae* by the natural historian Linnaeus (1735), there appeared the following classification of 'homo sapiens' into six varieties:

> a. Wild man – four-footed, mute, hairy.
>
> b. Europaeus albus – white, sanguine, muscular, long blond hair, blue eyes, gentle, ingenious, inventive, governed by law.
>
> c. Americanus rubesceus – liberty-loving, copper-coloured, choleric, obstinate, governed by customs.
>
> d. Asiaticus Luridus – yellowish, melancholic, dark hair and eyes, proud, avaricious, greedy, governed by opinion.

e. Afer Niger – black, phlegmatic, black frizzled hair, silk-like skin, ape-like nose, thick lips, the breasts of women distended, crafty, lazy, governed by caprice.

f. Monstra – divided into two categories, namely those so by nature, such as dwarfs and giants, and those so by custom, such as eunuchs. (Linnaeus 1735, in Dietrich 1993: 264)

The difference between these two lists lay in what was missing from that of Linnaeus. All but gone from his classification (relegated to the tail end under the heading 'monstra') were the legendary qualities that constituted the very stuff of Isidore's marvellous bestiary. These removed, all that remained was a mechanical listing of the essential characteristics of each human type, presented in uniform order to enable their comparison. Between Isidore and Linnaeus: 'the whole of animal semantics has disappeared, like a dead and useless limb. The words that had been interwoven in the very being of the beast have been unravelled and removed: and the living being, in its anatomy, its form, its habits ... appears as though stripped naked' (Foucault 1973: 129).

Drawing upon resurrected Greek and Roman myths and legends, Isidore's description was clearly the more fantastic, and perhaps induces a sense of wonder in the contemporary reader at how anyone could believe such a patently absurd set of fictions. By contrast, Linnaeus' description may create a sense that, although distorted by a heavy veil of prejudice, it showed at least some traces of the direct observation of actual bodies.

Such an evaluation speaks to 'what the historians say' (Foucault 1973: 125), where they ascribe the displacement of myth by classification to a curiosity and desire that caused eighteenth-century scholars 'if not to discover the sciences of life, at least to give them a hitherto unsuspected scope and precision' (p. 125). On the one hand (say the historians), this was made possible by the new privileges accorded to observation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For instance, the invention of the microscope and its enhancement of observational acuity, or the then recently attained privilege of the physical sciences, which in permitting analysis of the laws of movement and light through theory, experimentation and observation, offered a model of rationality with which to analyse the adjacent realm of living beings and strip away the veneer of myths that clouded their 'true' apprehension. On the other hand, a variety of new interests (such as an economic attitude towards agriculture) incited a curiosity directed towards exotic plants, animals and peoples. Which were useful, and which could be domesticated for European use?

But, wrote Foucault, running through such conventional analyses is a thread of progress that for histories of the present is as mythic as the legends it devalues, itself the application of a modernist category that is anachronistic to these obsolete knowledges. This category is 'life' itself, and the idea that life is immanent in living things.

> Historians want to write histories of biology in the eighteenth century; but they do not realize that biology did not exist then, and that the pattern of knowledge that has been familiar to us for a hundred and fifty years is not valid for a previous period. And that, if biology was unknown, there was a very simple reason for it: that life did not exist. (Foucault 1973: 127–8)

What is meant by this claim that before the birth of biology 'life did not exist'? How can it be argued that to accept such an assertion can contribute to understanding the African body as the object and effect of power? This and the following chapter on the African bodies of knowledge produced from around the 1400s to the turn of the nineteenth century attempt to answer these questions, and so contextualize the subsequent emergence of disciplinary modernism by highlighting its discontinuity with the Renaissance and Classical epistemes that preceded it.

The body as prose and the renaissance episteme

> The mother in a woman is a singular member, disposed as a bladder, and kind has ordained that member to take and receive the humour seminall ... The mother hangeth between the spleen and the bladder, but somewhat higher than the bladder, the bottom of hollowness is extended into the navell, and is the place of the first Fragma, of conception called Embrion, because of carnal copulation. (Batman 1582: 62)

Until the middle of the 1600s, a scholar like Batman who explored the qualities of the human body could be secure in the truth of assertions such as this because its investigation proceeded not through the use of a cold cadaver and a scalpel, but rather parchment, a pen and the 'book wheel'. Indeed, the book from which Batman reproduced his description of 'the mother' – Bartholomew Anglicus' *On the Properties of Things*, 'first set forth in 1360' (Batman 1582: 1) – was perhaps itself penned using a 'book wheel', for, as Batman's introduction informed the reader it drew upon such authorities as Aristotle, Pliny, Hippocrates, Isidore of Seville, Cicero, Galen, Theophrastus and Zeno.

The 'book wheel' (see Grafton 1992: 117–18) typified the 'circular system of authentication' (Greenblatt 1992: 35) that prevailed in Renaissance thought and dictated that the absence of anything new in a text was a sign not of its intellectual sterility but of its truth. Like a scaled

down Ferris wheel, the circumference of the 'book wheel' was partitioned into shelves each containing a number of volumes which could be opened and read without removing them from the shelves. To turn the device, an elaborate system of cranks, cogs and gears was activated by a foot pedal. Whenever a new compartment on the 'book wheel' was to be selected, depressing the pedal and engaging the machinery would result in the chosen texts whirring into place before the reader's eyes. Since all knowledge already existed in the pages of authoritative texts,[2] the 'book wheel' thus allowed users to move throughout the library (and, by extension, the universe) while remaining seated at the desk in the calm posture appropriate to scholarly contemplation. By spinning from text to text, authority could be compared with authority, and the object of interest confirmed as a component of knowledge by assembling all that had been seen and heard, and everything that was recounted of it, 'either by nature or by men, by the language of the world, or by tradition' (Foucault 1973: 40).

Moving closer to the 'book wheel', we may peer over the shoulder of the Renaissance scholar to read what he read, and, more importantly, to see what he saw in the way the words and sections of his text were physically arranged on the page. Perhaps the text was Batman's (1582) rendition of *On the Properties of Things*. Examining the 'catalogue' of the matters dealt with, we see that it was not arranged according to the order of the alphabet,[3] but instead that it juxtaposed seemingly unrelated topics, such as the following sequence of matters: 'man's fasting spittle kills serpents; the harmony of the elemental humours; carnall lust; corruptions of the flesh; man's body is spirit, humour and members'. But this arrangement was far from random, for like the 'book wheel' that was perfectly closed in its circularity upon itself, the way words were linked together and the 'matters' arranged in the space of the printed page reconstituted the very order of the universe. Within this episteme 'the names of things were lodged in the things they designated' (Foucault 1973: 36), and it was therefore the encyclopedist's ideal 'to spatialize acquired knowledge both in accordance with the cosmic, unchanging, and perfect form of the circle and in accordance with the sublunary, perishable, multiple, and divided form of the tree' (Foucault 1973: 38). Arranged according to just this principle, the *Nuremberg Chronicle* (Schedel 1493), for instance, arranged all of history into seven ages, each age a different section of the text, and each analogous to the first week in which God created the universe. Every thing was connected to every other thing in a complete cosmic web, the organizing principle of which was resemblance as it repeated and replicated itself through the play of the four 'similitudes'.

The first of the similitudes was 'convenience', which assured that like things would tend to occur in juxtaposition with one another, and that things which were adjacent would through their mere proximity tend to become similar. 'Convenience' thus linked the world together in the form of an endless chain where at each point of contact there began and ended a link that resembled the one before it and the one after it (Foucault 1973: 18–19). 'Emulation' referred to a force of resemblance by which things imitated one another in the absence of the physical proximity required by 'convenience'. For instance, the human face emulated the sky and man's wisdom that of God, and through emulation things widely dispersed throughout the universe were able to resonate with and answer one another. 'Analogy' was a mode of connection between things that induced resemblances not only between visible and substantial things, but between entire patterns of relationships. Thus, the human body was analogous to the universe, for the pulse beat in the veins as the stars circled the sky, and the seven orifices of the head were to the face what the seven planets were to the sky (Foucault 1973: 21–3). Completing the similitudes were the 'sympathies', a capricious force of resemblance and assimilation emanating from the sameness of the invisible virtues of things. Sympathy attracted what was heavy to the heaviness of the earth, and it was the sun's warmth and light that attracted fire into the air. Preventing, however, the merging of everything into an undifferentiated mass was the antithesis of sympathy, 'antipathy'. This maintained the isolation of things by enclosing each within its own impenetrable difference. So, the olive and the vine 'hated' the cabbage, just as Nature had ordained that the rat and the crocodile should be eternal enemies (pp. 23–4).

Folded upon itself in a chain of relentless duplication, the similitudes that maintained the Renaissance universe were visible on the surface of things as 'signatures' of the invisible analogies that linked them. The signature of bravery, for example, was the presence of large and well-developed extremities to the limbs (which marked the affinity between the lion and the gladiator), and it was the task of the scholar to scrutinize every thing so as to decode its 'signature' and establish its rightful place in the order of things. The Renaissance episteme was therefore a mode of knowing in which the connection between the eye that looked and the properties of the beings it saw

> was that being itself, within the whole semantic network that connected it to the world. The division, so evident to us, between what we see, what others have observed and handed down, and what others imagine or naively believe, the great tripartition … into Observation, Document and Fable did

> not exist, because ... signs were then part of things themselves. (Foucault 1973: 129)

In this age of authority and kingdom of resemblance things were undivided from words, and to know something was to collate the entire semantic complex through which it existed, as had Pliny where he stated in the preface to Book One of his *Natural History* that 'by perusing about 2,000 volumes, very few of which ... are ever handled by students, we have collected in 36 volumes 20,000 noteworthy facts obtained from 100 authors' (Pliny 1938: 13).

Was Foucault correct in asserting that under the Renaissance episteme 'life did not exist' because it was not immanent in living things? If so, then the genealogical method must identify texts that: (1) reveal the absence of life in living things such as the human body; (2) localize the source of animation to forces other than those chemical, organic and physical processes we now take for granted as emergents of the body and the determinants of life; (3) demonstrate how the practice of doctors was constitutive of the living body without life; and (4) explicate how the bodies conceived of by Renaissance knowledge as existing in Africa were contingent upon this episteme.

