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# Exhibitions of the Artistic and Scientific Exploitation of Baartman (ca. 1775-1815), the "Hottentot Venus"

## Expositions de l'exploitation artistique et scientifique de Baartman (ca. 1775-1815), la « Vénus hottentote »

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**ABSTRACT.** Baartman was a woman of the indigenous Khoisan people of South Africa. In 1810, when working as a housemaid in Cape Town, she was coaxed to travel to England to be shown as a savage African, the "Hottentot Venus". She was exhibited as an ethno-erotic freak in Britain and Paris. After her death in late 1815, her body was dissected and George Cuvier published lurid details of her anatomy in an 1817 report. Her remains were kept, and periodically displayed, in the Museum of Natural History (Paris) until finally being repatriated to South Africa in 2002. The tragic story of Baartman's exploitation has been the subject of many books, films, and articles. Here the focus is on two relatively poorly documented aspects of her exploitation by both artists and scientists. First shown is the artistic exploitation through an exhibition of the depictions of her by the artists of satirical prints, a very popular medium in Baartman's time. The depictions of her, always in profile with greatly exaggerated buttocks, became in satirical prints, a generic portrayal of African women. In line with the orthodox racism of the early 1800's, the depictions emphasized the differences between Europeans and African peoples, the "otherness" of Africans. Secondly, in an exhibition tracing the use of images and characteristics of her, especially (but not only) her skull and brain, the scientific exploitation of Baartman will be shown. The features of her morphology were used to support the divisive view of the inferiority of African peoples. This began with an 1816 report on her visit to the Professors of the Natural History Museum and Cuvier's 1817 report on the dissection of her corpse, and continued on well into 1970's.

**RÉSUMÉ.** Baartman était une femme du peuple indigène Khoisan d'Afrique du Sud. En 1810, alors qu'elle travaillait comme domestique au Cape Town, elle fut persuadée de se rendre en Angleterre pour y être représentée comme une Africaine sauvage, la « Vénus hottentote ». Elle fut exposée comme une créature "ethno-érotique" en Grande-Bretagne et à Paris. Après sa mort fin 1815, son corps fut disséqué et George Cuvier publia des détails sordides sur son anatomie dans un rapport de 1817. Sa dépouille fut conservée et exposée périodiquement au Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris jusqu'à son rapatriement en Afrique du Sud en 2002. L'histoire tragique de l'exploitation de Baartman a fait l'objet de nombreux livres, films et articles. Nous nous concentrons ici sur deux aspects relativement peu documentés de son exploitation par les artistes et les scientifiques. Le premier est l'exploitation artistique, à travers une exposition de ses représentations par les artistes d'estampes satiriques, un médium très populaire à l'époque de Baartman. Ses représentations, toujours de profil, les fesses fortement exagérées, sont devenues, dans les estampes satiriques, une représentation générique des femmes africaines. Fidèles au racisme orthodoxe du début du XIXe siècle, ces représentations soulignaient les différences entre Européens et Africains, l'« altérité » des Africains. Deuxièmement, une exposition retraçant l'utilisation de ses images et de ses caractéristiques, notamment (mais pas seulement) son crâne et son cerveau, montrera l'exploitation scientifique de Baartman. Ses caractéristiques morphologiques ont servi à étayer la thèse de l'infériorité des peuples africains. Cela a commencé avec un rapport de 1816 sur sa visite aux professeurs du Musée d'histoire naturelle et le rapport de Cuvier de 1817 sur la dissection de son cadavre, et s'est poursuivi jusqu'aux années 1970.

**KEYWORDS.** Racism, Caricatures, African Women, Scientific Racism, Scientific Illustration, Eugenics.

**MOTS-CLÉS.** Racisme, Caricatures, Femmes Africaines, Racisme Scientifique, Illustration Scientifique, Eugénisme.

### 1. Introduction

In the early 19th century a young woman from South Africa was exhibited in Britain and in Paris as an exotic African savage under the name the "Hottentot Venus". The exhibitions marked the beginning in Europe as a way to actually see 'the other', a living specimen of another race, rather than only read

accounts in books or through museum objects (Boëtsch & Blanchard 2003). She arrived in England in 1810 and died in 1815 in Paris. Shortly after death, her body was dissected by George Cuvier, and her skeleton and various organs were added to the collections and exhibits of the Natural History Museum (Paris). She was quite famous in her time, as attested to by press reports of exhibitions and events in her life and her death in both the British press (Anon. 1810, 1811, 1814a, 1816a) and the French press (1814b, 1815, 1816b,c). Her story subsequently received little attention throughout the 19th century and most of the 20th century except for a series of articles by Percival Kirby (Kirby 1949, 1953, 1954a,b), a musicologist with wide-ranging interests (Maccrone 1971). However, the end of Apartheid in South Africa permitted calls for the repatriation of her remains from France to South Africa. The calls began in the 1990's bringing new attention to the story of the Hottentot Venus (Fauvelle-Aymar 2006) and since 2000, the literature on the Hottentot Venus has grown tremendously, representing a veritable industry (Gjerden et al. 2016), and is showing few signs of abating. There are five book-length scholarly treatments of her life (Badou 2000; Holmes 2007; Crais & Scully 2009; Sandrel 2010; Blanckaert ed. 2013), two fictionalized accounts of her life (Chase-Riboud 2003; Clarke 2023). A feature length film, *Vénus Noire* by Adellatif Kechiche appeared in 2009, focused on her time in Paris.

There is a notable lack of consensus concerning many aspects of the woman who came to be known as the Hottentot Venus, as basic as her name. For example, in the titles of the biographies, her first name is given as Saartjie (Clarke 2023), Sara (Crais & Scully 2009) or Sarah (Holmes 2007; Sandrel 2010) and her last name as Baartman (Holmes 2007; Crais & Scully 2009; Clarke 2023) or Bartman (Sandrel 2010). Neither her first nor last name variants were those given to her by her parents, names which