Lifeless bodies of the living

> The soul, *anima*, was so called by the pagans because they took it to be wind. Whence also 'wind' is anemos in Greek, because we seem to live by taking in air with our mouths, but this is most likely false since the soul arises long before air can be taken in by the mouth, and is already alive in its mother's womb. (Sharpe/Isidore 1964: 38)

The soul withdrawn, the Renaissance body as its temporary corporeal container collapsed into a heap of blood, bones and skin, like a heavenly glove-puppet from which the celestial hand has been removed. 'When the soul departs, what is left is no longer an animal, and that none of the parts remain what they were before, excepting in mere configuration' (Barnes/Aristotle 1984: 997). All the arteries pulsing blood, the ventricles coursing humours and the lungs bellowing air were in themselves bereft of the power of life, empty skeins until breathed into by the 'vital virtue'. The Renaissance episteme's lifeless bodies of the living were repeatedly confirmed through the practice of dissection, since because the animate body was merely the temporary vessel of the soul, to search for the mechanisms of life in the dead body was unthinkable. As an exercise in medical education, the practice of dissection was therefore akin to other forms of textual illustration (e.g. 'trees', 'wheels' and

'wound men' representing the theory of temperament and diagramming humoural systems) in that it aimed to help scholars achieve a grasp of organizing schemes rather than to enable naturalistic description of the body itself.

> The goal of physiological or anatomical study was, in many instances, a better understanding of texts ... The academic environment in which the dissection of a human cadaver was regularized integrated the occasional presentation of the body itself as the object of study with frequent and habitual attention to learned texts on the subject. (Siraisi 1990: 80–2)

If life was not an immanent of the body's functioning, then how was it possible to explain the living body? The Renaissance solution to this question was to treat the body as a complex jigsaw of outward signatures (such as the shape and positioning of bones and features) that encoded the invisible web of analogies by which the living was spatialized in the sympathetic interplay of everything.

> These links proceed so strictly that they appear as a rope stretched from the first cause as far as the lowest and smallest of things, by a reciprocal and continuous connection; in such wise that the superior virtue, spreading its beams, reaches so far that if we touch one extremity of that cord it will make tremble and move all the rest. (Porta 1650, in Foucault 1973: 19)

And so to Purchas, for whom the human body 'is a microcosme, and created after the rest, as an Epitome of the whole Universe, and truest Mappe of the World, a summarie and compendious other world' (Purchas 1619: 25–6). Just as the universe was explicable in terms of 'Man', so 'Man' was explicable in terms of the universe.

> O Man, Know thy selfe, and know all things ... Thou hast thy Body, a Booke of Nature, and carriest a little Modell of the greater World continually about thee. In thy composition, thou seest the foure Elements; the elementarie qualities in thy complexions; all the ranks and classes of creatures in thy growth. Is not the Haire as grasse? the flesh as Earth? the Bones as Mineralls? the Veines as rivers? the liver a Sea? Are not the lungs and Heart Correspondent to the ayrie and fierie elements? the Braines, to the clouds and Meteors ... the Eyes, to starres, or those two Eyes of Heaven, the greater lights? and the circular frame of the Head, to the globositie of the heauens? (Purchas 1619: 29–31)

To explain how the similitudes could produce so perfect a symmetry between the body and the universe required a medium that could invest both the animate and the inanimate with the properties and form proper to themselves. Following Anglicus (Steele/Anglicus 1893) this

medium consisted in the 'substances' common to all things by which they retained and reproduced their proper place and function in the universe.

> True it is that after the noble and expert doctrine of wise and well learned philosophers ... we know that the properties of things follow and ensue their substance. Herefore it is that after the order and distinction of substances, the order and the distinction of the properties of things shall be and ensue. (Steele/Anglicus 1893: 11)

Explanations of the living body privileged this elemental force. Subdivided into four, the elements in turn explained the principal properties of every thing.

> Elements are four, and so there are four qualities of elements, of which every body is composed and made as of matter. The four elements are Earth, Water, Fire, and Air ... Four be called the first and principal properties, that is hot, cold, dry, and moist: they are called the first qualities because they slide first from the elements into the things that be made of elements. (Steele/Anglicus 1893: 23)

Reading the Renaissance human body thus involved tracing the transmutations of the elements in its 'members' (arms, legs, organs and collections of organs), and following their minglings through the different 'offices' conferred upon each member and group of members by the cosmic template. Quoting Batman (1582), 'Avicen says that members are bodies made of the first meddlying of humours'. Each member 'is ordained to some special office', and each office was ordained by the soul. 'Because the soul has diverse virtues, so are diverse members needed' (Batman 1582). Batman divided the body through classification of its members into those that 'make ready', 'purge', 'cleanse', 'defend', and 'bear about'. Similarly, De Liuzzi's *Anatomy* (cited in Siraisi 1990: 107–8) segmented the body according to how the vital, animal, and natural virtues were localized. 'Animal' virtues (such as motion, sensation and thinking) produced 'animal members' – the skull and its contents. 'Spiritual' or 'vital' virtues (breathing, the pulse, the heartbeat) produced 'spiritual members' – the thorax and its contents. 'Natural' virtues (growth, nutrition, reproduction, excretion) produced 'natural members' – the abdomen and its constituent organs.

Animating this corporeal microcosm was the 'vital spirit', 'by whose benefits and continual moving, both wits and virtues in beasts are ruled to work and do their deeds' (Steele/Anglicus 1893: 26). The 'vital spirit' was heated by the liver to form a smoke. This smoke was then 'made subtle' by the liver's veins until it became 'the natural spirit'. In turn,

this moved the blood and brought the heart together, by which it was 'more pured, and turned into a more subtle kind' (Steele/Anglicus 1893: 27). This was the 'vital spirit' and by it 'The soul is joined to the body ... And therefore if these spirits be impared, or let of their working in any kind, the accord of the body and soul is resolved, the reasonable spirit is let of all its works in the body' (p. 28).

This, then, was the human body of Renaissance thought, a complex interplay of invisible elements, virtues and spirits that united it to the irreducible 'soul' and inscribed their signatures in the body's members. Far from an intellectual abstraction, it was precisely this body that was produced through the concrete practices of the Renaissance doctor.

Doctoring the Renaissance body Since it existed as the finely balanced space where the elements coincided, the living human body of Renaissance thought was a particularly resonant link in the great web of reciprocal and continuous cosmic connection. Hence the necessity that the Renaissance doctor be conversant with all the scholastic disciplines, and hence the manner of diagnosing and treating the sick.

> 1. Some ask why the study of medicine is not included among the other liberal disciplines. It is because whereas they embrace individual subjects, medicine embraces them all. The physician ought to know literature, grammatica, to be able to understand or to explain what he reads.
>
> 2. Likewise also rhetoric, that he may delineate in true arguments the things he discusses; dialectic also so that he may study the causes and cures of infirmities in the light of reason. Similarly also arithmetic, in view of the temporal relationships involved in the paroxysms of diseases and in diurnal cycles.
>
> 3. It is no different with respect to geometry because of the properties of regions and the locations of places. He should teach what must be observed in them by everyone ...
>
> 4. Finally also, he ought to know astronomy, by which he should study the motions of the stars and the changes of the seasons, for as a certain physician said, our bodies are also changed with their courses. (Sharpe/Isidore 1964: 64)

As a reflection of every thing within the universe, every thing could influence the body's working. Diagnosis therefore required deciphering the signatures of this resonance from the texture, colour and smell of bodily excrements (faeces, phlegm and urine); the rhythm of the heartbeat and pulse; the texture and colour of the skin; the appearance of the face; and the sick man's telling of his illness. To complete the puzzle, this complex of signs was mapped on to the macrocosm through

the horoscope, astrolabe, inspection of the weather and knowledge of the climate. The comparison drawn by Crollius between apoplexy and tempests thus extended the correspondence identified by Purchas (1619: 30) of 'the Braines to the clouds and Meteors':

> The storm begins when the air becomes heavy and agitated, the apoplectic attack at the moment when our thoughts become heavy and disturbed; then the clouds pile up, the belly swells, the thunder explodes and the bladder bursts; the lightning flashes and the eyes glitter with a terrible brightness, the rain falls, the mouth foams, the thunderbolt is unleashed and the spirits burst open breaches in the skin; but then the sky becomes clear again, and in the sick man reason regains ascendancy. (Crollius, 1624, in Foucault 1973: 23)

In other cases, the cause of illness (which was almost always humoural imbalance) might lie not in the weather but in astrological events, discernible through scrutiny of the sick man's horoscope. Likewise, corruption of the air through which illness was spread would be ascribed to unfavourable planetary conjunctions (Siraisi 1990: 187). Yet other afflictions arose simply through the contact of things, as with 'mourning roses which have been used at obsequies', whose adjacency to death left those who smelt them 'sad and moribund' (Porta 1650, in Foucault 1973: 23).

If the play of sympathies caused infirmity, so too the opposite, and by identifying positive sympathies between plants or minerals and afflicted members of the body remedies could be established and applied. Because the seeds of aconite are tiny dark spheres set in white, skin-like coverings that resemble the eyelids, they were good for treating diseases of the eye. Similarly, the affinity between walnuts and the human head was signalled by the fact that their shells (like the pericranium) enclosed the nut itself, 'which is exactly like the human brain in appearance' (Crollius 1624, in Foucault 1973: 27). Thus, the shells helped heal skull wounds, and the nuts repaired sickness to the brain.

The soul, elements, humours, spirits, affinities and sympathies – all invisible and ephemeral, yet there for all to see in the prose of the Renaissance body. All only words, yet words that were contiguous with the forces they designated and so were those forces. It is therefore incorrect to speak of the Renaissance body as if it was anything other than these semantic constellations. Correspondingly, it is correct to say of the monstrous and marvellous beings set around it at the edges of this episteme that they were just as real as it was.

Monstrous men

It is perhaps ironic that this analysis of the Renaissance body should have commenced at the centre of the Renaissance episteme. For it was at its edges, where the cords of similitude were most tautly stretched, that its power to produce bodies of prose was most clearly evidenced in the variety of the monstrous men that crystallized along this periphery.

> Ethiopia, blue men's land, had first that name of colour of men. For the sun is nigh, and roasteth and toasteth them. And so the colour of men showeth the strength of the star, for there is continual heat ... In this land be many nations with divers faces wonderly and horribly shapen ... Also there be great cockatrices and great dragons, and precious stones be taken out of their brains ... The men of Ethiopia have their name of a black river, and that river is of the same kind as Nilus ... Some oft curse the sun bitterly ... for his heat grieveth them full sore ... Troglodites dig them dens and caves ... and they eat serpents and all that may be got. (Steele/Anglicus 1893: 74–5)

Bizarre as they were, the possibility of knowing and representing these 'wonderly and horribly shapen' bodies lay in the omnipresent play of the similitudes. For, as d'Ailly said in his *Imago Mundi* (printed *c.*1480–83, and cited in V. J. Flint 1992: 25–7), to know all of the earth's inhabitants was to proceed as would a doctor understanding the sick man. First, deduce the disposition of the planets and stars in relation to the area of the earth in question. Which planet was it 'governed' by? Where was it in relation to the sun? Then, infer from this how the humours would be constellated, and whether the 'vital spirit' so produced would induce activity or torpor. Third, examine the presence of seas, rivers or deserts to discern the terrestrial conveniences at play. With this cosmic template complete, sketch the shapes of men, monsters and marvels that, if it be inhabited, must and can only be there.

Epitomizing this system of knowing and representing the earth's inhabitants was the Macrobian 'zone map' (see Friedman 1981). These maps reflected the world's division into horizontal layers according to temperature and natural harmony. Of these zones, only the middle climatic zone (Europe) was sufficiently temperate and balanced to sustain bodies in their familiar human form, because, as Hippocrates had argued: 'Growth and freedom from wildness are most fostered when nothing is forcibly predominant, but equality in every respect prevails ... For the seasons which modify a physical frame differ; if the differences be great, the more too are the differences in shape' (Hippocrates, in Friedman 1981: 52).

Contingent upon the interplay of these external forces that created and conditioned its form and functioning, the boundaries of the Renaissance body were tenuous and indistinct, so that when located in zones lacking 'equality' it might deliquesce and distort. Hence the correctness of Al-Kindi's statement concerning the 'Zanj' of North Africa:

> His country being very hot, the heavenly bodies exert their influence and draw the humours to the upper part. Hence his bulging eyes, his drooping lips, his big, flat, nose, the flaccidity of his head resulting from the abundance of humours drawn to the top of his body. Thus the mixture in his brain is no longer in balance, and the soul cannot exert its full influence upon him; his discernment is altered, and the acts of the intelligence desert him. (Al-Kindi, in Devisse 1979: 218)

In Mandeville, whose *Travels*[4] (Seymour/Mandeville 1967) exemplified Foucault's description of the Renaissance as 'the age of the theatre' (Foucault 1973, p. 131), it was emulation that moulded men and monsters. Owing to their adjacency to Jerusalem and therefore God, the centres of Christian power were places of pleasant climate inhabited by people of beauty, gentleness and wealth. 'Mancy', for instance, was a 'good and great country', and its inhabitants 'ben fulle faire folk, but thei ben alle pale ... and men clepen that land Albanye because the folk ben white' (Seymour/Mandeville 1967: 149). Distant from these centres, extremes dominated to form 'fulle cursed peple' (Seymour/Mandeville 1967: 143), and 'wylde men that ben hidouse to loken on' (p. 198). Planetary and other cosmic forces shaped the destiny of nations, the proclivity of their peoples for exploration, and their bodies. 'India' was a land of numberless people, because living under the slowing and nearly motionless 'climate' of Saturn they 'han of no kynde nor will for to move ne stere to seche strange places', and so never 'gon out of here owne contree' (p. 119). By contrast, Europe lay within the 'climate' of the moon, which because it orbited the earth faster than other planets and moved the waves conferred upon those within its aura the will 'to meve lightly and for to go dyuerse weyes and to sechen strange thinges and other dyuersitees of the world' (p. 120). An island of the 'Great See Ocean' was so hot that traders' 'ballokkes hangen doun to here knees for the gret dissolucoun of the body', a difficulty avoided by the 'natives' through binding and anointing the testicles (p. 120).

Whether considering these secular texts of scholars and travel writers such as Mandeville, or the more theologically inclined 'T-O' maps and 'mappa-mundi' (see V. J. Flint 1992; Friedman 1981), the answer was always the same. As the distance from the centre of the Renaissance world increased, so did the mutability of power and with it the body.

For instance, at the centre of the circular Hereford map made around 1300 by an English canon (see V. J. Flint 1992: 12) was Jerusalem. Just below Jerusalem converged three inland seas which took the form of a rough 'T' that symbolized Christ on the cross and divided the land into three unequal continents: to the left, Europe, at the top Asia and on the right Africa. Following biblical tradition, each continent was associated with one of Noah's sons: Asia with Shem, Africa with Ham, and Europe with Japhet. Superimposed upon this land mass were illustrations depicting the wonders to be found at the point of their insertion. Moving from Jerusalem towards the circumference there occurred increasing numbers of bizarre beings, with their greatest frequency in narrow bands along the edge of the world where there clustered the monsters produced by the fiends of hell copulating with Ham's son, Membroth, which: 'engendred on hem dyuerse folk, as monstres and folk disfigured, summe withouten hedes, summe with grete eres, summe with on eye, summe geauntes, sum with hors feet, and many other of dyuerse schapp ayenst kynde' (Seymour/Mandeville 1967: 160–1)[5]

The spectacle of strangeness and the Cape of Good Hope The Renaissance was an episteme in which the strangeness of living beings 'was a spectacle: it was featured in fairs, in tournaments, in fictitious or real combats, in reconstitutions of legends in which the bestiary displayed its ageless fables' (Foucault 1973: 131). Due to a tradition of knowing things not through direct inspection but through collation of the words and myths that were synonymous with them, the effects of this fascination with the marvellous were nowhere more apparent than in the practice of exploration and reports of the 'new worlds' brought back by voyagers to the Americas, Asia and Africa.

In *The Imaginative Landscape of Christopher Columbus* the medievalist Valerie Flint (1992) analysed the books that composed his library and which Columbus may have studied in preparation for the 1492 voyage to what we now know as the Americas. By comparing these books with what Columbus reported seeing (which included the Hispaniola Indians as 'well made men' alongside descriptions of other humans that were hairless, had tails and the heads of dogs), Flint concluded that: 'This old world held great power ... Thus, though some of it could later ... be described as fanciful, it was so real at the time that it had a decisive impact upon the establishment of "objective reality"' (V. J. Flint 1992: xxi). 'Discovered' by Vasco da Gama between 1497 and 1499, the Cape of Good Hope was no exception to this power of the fabulous, the accounts of voyagers from then until well into the 1600s repeatedly confirming its indigenous inhabitants as the embodiment of

Renaissance mythography. Far from puncturing this self-sealing semantic universe, the great voyages of exploration that commenced in the late 1400s were at the start analogous to the role of dissection in Renaissance medicine, serving less to enable naturalistic description of the unexpected peoples encountered than to embellish the ancient texts that had populated the unknown corners of the world with headless monsters and cannibals. As V. J. Flint (1992: 23) noted, it was as though the further back the boundaries of geographical knowledge were driven, the more zealous were the makers of maps and authors of travelogues in their attempts to create a sense of the marvellous.

What historians consider to be the first account of the Cape of Good Hope's inhabitants was recorded by da Gama during his voyage between 1497 and 1499.

> The inhabitants of this country are tawny-coloured. Their food is confined to the flesh of seals, whales and gazelles, and the roots of herbs. They are dressed in skins, and wear sheaths over their virile members. They are armed with poles of olive wood to which a horn, browned in the fore, is attached. Their numerous dogs resemble those of Portugal, and bark like them. (da Gama, in Ravenstein 1898: 6)

Remarkable in its restraint, this bland portrait was produced in the course of a voyage propelled by the very power of Renaissance mythology, for da Gama had been commissioned to find the fabled land of Prester John, said to be an earthly paradise that harboured precious jewels and minerals, the fountain of eternal youth, and nearly all the marvellous and monstrous creatures ever described.[6] Thus, some fifty years later Sebastian Munster's *Cosmographiae* of 1550 could include a map of Africa showing a 'monoculi' on the coast where Cameroon is today, Prester John's kingdom in the region of modern-day Ethiopia, and the 'Caput bone Spei' as inhabited only by wild beasts. Commenting upon the region, he wrote:

> Only the coastline of this region has been explored, since it is very hot and so sandy that nobody could ever live there. It is mainly situated between the tropic of Capricorn and the tropic of Cancer, which is the hottest area and neither human beings nor animals can live there, only dragons, snakes and other dangerous animals. And if there were to be found people there, then they must be like animals, living underground and not coming together in the way that others do. (Munster 1550)

For Linschoten, it was the hardy myth of the cannibal that was pressed into the service of his 1596 account which said of the 'Kaffers' between Mozambique and the Cape of Good Hope that:

> Some of them are cannibals ... They cut off the penis of their prisoners but let them go afterwards. They bring the dried pieces of flesh to their king as proof of bravery. They go before the King in the presence of the highest dignitaries of the village, put one penis after another in their mouth and spit them out in front of the king. (Linschoten 1596, in Hirschberg 1967: 38)

In addition to its high dramatic value, the figure of the cannibal perhaps reflected in symbolic form a fear that the body boundaries of the European (who came from a climate of harmony and balance) would deliquesce and be absorbed into the bodies of those who against all reason existed where the theories of Renaissance medicine and geography said they could not. For the spectacle of the Cape as home to cannibal hordes was repeated like a litany in the reports of many other Renaissance explorers (for these texts in English translation, see Raven-Hart 1967). As if it were the land 'beyond the Valley Perilous' – where Mandeville had talked of a people that 'han no clothinge but of skynnes of bestes that thei hangene upon them. And thei eten more gladly of mannes flesch than any other flesch' (Seymour/Mandeville 1967: 205) – Downton could in 1610 describe the inhabitants of the Cape as:

> very brutish and savage, as stupid as can be and without intelligence, black and mis-shapen, with no hair on their heads, their eyes always running. They cover their privy parts with the hairy skins of beasts and their backs with an entire large skin which they tie below the chin, leaving the tail hanging so that from a distance one might say that they had tails. The women have very long breasts, and dress like the men. They eat human flesh and entirely raw animals, with the intestines and guts without washing them, as do dogs. (Downton 1610, in Raven-Hart 1967: 47)

Sharpening the notion of body boundary dissolution and recalling an isle in Mandeville where the bodies of female virgins contained serpents which stung men's penises and killed them (Seymour/Mandeville 1967: 206), Tavernier could in 1649 describe 'the women of the kaffers [as] ... so hot blooded that when they have their menses and make water, if a European passes over it he at once gets a head-ache and fever, and even sometimes the plague' (Tavernier, in Raven-Hart 1967: 181). De Beaulieu, writing around 1620, perhaps echoed the Mandevillian myth of Ethiopia where men and women lay together in the rivers or buried in the sand to avoid the heat (Seymour/Mandeville 1967: 120) when he recorded how

> some of our men met them with their wives and children at the place where they had gone to pass the night, where they had no shelter other

> than bushes and some skins stretched on two crossed sticks, with another in the middle to thrust into the ground like a parasol, under which their wives and children set themselves, buried to the waist in sand. (De Beaulieu 1620, in Raven-Hart 1967: 101)

The Cape was not only a repository of the bestial and bizarre, but also of the more wondrous things befitting a region that for some explorers was the land of Prester John.

> In this Land of Prester John ther was seene by our Men Lyons and monkeyes, Babownns a multid, with divers other Strange beastes as Antilops and many other deformed creattures verie strange to be Sene ... The Bay of Soldania and all about the Cape is so healtfull and frutfull as might grow a Paradise of the World; it well agrees with English bodies ... The Countrey is mixed, Mountaines, Plaines, Medowes, Streames, the woods as if they were artifically planted for order. (Best 1612, in Raven-Hart 1967: 59)

Although such visions of the Cape as a land of plenty were not uncommon, it was time and again accounts of its human inhabitants that took centre stage, as exemplified by the section on the Cape of Good Hope in Herbert's popular and much reprinted *Travels into Africa and Asia* (Herbert 1638, in Hirschberg 1967).

> The Natives being propagated from *Cham*, both in their Visages and Natures seem to inherit his malediction. Their colour is ugly black, are strongly limbd, desperate, crafty and injurious. Their heads are long; their haire, woolly and crisp, no apparell in any place shewing more variety ... Their noses are flat, crusht so in their infancie; great lips, description cannot make them greater; quick, crafty eyes; and about their necks (in imitation of the Dutch *Commandores* chains) have guts and raw puddings, serving both for food and complement, eating and speaking both together ... Solinus calls the tawny *Africans, Agriophagi* (or Panther and Lyon-eaters) we now call them *Icthio* and *Anthropophagi* ... These Savages eat men alive or dead Which when they faile of, dead Whales, Seales, Pengwins, grease or raw Puddings diet them. Safety is scarce among themselves, for when the frost of old age benums their vigour, unapting them to provide their owne food; they either eat them, or leave them destitute of defence upon some Mountain pittied by none. (Herbert 1638, in Hirschberg 1967: 16–17)

The African body that was the object and effect of Herbert's late Renaissance report was clearly more substantial than the purely imaginative monsters such as the 'Blemmyae' and 'Cynocephali' described by Isidore of Seville and popularized by Mandeville. For, while travellers continued to weave myth and legend into their accounts of the African body until the mid-1600s, they none the less created an increasingly

stable corporeal form that was more than and thus autonomous of the words that described it. This transformation begs the question as to what effects the practice of exploration must have had upon the Renaissance episteme. More specifically, to what extent did these practices constitute the conditions of possibility for the emergence of a Classificatory gaze to the surface of the African body?

The eye of the explorer and the rise of Classification

The practice of exploration involved the respatialization of knowledge formation from the library to the zone of situated observation in Africa and other unknown regions of the world.

Even as the practice of exploration served to confirm the ancient myths and legends of Renaissance thought, so it operated to install a new vision of the universe and a new way of seeing the human body. Analogous with the movement of the patient from the home to the hospital that fabricated a deep anatomy to demand the invention of new devices for seeing into it (such as the stethoscope), this respatialization of exploration required the deployment of new observational techniques able to regularize what was seen and how such observations were recorded.

As early as 1575 there began to appear a new kind of text devoted not to describing the marvels of the world, but to calibrating the eye of the explorer as itself an object of knowledge and target of power. Among these was *The Traveiler of Jerome Turler* (1575). 'A notable discourse on the manner, and order of traveiling oversea, or into strange and forrein countreys', this advocated that the traveller 'make down suche things in strange countries as they shall have neede to use in the common trade of life' (Turler 1575: 3). In 1578, Bourne's 'tresure for traveillers' problematized the act of seeing by warning how 'banketting, and play, and gaine, and dauncing and dalying with women' would so distract the traveller as to dampen his observational acuity, demanding their strict avoidance. Meirus' (1587) 'speciall instructions for gentlemen, merchants, students, souldiers, mariners, and c.' aimed at enrolling every explorer in the 'catalogue of Homer' as 'seers of many Regions and of the manners of many nations':

> If in our peregrinations and travels, we shal observe and note in our tables those things which do occurre and seeme worthie of regard, we shall make our journies and voyages in great measure, pleasant and delectable unto us: not thinking that our diligence can search and mark any thing in any place … but to discourse and recorde any thing, rather than to passe the way, and

> spend the time in idelnesse: and with by all this means, this commoditie is reaped, that whatsoever the eye seeth, is the easier and the better remembered, if it once be written. (Meirus 1587: 22)

As for Meirus, so in Lipsius (1592), who asserted that nothing was more likely to ensure wisdom and sound direction 'than the sight, consideration and knowledge, of sundry rites, manners, pollycies and governments'.

All instructing the eye of the explorer in somewhat broad and global terms, these textual teachers of observation represented the nascent beginnings of a new way of knowing, the rise of a Classificatory gaze directed in its seeing not by the semantic force of myth and legend but by the very bodies of people and things themselves. They therefore exemplify what Foucault described as having come surreptitiously into being between the age of the theatre and that of the catalogue: 'not the desire for knowledge, but a new way of connecting things both to the eye and to discourse. A new way of making history' (Foucault 1973: 131).

> The documents of this new history are not other words, texts, or records, but unencumbered spaces in which things are juxtaposed: herbariums, collections, gardens; the locus of this history is a non-temporal rectangle in which, stripped of all commentary, of all enveloping language, creatures present themselves one beside another, their surfaces visible, grouped according to their common features, and thus already virtually analysed, and bearers of nothing but their own individual names. (Foucault 1973: 131)

Epitomizing the taxonomic space in which this new knowledge would form itself was the observational grid devised in 1666 by the Royal Society and directed to systematizing the information recorded by the 'labours of the ingenious in many considerable parts of the world' (Royal Society 1665–66). Under its 'general heads for the natural history of a country' were instructions for the classification of flora, fauna and geology, and a special section on how to see 'both Natives and Strangers':

> And in particular their Stature, Shape, Colour, Features, Strength, Agility, Beauty (or the want of it), Complexion, Hair, Dyet, Inclination, and Customs that seem not due to Education. As to their Women (besides other things) may be observed their Fruitfulness, or Barrenness; their hard or easy labour, etc. And both in Women and Men must be taken notice of what diseases they are subject to. (Royal Society 1665–66)

'Between 1550 and 1650 Western thinkers ceased to believe that they could find all truths in ancient books' (Grafton 1992: 1). On the one side

of this massive disjunction in knowing was the 'book wheel' and the great compilations of documents and signs enabled by its use; on the other side was the empty observational template of the Royal Society that created a gaze to the strictly transected surface of the body. It was precisely this transformation in the underlying base of knowledge that made possible the African body as an object of positive knowledge, and the Cape of Good Hope a site for the formation of a sovereign power directed to its surface.

Notes

1. Sharpe (1964) stated that the first three printed editions containing Isidore's works on medicine appeared in Paris (1580), Madrid (1590) and Cologne (1617).

2. As Bentham's Panopticon is to disciplinary power in the Modernist episteme, so the 'book wheel' was to the Renaissance episteme. In the former, it is the bodies of all who are rendered visible to the omnipresent gaze; in the latter it was to see better the texts of ancient wisdom containing the legends, virtues and fables characteristic of things that technology was bent.

3. Foucault (1973: 38) noted that except in regard to the study of languages – since the alphabet is its raw material – use of the alphabet as a means of creating encyclopedic order appeared only in the second half of the seventeenth century, suggesting therefore that it was only then that linguistic signs became disengaged from things themselves and hence imbued with the power to order things.

4. Historians tell us that the frequency with which *Mandeville's Travels* was reprinted, translated and used as a source for subsequent texts points to it being among the more popular of Renaissance travelogues:

> Mandeville's influence on the literature of the sixteenth century was profound. Many of his stories and most of his monsters, as depicted by his artists, found their way into the *Nuremberg Chronicle* and Munster's *Cosmographia* (1544). Like the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, Munster's book was extremely popular, there having been as many as forty-seven editions in seven languages before 1650. (Letts 1949: 38)

While not the province of this study to debate whether what Mandeville wrote was really taken to be the truth or not, the historian Newton argued that because it was written into a vacuum of comparative information by which to disentangle 'the true wonders from the false, both made an equal appeal and had an equal aspect of reality' (Newton 1950: 160).

> For most contemporary readers the book had to rest on its own foundations, and as the marvels which Mandeville sets down as sober facts can be capped and even outrivalled by other writers ... the reading public of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries probably swallowed their Mandeville whole. Bale,

who published his *Catalogue of British Writers* in 1548, had no doubt about the authenticity of the 'Travels', and his contemporary Leland (who died in 1552) goes even further, for he placed Mandeville above Marco Polo, Columbus and Cortez and other travellers. (Letts 1949: 34)

5. Speaking to the endless cycle of telling and retelling by which the epistemic base of Renaissance knowledge folded in upon itself, Letts (1949) suggests that Mandeville's *Travels* can just as well be read as a textual annotation of the Hereford 'mappa mundi', for the one is in effect supplemental to the other: 'Detach some thirty-five or forty pictures from the Map, reproduce them separately, and they become a set of illustrations for Mandeville, so apt for their purpose that all that is necessary is to fit them into their places in the text' (Letts 1949: 106).

6. The myth of Prester John dates to the twelfth century when there appeared the Latin text of a letter addressed to the Byzantine emperor Manuel Comnenus and purportedly written by Prester John. Eager to discover his wondrous realm, European monarchs and travellers mounted many an expedition to search for it. Some travellers succeeded in returning, such as an Englishman by the name of Edward Webbe, who in 1590 reported that he had visited the court of Prester John and seen there a monster. Kept chained to prevent its devouring human beings, the monster was fed human flesh only after executions. Its geographical location variously conceived, the realm of Prester John was initially in or near India, and later in Abyssinia (see Malefijt 1968: 115–16).

CHAPTER 4

A Body without Volume: the African as Target of Sovereignty and Object of Taxonomy

Contemporaneous with the emergence into travel writing of a discursive strand that problematized the act of observation, the Cape of Good Hope was in 1652 established as a 'refreshment station' for ships *en route* to the East Indies, and in 1671 raised to a government to formalize its colonial status. This new context of situated interaction between Europeans and Africans emerged to visibility as continuous settlement coincided with a massive surge in the production of formal and informal texts that recorded European perceptions of the Africans. For instance, in 1655 Heeck wrote:

> Behind the Table Mountain we came into a village of the inhabitants, called *Hottento* and *Hottento: Broqua* because they thus sing of themselves for a little bread ... Their clothing is nothing but the skins of wild beasts and seals, the men wearing one skin only, not longer than to their waist, and the women 2, 3, or more skins, somewhat longer, and all also covering their privities with a small skin. The men are tolerably tall and well built, and exceptionally fast runners, but by nature cruel, sly and rascally: the women are quite short of stature and very ugly ... They ... plait some little shells in their hair, smearing this, as also their whole body, with every sort of fat that they can get, and from this they stink exceptionally foully (as do most of the black peoples in general), and otherwise they would be yellow rather than black because of the cold climate of this land ... In hair and all else they resemble the Caffers of *Guinea, Angola* and *Monzembicque*, their neighbours; but since (as aforesaid) they live far further to the southwards, they are nothing like so black of skin, and somewhat better built. In a word, it is almost impossible, and quite unbelievable by those who have never seen such people, to realize their wild, strange, and altogether beast-like manners. (Heeck 1655, in Raven-Hart 1971: 34–8)

Despite its appeal to the bizarre by invoking the 'wild, strange, and altogether beast-like manners' of the Hottentots, the African body of

this account was distant from the fabulous creatures of Renaissance imagining such as the 'Cynocephali' of Isidore's *Etymologies* (Sharpe/Isidore 1964) and Herbert's 'Icthio' or 'Anthropophagi' of 1638 (in Hirschberg 1967). Where such accounts had constituted the African body through recourse to tradition and mythology, this did so in a language of the senses: through the voice as it was heard by the ear, through the eye as it scanned the body, and through the nose as it received the stench of fat applied to the skin.

The problem of the African body as a surface

This chapter concerns the 180 years between 1650 and 1830 when as an object of knowledge and target for power the African body[1] shed its fabulous qualities and for the first time emerged as a collection of overtly perceptible external organs – noses, teeth, hands, the skin, the hair, the feet, the genitalia, the breasts and so on. What force relations had to be present for a knowledge that allowed the African body as a surface of skin and topography of corporeal proportions to replace the densely woven tissues of myth which for so long had sustained its fabulous properties? Or, to state the problem from a Modernist perspective that takes the anatomized body for granted, how could this regime not see the African as a three-dimensional anatomical interior possessed of organs such as the heart, the lungs, the spleen, the kidney or the brain? For to search the record of this time for any account of a systematic gaze that saw beneath the African skin is to toil under a delusion, since the African quite simply failed to exist as a body with volume.

It is true that in his 1686 *Account of the Cape of Good Hope* Ten Rhyne mentioned that 'a surgeon of my acquaintance lately dissected a Hottentot woman who had been strangled'. But what was seen marked this report as no more than an exercise in the Renaissance preoccupation with the exotic, since

> He observed these finger-shaped prolongations of the *Nymphae* falling down from the private parts, two nipples in one breast, and various stones in the pancreas. What is more, the Governor, whose word can be absolutely relied upon, added the following: 'I too owned a remarkable stone. It was cut from the middle of a man's testicle, and, on account of its diamond-like brilliance I had it set in a ring. But I made a present of it to the King of the Negroes, a superstitious fellow, who displayed a profound belief in its power as an amulet.' (Ten Rhyne 1970/1686: 115)

It is also true that a century later, Sparrman, professor of physic at

Stockholm and inspector of the Swedish Royal Society's cabinet of natural history, could expiate his curiosity concerning the appearance of 'negro flesh' by undertaking to oversee the cure of a slave with an ulcer in the leg.

> A young Madagascar slave, who had an inveterate ulcer in his leg two inches broad, and of three years standing, was sent to the warm bath under my care ... Being curious to examine a negro's flesh, I had for some weeks before we set off, undertaken to look after the sore myself. In general the discharge from it was very trifling. The raw flesh looked exactly of the same colour with that of an European. After the proud-flesh was suppressed, the ulcer began to heal, by throwing out fresh fibres in the same manner as ours do, with something whiteish on the side of the skin, which otherwise was of a dark colour. (Sparrman 1786: Vol. 1, 143)

But these two instances, even if they are to be counted as such, were exceptions which proved this regime to be one ruled by a constellation of power for which the African body as a surface – without internal organs, tissues and systems – was all that existed to the European gaze.

While it would have to wait until the 1800s to begin being invested with an anatomical interior, what did change across the 200 years explored in this chapter was the nature of this surface. Initially, the African body was merely a random collection of external organs, while later and towards the end of this regime it began to be defined as much by these elements as by the pattern of relationships between them. Thus, the 'build of the Kaffirs or Hottentots' seen by Dapper in 1668 was little more than a listing of separate surface features.

> In build and shape of the body the Hottentots ... are on the average people of medium stature, but slender, with ill-formed bodies and insignificant appearance, and yellowish in colour ... The forehead is reasonably broad, but wrinkled; the eyes beautifully black, and as clear and pure as those of the hawk. But men, women and children all have flattened noses, more marked in some than in others; and in addition their lips are almost always thick, especially the upper, which is turned up and out. The mouth is well shaped and of normal size and proportions, with teeth beautifully clean and white, like ivory, and hard, so that the bite is firm. The neck is moderately long, shoulders narrow, and arms rather long but quite slender and lean at the wrists ... The belly with almost all of them is lean and slender and the buttocks protrude, with the result that the body, when stripped or lightly clad, is not evenly balanced. (Dapper 1970/1668: 43–5)

In Barrow (1801), writing 133 years later, the gaze to the body surface was more systematizing, with the result that the body of the Hottentot it fabricated was no longer a mere enumeration and evaluation of

external features, but a morphological structure reflecting the composition of the pieces in their relation to one another.

> The person of a Hottentot while young is by no means void of symmetry. They are clean-limbed, well-proportioned, and erect. Their joints, hands, and feet are remarkably small. No protuberance of muscle to indicate strength; but a body delicately formed as that of a woman marks the inactive and effeminate mind of a Hottentot ... The colour of the eye is a deep chestnut: they are very long and narrow and removed to a great distance from each other; and the eyelids at the extremity next the nose, instead of forming an angle, as in Europeans, are rounded into each other exactly like those of the Chinese ... The cheek-bones are high and prominent, and with the narrow-pointed chin form nearly a triangle. Their teeth are beautifully white. The colour of the skin is that of a yellowish brown or faded leaf, but very different from the faded hue of a person in the jaundice, which it has been said to resemble. The hair is of a very singular nature: it does not cover the whole surface of the scalp, but grows in small tufts at certain distances from each other, and, when kept short, has the appearance and feel of a hard shoebrush, with this difference, that it is curled and twisted into small round lumps about the size of a marrowfat-pea. (Barrow 1801: 157)

This is the problem of the African body as a surface, a collection or assemblage of external organs without an interior anatomy to unify them.

For conventional twentieth-century historians such as Pratt (1985) and Dietrich (1993), how the African body of this period was seen negated its 'authentic fullness', and was 'bound up with the socio-political, economic, and cultural events of [the] ... time and shaped by visual traditions and aesthetic ideologies' (Dietrich 1993: 4–5). Or, where Pratt commented upon a fragment of Barrow's (1801: 283–4) account of the Bushmen, such descriptions

> [C]ould serve as a paradigmatic case of the ways in which ideology normalizes, codifies, and reifies ... As Catherine Belsey puts it in her lucid study *Critical Practice*, 'the task of ideology is to present the position of the subject as fixed and unchangeable, an element in a given system of differences which is human nature and the world of human experience, and to show possible action as an endless repetition of "normal" familiar action'. (Pratt 1985: 120–1)

Against this Modernist perspective, and while agreeing that the African body of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was contingent upon that time, the Foucauldean answer to the problem of this body as a surface is somewhat different.

First, it recognizes this body without volume as the outcome of a power quite distinct from that of the late twentieth century that assumes the interior of the body and individual subjectivity. This was the diagram of sovereign power, for when abstracted as a relationship of observation the requirement that sovereignty be visible to those over whom it is exercised has the reciprocal effect of preventing its subjects from crossing the threshold of visibility into the domain of describable individuality. From this perspective, the question is therefore not why the African body of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was never more than the sum of its external features, but how this corporeal topography could have crystallized at all.

The second component to the conditions of its existence must therefore be located in some productive counterpoint to the limiting effects on visibility imposed by the exercise of sovereignty. This appeared with the new space of seeing that opened up with emergence of the Classificatory episteme and its attendant discipline of 'natural history'. Preoccupied with the 'meticulous examination of things themselves', this was a method of seeing that restricted itself to the description and analysis of visible surfaces only. Natural history was thus a discipline of seeing that deflected the lines of observation away from the thickness of the body, dovetailing with the demands of sovereign power in much the same way as the deep gaze of pathological anatomy does with disciplinary power.

This interpenetration of sovereign power and Classificatory knowledge meant that disease was never coterminous with the individual body. Quite the reverse was true, sickness serving to map not the nature of the body but rather the characteristics of the places in which it occurred. First, the great strategies of quarantine which, preoccupied with keeping the sick from the healthy, divided geographical space into places that had to be kept separate to prevent the movement of infected bodies between them (cf. Armstrong, 1993). For instance, an outbreak of smallpox in 1748 was seen to have radiated from the linen of infected sailors. Hottentots employed to wash these items were rapidly infected, and to prevent the disease from spreading, the Hottentots 'contrived to draw lines round the infected part of their country, which were so strictly guarded, that if any person attempted to break through them, in order to fly from the infection, he was immediately shot dead' (Mead 1748: 10).

Similarly, in 1796 La Vaillant described how to prevent the spread of smallpox:

> [T]he Company's surgeons are always sent to examine with the utmost care such ships as arrive in the roads. On the least appearance of infection, the

> crew are rigorously interdicted from having any communication with the town or its inhabitants; and an embargo is laid on the goods, no part of which, however small, is suffered to be brought on shore. (La Vaillant 1796: Vol. 1, 24)

Second, the analysis of endemic diseases such as colds, catarrh and fluxions of the chest' (Mentzel 1921/1785: Part 2, 255), which illuminated the characteristics of the extra-corporeal space from which they impinged upon the body. In Kolben (1731), as in Mentzel (1970/1785), La Vaillant (1796: Vol. 1, 22–4) and Stavorinus (1798: 567), the probability of such diseases waxed and waned with the changing of the air:

> While the South-East winds blow, the Air is serene and very wholesome; and that in the Time of the North-West winds the Air is heavy and unwholesome ... For the Summer-Air, when the wind is still, becomes corrupt and sickly. The ... Reeds they call *Sea Trumpets*, and the Sea-Grass driven ashore, rot and fill the Air with most offensive stenches ... The Air is darken'd with swarms of Flies, Gnats, and C, which are exceedingly troublesome: And 'tis ragingly hot. When the Wind rises again, the Air becomes again serene and wholesome: Offensive stenches are no longer felt in it. The Inhabitants recover quickly of their Disorders; and flies and Gnats are immediately driven out of the Region. (Kolben 1731: Vol. 2, 326–7)

Correlated with this medical gaze that illuminated not bodies but places, airs and climates, was a control regime that epitomized the diagram of sovereign power. Within it the body of the African was certainly visible – not as an object of surveillance, but instead as a relay in the bloody rituals of punishment by which a sovereignty, momentarily injured by the crime of the offender, reconstituted itself through spectacular shows of the monarch's physical might, 'who seizes upon the body of the condemned man and displays it marked, beaten, broken' (Foucault 1977: 49).

The power of punishment and the sight of sovereignty

> Whenever an execution takes place, a military display is made in the following manner. After the guard for the day has been changed, the remaining available men – about 99 in number – are assembled in the market place and divided into 3 companies of 33 men each. Two of these companies, are armed with muskets, the third, which is carefully selected from the best physical specimens, is armed with long pikes (about 7yds. long). The pikemen are drawn up between the files of infantry. The battalion marches in this formation to the Governor's house ... The Secretary to the Council of Justice then mounts the 'Katt', and reads out the sentence of the con-

> demned. The troops now march to the place of execution, with band playing and form a ring with their pikes in such a way that each man can grasp his own pike and the end of his neighbour's pike at the same time. The musketeers take up a position immediately outside this ring formed with the pikes, with orders to keep the area enclosed free of encroachment. The executioner, with his assistants, under strong guard, now brings up the criminals ... Next comes the court messenger, bareheaded, carrying a silver-tipped staff of office. He is escorted by the sergeant, corporal and 12 grenadiers of the guard, and represents the majesty of the law. A clergyman ... offers a short prayer and the executioner does his work. (Mentzel 1921/1785: Part 2, 72–3)

In this 1785 description of the ritual prescribed for public executions in the Cape of Good Hope occurred all the elements of drama that composed the sovereign theatres of punishment by which this power renewed itself to the eyes of the anonymous onlookers. Confirming the African body without volume as the outcome of this force field that propelled the lines of visibility away from the bodies of all towards the 'majesty of justice', dissolution of this body as a surface was roughly coterminous with the legal abandonment of public execution in South Africa. The last occasion on which sovereignty was seen in its marking of the criminal's body thus occurred in Grahamstown in 1861,[2] some ten years after the emergence of missionary medicine (see Chapter 5) had begun to surround the African body with a new strategy of attention that in apprehending its anatomical interior marked the beginnings of a shift from unalloyed sovereignty to a nascent disciplinary power.

Prior to this point, and with the effect of strictly limiting the field of corporeal observation to maintain an unencumbered space for sovereignty's ostentatious displays, the castle, the ceremonials, the looming machinery of the gallows, the wheel and the whipping post served as constant indicators of its ubiquitous presence. Among the devices for its display was the 'New Castle Good Hope' built in 1666, which as a concrete spectacle of the sovereign's hold over other bodies was illuminated in the following verse.

> Thus more the kingdoms are extended;
> Thus more and more are black and yellow spread,
> Thus from the ground a wall of stone is raised,
> On which the thundering brass can no impression make.
> For Hottentoos the walls were always earthen,
> But now we come with stone to boast before all men,
> And terrify not only Europeans, but also
> Asians, Americans and savage Africans.
> Thus holy Christendom is glorified;

> Establishing its seats amidst the savage heathens.
> We praise the Great Director, and say with one another:
> 'Augustus's dominion, nor Conquering Alexander,
> Nor Caesar's mighty genius, has ever had the glory
> To lay a corner stone at earth's extremist end!' (Anon 1666, in Leibbrandt 1901: 170)

If the castle was a constant sign of the sovereign presence to the 'savage heathens' set about it, then it was through the public execution as a theatre of punishment that the surface of the body was inducted into this same service as a screen on which the wrath of the king was inscribed for all to see. In a 1772 extract of the 'Colonial Office Journal' the sentence for nine Hottentots involved in murdering a Dutch 'burgher' was

> [T]o be brought to the place where criminal sentences are usually carried into execution here, and being there delivered over to the executioner, the first Kleyne Booy bound to a cross, and broken thereon alive, from under upwards, with the *coup de grace*, as also the second Kleyne Jantje Links, to be punished on the gallows, with the rope, until death ensues, and thereupon their dead bodies dragged to the *Bytengeregt*, and there that of the first laid upon a wheel, and that of the second being again hung upon the gallows, thus to remain a prey to the air and to the birds of the heavens; and, further, the remaining seven, ... one after the other, bound to a post and severely flogged with rods upon the bare back; and then the 3d, 4th, 5th, and 6th to have the sinew of the heel cut asunder, and be banished for life to the public works, at the Honorable Company's slave lodge. (Moodie 1960: Part III, 17)

Punishments were carefully calibrated to fit the nature of the injury inflicted on the monarchial body: blasphemers were bored through the tongue; fighting with knives was punished by lashing and being forced to stand with the knife driven through the hand into the post; and sheep stealers were flogged with rods and made 'to stand as a public spectacle with a sheep's skin upon their head and shoulders' (Moodie 1960: Part I, 382–3). Similarly, a 1782 'resolutien' prescribing the rates of pay for a Cape executioner listed no less than fifteen permutations of torture to the body surface.

Breaking limbs	Rds[3]	12
Pinching with red-hot tongs	"	4
Burning	"	12
Decapitating	"	8
Hanging	"	8
Strangling	"	6

Scorching	"	2
Quartering and hanging up the pieces	"	6
Transporting body to 'outside place' of execution	"	3
Torturing	"	10
Chopping off the hand	"	4
Scourging	"	3
Branding with red-hot iron	"	1
Placing a rope around the neck under the gallows	"	2
Putting in the pillory	"	2

(De Kock 1950: 167)

While it was only in 1861 that public execution was legally outlawed to confirm the subordination of sovereignty to disciplinary power, it was towards the late 1700s that, at least for some observers, the spectacle of sovereign pain began to have effects opposite to its intended function of subordinating the masses to the might of the king. Hence Sparrman's comment of 1786 on encountering the gallows:

> *Heus Viator!* Here we stopped a little to contemplate the uncertainty of human life. Above half a score wheels placed round it, presented us with the most horrid subjects for this purpose; the inevitable consequences, and at the same time the most flagrant proofs of slavery and tyranny; monsters, that never fail to generate each other, together with crimes and misdemeanours of every kind, as soon as either of them is once introduced into any country. The gallows itself, the largest I ever saw, was indeed of itself a sufficiently wide door to eternity; but was by no means too large for the purpose of a tyrannical government, that in so small as town as *Cape*, could find seven victims to be hanged in chains. (Sparrman 1786: Vol. 1, 52–3)

The display of its power to punish was not the only way that sovereignty invented itself to the eyes of its subjects. Complementing these violent strategies of majestic visibility were the less bloody but equally spectacular tactics by which the power of monarchial might was fabricated in the course of those more placid rituals where the African was approached by the European for purposes of observation and enquiry. Highlighting how the economy of sovereign visibility invested even the act of observing the African was the procedure adopted by the French naturalist La Vaillant, who in 1796 described his preparations for the contemplation of an 'interesting horde' of Africans he had chanced upon during his 'travels into the interior parts of Africa'.

> After arranging my hair, I dressed myself in the most magnificent manner I

> could. Among my hunting frocks I had one of a dark brown colour, ornamented with steel buttons, cut facet-wise; this I made my dress of ceremony; as the rays of the sun, falling upon the different facets, would by their reflection form a splendour very proper for exciting the admiration of these savages ... When I was within two hundred yards of the horde, I discharged both my shot, and ordered my four hunters to do the same ... [A]nd this was to the whole horde the signal for a general shout of joy. I shall not make any reflections upon this affecting scene: the tender reader will share in the emotions of my heart. (La Vaillant 1796: Vol. 2, 18–21)

While captivating of the attention, it would be tedious to catalogue more strategies for the manufacture of sovereign visibility, the point of their presentation being to establish this regime as dominated not by a gaze to the African body, but by precisely the reverse: the gaze of the African to the sovereign might of colonial power as it was produced through the rituals of the European. Leaving La Vaillant examining the 'savages' as they 'examined [him] ... with the utmost attention, even to the minutest part of my dress' (La Vaillant 1796: Vol. 2, 21), this chapter now analyses how the African body was made known in the slender space of Classificatory observation that was all which remained for its formation as an object of knowledge.

Natural history: the African body as surface, structure and character

Of all possible perceptual strategies for apprehending the nature of living things, it was no coincidence that natural history should have surfaced in the middle of the seventeenth century as the knowledge side of the sovereign-power coin. For in the concern of the Classificatory age to order and distribute things on the basis of their perceptible physical structures, the world of nature it invented emerged as a world of excess, a teeming plenitude of minute variations between things. For them to be seen and described in a way that reflected their natural ordering thus demanded an observational technology able to shut down this confused wealth of representation.

> In order to establish the identities and differences existing between all natural entities, it would be necessary to take into account every feature that might have been listed in a given description. Such an endless task would push the advent of natural history back into an inaccessible never-never land, unless there existed techniques that would avoid this difficulty of making so many comparisons. (Foucault 1973: 139)

Hence the affinity between the science of natural history and sovereign

power, for as the latter was concerned with maintaining the visibility of the king, so the former offered itself as a technology for systematically restricting the space of what could be seen.

> Natural history did not become possible because men looked harder and more closely. One might say, strictly speaking, that the Classical age used its ingenuity, if not to see as little as possible, at least to restrict deliberately the area of its experience. Observation, from the seventeenth century onward, is a perceptible knowledge furnished with a series of systematically negative conditions. (Foucault 1973: 132)

Accordingly, where conventional histories consider seventeenth- and eighteenth-century representations of the African body to be fictions produced by accretions of ideology upon an ahistorical body, it is no surprise that for the history of the present this body was the very real outcome of a perceptual process premised not on a strategy of accretion but on one of depletion.

First, the stripping away of all the obscure similitudes that for the Renaissance episteme had been the truth of the African body's fabulous identity. Second, installation of the theories of structure and character as filters of the visible, by which natural history secured the African body as a morphology in its taxonomic grid. In the same way as it was not the outcome of ideological distortion, neither was this African body the product of a better way of seeing that replaced Renaissance mythology, but merely the object and effect of a new way of seeing, 'a new field of visibility being constituted in all density' (Foucault 1973: 132).

Seeing the body surface itself: the invention of fantasy and death of imagination For bodies to be revealed to the Classificatory eye demanded that the old Renaissance techniques of knowing be identified and eliminated to create a clear epistemic space for the installation of a taxonomic gaze. The first signs of this nascent transformation in relation to the African body appeared with the fabrication of fantasy as itself an object of knowledge, for only with its isolation could the play of imagination give way to the technology of examination. This occurred between 1650 and 1750, during which time the old ways of knowing and the fabulous attributes that had invested the African body were themselves elevated into the field of classificatory visibility, analysed and discarded.

By the 1660s accounts describing Africans at the Cape of Good Hope had stabilized into a consistent structure closely resembling the observational categories laid down in the Royal Society's instructions for the classification of 'natives and strangers' (see Chapter 3, page 51). For

instance, and in all respects formally identical to those of contemporary writers, Dapper's 1668 account of *Kaffraria or Land of the Kaffirs, also named Hottentots* (Dapper 1970/1668) was divided into eighteen sections under the following heads: 'The build of the Kaffirs or Hottentots; clothing of the men; clothing of the women; ornamentation; weapons; food; industry; subsistence; marriage; death; punishments of theft; incest; punishment of homicide and assault; dwellings; language; trade; government, and religion.' However, while this grid operated to regiment what was recorded of the bodies, manners and customs it invented, its properties as a screen for the delimitation of how things should be seen was restricted by its coarseness, for it permitted the entry of 'hearsay' into the constitution of its objects. Indeed, Dapper's descriptions were all hearsay, derived 'as far as these have come to knowledge from some reports recently sent over by men who have dwelt in these parts for some time' (Dapper 1970/1668: 7).

Albeit in rapidly fading form, this failure to filter out hearsay briefly sustained the African as an object of Renaissance myth and similitude. In 1686 Ten Rhyne could thus note that the build, character and 'temper' of the Hottentots 'afford a clear proof that even a mild climate can produce monstrous dispositions' (Ten Rhyne 1970/1686: 125).

> They have the temper of wild animals (I am quoting the words of Florus) and bodies more than human. But it has been found by experience that as their ardour is at first fiercer than that of men, so it dwindles till it is feebler than that of women. The bodies of a mountain folk bred amidst moist clouds have a resemblance to their native snows: they warm at once to the battle, fall immediately into a sweat, and are dissolved by a slight effort, as if by the sun. But the flinty rocks and shuddering woods match their real fierceness. For the Hottentots hang about the mountains, scouring every part of them by night and day. (Ten Rhyne 1970/1686: 133)

By 1695 the antipathy of the Classificatory gaze to all knowledge not derived through direct observation was further confirmed in Grevenbroek's astonishment 'that Rumour, never bearing a clear report, should have acquired such strength in her course and proved so tenacious of falsehood that those half truths spread abroad about our Africans should have reached even your ears' (Grevenbroek 1970/1695: 173). Despite this protestation, his 'rough sketch, embodying matters of hearsay as well as information gathered from reliable witnesses, written records, authentic documents and my personal observations' (p. 299), could still assert of the Hottentots:

> Those who live near our Cape are of middle height; but the inhabitants of the remote parts of the region are shaggy fellows, with taller and sturdier

> frames, and with frizzy hair. Among them has been seen a king, Longurio, twelve foot high, with hair all over his body thicker than a water spaniel's. (Grevenbroek 1970/1695: 175)

In 1731 an English translation of Kolben's *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope, or, A Particular Account of the Several Nations of the Hottentots* was published. A turning point of some significance, Kolben's text marked a new intensification in the ingenuity of the Classificatory gaze to identify barriers to its meticulous observation of things themselves. In it, the minimal commentary provided by earlier writers upon the problems of hearsay and rumour was substantially expanded, the translator's preface to this edition offering an eight-page essay concerning 'some Reflections on History and Historical writers' (Medley, in Kolben 1731: Vol. 1, ii). This recognized three classes of barriers 'to Pursuit of Historical Truth ... *Ignorance* ... *Knavery*, and the *Constitutions* of writers' (p. iii). Noting that other authors had already said enough on ignorance and knavery as sources that 'plague the World with mutilated Fact and Historical Fiction' (p. vii), this concentrated on 'how Truth may be injur'd by the *Melancholic*, the *Phlegmatic*, the *Choleric*, and the *Sanguine* Tempers of Men' (p. viii). Writers of Sanguine temper were prone to over-emphasizing the virtues of what they liked; the Choleric to making everything they disliked infinitely worse, and the Melancholic to reporting 'Shadows for Substances, and airy Suspicions for the best grounded Truths in the World' (p. ix). The Phlegmatic, however, excelled 'all others in Accounts of Fact' (p. xv), precisely because they saw only to the surface of things.

> The *Phlegmatic* have no Eyes, indeed, for the *Inside* of Things; but they have excellent ones for the *Outside*; and give a Detail of a Thousand Particulars there which escape Men of other Complexions ... They are neither ravish'd with beauty, nor frighted at Deformity; neither elated with Success, nor depress'd with Misfortune. They are subject to none of those Flurries of Imagination that transport and bewilder other Men. (Medley, in Kolben 1731: Vol. 1, xv–xvi).

Not surprisingly, it was 'of the Class of *Phlegm*' (p. xvi) that Medley reckoned Kolben to be.

The second reason for singling out Kolben's text as a turning point in the solidification of the taxonomic gaze to the African body occurs in the text itself. Here, appearing wherever what was seen by the eye contradicted what rumour had claimed or temper had fantasized, was the imaginative error and its attendant Classificatory correction. In his account of 'the Shape, Stature and Features of the *Hottentots*', Kolben could thus write: ·

> They are by no Means so Hideous as the Press has hitherto made them ... What a frightful Picture has *Anderton* drawn of this People in his Travels! After saying, the Features of the *Hottentots* are monstrously ugly, he adds, their Faces are shrivell'd. Yes, those of Old People ... But the Face of a young *Hottentot* is as smooth and plump as that of any Youth in *Africa*, or even in *Europe*. For a general Description of the Persons of the *Hottentots*, they are not so small of Stature as we have been told, most of the Men being from 5 to 6 Foot high. The Women are a great deal less. Both sexes are very erect and well made, keeping a due Medium between Gross and Meagre. Their Heads being generally large, their Eyes are so in Proportion. The Noses of both Sexes are flatted, & their Lips thick. Their Teeth are white as Ivory. And their Cheeks have Something of a Cherry; but, by Reason of their continual Dawbings, it is not easily discern'd. Their Hair is like that of *Negroes*, short, and black as jet. The Men have large broad Feet: The Women have them very small and tender. Neither Men nor Women cut the Nails of their Fingers or Toes. (Kolben 1731: Vol. 1, 52–3)

Dapper was shown by Kolben to be 'out' where he reported the Hottentots as eating whale fat, and of the reports 'by several Authors' that the Hottentots are 'black from their Birth' he noted: 'What a mistake is Here! ... I have seen a great many new-born Children of the *Hottentots*, and always found them of a bright olive' (Kolben 1731: Vol. 1, 54).

While the truth of the African as constituted in Kolben's account would last out the next fifty years, its appearance coincided with the recognition by natural history of a new class of barriers to its taxonomic task. Until Kolben, the primary difficulty had been stilling the play of imagination to clear the perception so that it could be imprinted upon by the surface of things themselves. The very success of this strategy of attention, however, brought with it the new problem of excess. For, as Medley had noted, the down side to nature as revealed by 'the exactest Relaters of the World of what they See' (in Kolben 1731: Vol. 1, xvi) was its 'dullness' and 'tediousness' since: 'they relate every Thing they see and hear, with most religious exactness, not omitting the smallest or most indifferent Matter or Circumstance, they remember, tho' it be of neither Use nor Entertainment, nor any Thing at all to the Purpose' (p. xv). Accordingly, the next refinement in Classificatory perception occurred with elaboration of the theories of structure and character as mechanisms by which to sift from the newly apprehended mass of the visible only those few things which could be analysed, recognized by all, and hence given a name that everyone would understand.

Screening the seen: the African body as structure and character As the period in which it finally became a formal discipline, the years between

1735 and 1760 were of some significance to natural history. In 1735 Linnaeus published his famous system of botanical classification *Systema Naturae*, in 1751 his *Philosophia Botanica*, and in 1753 his *Species Plantarum*. Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* appeared in 1749 and Adanson's *Famille des Plantes* in 1763 (cf. Foucault 1973; Pratt 1992: 25). While differing in aspects of the debate over classificatory method, these authors shared a concern with providing to natural history a theory and technique of seeing and describing that would at last enable it to engage with its proper object. This object was known as the structure of any living thing, and was

> the extension of which all natural beings are constituted – an extension affected by four variables. And by four variables only: the form of the elements, the quantity of those elements, the manner in which they are distributed in space in relation to each other, and the relative magnitude of each element. As Linnaeus said, in a passage of capital importance, 'every note should be a product of number, of form, of proportion, of situation'. (Foucault 1973: 134)

In the theory of structure was thus articulated the ideal object of natural history, the effect of a gaze strictly screened to admit the visual alone and then only certain components of what was seen. Now, the earlier system of screening by which hearsay had been excluded was extended to eliminate taste, smell and even touch, leaving sight with an almost exclusive privilege. As Buffon noted, 'the method of examination will be directed towards form, magnitude, the different parts, their number, their position, and the very substance of the thing' (in Foucault 1973: 135). The theory of structure enabled a new precision to be entered into the act of describing what was seen. First, number and magnitude could be quantified through counting or measuring. Second, the specification of form and arrangement could be done through the qualitative method of identification with geometrical figures and the strictly clarified use of analogies.

Alongside structure as the natural history method of seeing by which its possible objects were restricted to surfaces and lines, the theory of character was a device of secondary sifting. Given the practical impossibility of classifying things by taking into account every feature listed in a given description, the theory of character prescribed that a particular structure be selected as the locus of identities and differences. For instance, the structural locus advocated by Linnaeus for the comparison and classification of plants was the pattern formed by their organs of reproduction – the stamens, fruits, seeds and so on. Thus, 'the character should be composed of "the most careful description of fructification of the first species. All the other species of the genus are

compared with the first, all discordant notes being eliminated; finally, after this process, the character emerges"' (Foucault 1973: 140). In outline, this was the taxonomic gaze through which the body of the African as invented by Kolben was, towards the close of the eighteenth century, consigned to the now extensive cabinet of accounts of the curious: 'Kolbe's "Caput Bonae Spei" was from the beginning received with great favour and was eagerly devoured by lovers of the marvellous. At that time no one found cause to doubt its accuracy or to pick holes in it' (Mentzel 1921/1785: Part 1, 21). In its place were the tentative outlines of a new African body as a structure which began to crystallize in the first formal natural history of the Cape, Sparrman's (1786) *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope*.

Sponsored by no less than 'the late Archiater LINNAEUS [who] ... in his own name drew up a petition for the voyage to be made' (Sparrman 1786: Vol. 1, xii), Sparrman observed that his description – 'never relying on the relations of others ... he sees every thing with his own eyes, and trusts only to the report of his own senses' (p. vi) – would disappoint the reader expecting 'accounts ... of a most entertaining and wonderful import':

> Nature has presented herself to me in various shapes, ever worthy of admiration, often enchanting, and sometimes terrible, and clothed with horror. But at the same time I must apprise the reader, that a great many prodigies and uncommon appearances, about which I have frequently been asked by many, who have been brought to entertain these conceits by perusing the descriptions of others, are not to be found in my journal. Men with one leg, indeed, Cyclops, Syrens, Troglodytes, and the like imaginary beings have almost entirely disappeared in this enlightened age. At the same time, however, many have been hitherto induced to give credit to tales almost as marvellous, with which authors, who have before me visited and described the Hottentots, have seasoned their relations ... So that the reader must not be surprized to find my narrative frequently differ much from those of various of my predecessors. (Sparrman 1786: Vol. 1, xv–xvi)

Where earlier accounts had set the African body in a broader space of sensationalist descriptions concerning ways of eating, hunting, copulating, childbirth, punishment and so on, the African body fabricated by Sparrman appeared alongside the carefully measured and minutely detailed descriptions of animals and plants, which, indeed, were invested with a substantially greater degree of visibility, thus locating the body of the African to the very edge of taxonomic space.[4] Nevertheless, and albeit only faintly, Sparrman's description of the Hottentot body revealed its inscription in the new perceptual strategies of structure and character, where, through their proportions and relationships, the body's external

organs began to form some impression of a distinctive arrangement, a 'characteristic mark':

> With regard to their persons they are as tall as most Europeans; and as for their being in general more slender, this proceeds from their being more stinted and curtailed in their food ... But that they have small hands and feet compared with the other parts of their bodies, has been remarked by no one before, and may, perhaps, be looked upon as a characteristic mark of this nation. The root of the nose is for the most part very low, by which means the distance of the eyes from each other appears to be greater than in Europeans. The tip of the nose likewise is pretty flat. The iris is scarcely ever of a light colour, but has a dark brown cast, which sometimes approaches to black. Their skin is of a yellowish brown hue, which something resembles that of an European who has the jaundice in a high degree; however, this colour is not in the least observable in the whites of the eyes. One does not find such thick lips among the *Hottentots* as among their neighbours the *Negroes*, the *Caffres*, and the *Mozambiques*. In fine, their mouths are of a middling size, and almost always furnished with a set of the finest teeth that can be seen; and, taken together with the rest of their features, as well as their shape, carriage, and every motion, in short, their *tout ensemble*, indicates health and content, or at least an air of *sans souci*. (Sparrman 1786: Vol. 1, 180–1)

Five years later the apotheosis of the African as object and effect of the taxonomic gaze appeared in Barrow's (1801) *An Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa*. Here the hesitancy evident in Sparrman to invent the African body as structure and identify from this its distinguishing character gave way to a textbook precision in the discernment of number, magnitude, form and arrangement. The effect of this was the African body as a geometrized morphology that at the same time bore within it a sufficiency of isolated structures to permit the establishment of its character:

> The great curvature of the spine inwards, and extended posteriors, are characteristic of the whole Hottentot race; but in some of the small Bosjesmans they are carried to a most extravagant degree. If the letter **S** be considered as one expression of a line of beauty to which degrees of approximation are admissible, these women are entitled to the first rank in point of form. A section of the body, from the breast to the knee, forms really the shape of the above letter. The projection of the posterior part of the body, in one subject, measured five inches and a half from a line touching the spine. (Barrow 1801: 281)

Elsewhere, in the Hottentot, as in the Bushman, it was not the curvature of the spine but the shape of the eye that was selected as the locus of

pertinent identities and differences. 'The upper lid of this organ, as in that of the Chinese, is rounded into the lower on the side next the nose, and forms not an angle, as is the case in the eye of an European' (Barrow 1801: 278). The women of the Hottentots were readily distinguished from those of other nations by their 'protruded nymphae'.

> The longest that was measured somewhat exceeded five inches ... Their color is that of livid blue, inclining to a reddish tint, not unlike the excrescence on the beak of a turkey, which indeed may serve to convey a tolerable good idea of the whole appearance both as to color, shape, and size. The interior lips or nymphae in European subjects which are corrugated or plaited, lose entirely that part of their character when brought out in the Hottentot, and become perfectly smooth. (Barrow 1801: 279)

A more problematic task of comparison was presented by the corporeal structure of 'the Kaffer'. Where the spine, the eye and the nymphae were identifying singularities on the Hottentot body, that of the 'Kaffer' was more difficult to place, owing to the closeness with which the form of the head approximated to that of the European.

> Though black, or very nearly so, they have not one line of the African negro in the composition of their persons. The comparative anatomist might be a little perplexed in placing the skull of a Kaffer in the chain, so ingeniously put together by him, comprehending all the links from the most perfect European to the Ourang-Outang, and thence through all the monkey-tribe. The head of a Kaffer is not elongated: the frontal and the occipital bones form nearly a semicircle; and a line from the forehead to the chin drawn over the nose is convex like that of most Europeans. In short, had not nature bestowed upon him the dark colouring principle that anatomists have discovered to be owing to a certain gelatinous fluid lying between the epidermis and the cuticle, he might have ranked among the first of Europeans. (Barrow 1801: 205–6)

From theatres of punishment to theatres of healing

It is here that this chapter must end, where the eye of Barrow fabricated the African as object and effect of a taxonomic gaze to the surface of the body, while at the same time threatening to become more than skin-deep as it outlined the interior lips of the 'nymphae', delineated the occipital bones of the skull, and engaged with the 'gelatinous fluid lying between the epidermis and the cuticle'. For, some twenty-five years later, the classificatory gaze of natural history itself began to be made visible to a new strategy of attention which recognized 'Man himself' as a central concern of its surveillance. Writing in 1827, Thompson observed:

> The majority of travellers who penetrated into the interior of the country in former times, were men enthusiastically and almost exclusively devoted to scientific pursuits. Discoveries in natural history were their paramount objects. Man himself, whether social or savage, was secondary, in their researches, to a new plant or animal. (G. Thompson 1827: vi)

This emergence of 'Man' marked the point of epistemic disjunction where Classification gave way to Modernity and natural history to the new science of biology through which the taxonomic ordering of morphologies would be complemented[5] by the penetrating analysis of structure and its relationship to function. In this new epistemic space, 'the internal laws of the organism were to replace differential characters as the object of the natural sciences' (Foucault 1973: 145), and within medicine there could emerge the deep gaze of pathological anatomy and its concern to establish how the organs of the body are ordered, the mechanics of the cell, the nature of the tissues of the skin, and the dynamics by which pathology localizes itself to a distinct point within the body.

It was this disjunction in knowing that made possible the mid-nineteenth-century articulation of the African body in a new power regime, as alongside the older spectacles of sovereignty there began to appear the minute rituals of disciplinary power by which the interior of the African body was fabricated as a visible, analysable and useful space for the installation and reticulation of power. Thus, Chapter 5 examines the unfolding of the African body as an object and effect of missionary medicine, which as the first socio-medical discipline to emerge into this anatomy of power bore within its practices elements from the diagrams of both sovereignty and disciplinary power – its theatres of healing standing where in the earlier regime had loomed the theatres of punishment; the hands of the doctor and his instruments of treatment where before had been the tools of the torturer; and the act of healing the infirm African body supplanting the inscription of pain upon its surface as a strategy of sovereign visibility.

Notes

1. To highlight the variability of the taxonomic gaze itself by holding constant the object that was its effect, this chapter focuses on the body of the Hottentot only, while acknowledging that alongside the Hottentots many other 'tribes' of Africans were delineated on the basis of their perceptible physical characteristics.

2. In South Africa, the statutory abolition of capital punishment in public occurred only eight years later, with the passing of Act 3 of 1869.

3. 'Rds.' was an abbreviation for 'Riksdaalders'.

4. Foucault commented on this phenomenon by noting that 'in so far as there are a great many constituent organs visible in a plant that are not so in animals, taxonomic knowledge based upon immediately perceptible variables was richer and more coherent in the botanical order than in the zoological' (1973: 137).

5. It is important to reflect briefly upon the resilience of taxonomy as a strategy of perception and a tactic of power. For, with Barrow's articulation of the skull of the African into the great grid of classification, we see the nascent beginnings of a new sovereignty that through the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would continue to operate upon the typology of bodies produced through the interplay of structure and character. Thus, a 1958 volume of 'race studies' – written for the teaching of standard-six high school pupils – installed precisely the same human body as that seen by Barrow where it depicted for all to see the instruments of ethnographic observation and classification: an 18-point 'scale for comparing colour of skin'; thirty samples of human hair systematically arrayed in a metal box labelled 'scale for comparing hair'; sixteen artificial eyes that composed the 'scale for comparing eye colours'; and a set of three 'instruments for measuring the skull' (Bruwer et al. 1958: 14–17). Although it is true that with the beginnings of the nineteenth century a new regime of power that worked less upon the body's surface than through its interior would begin to materialize, this switch in power must be recognized as one that did not so much displace as complement the sovereignty of taxonomy and the dividing practices it made possible.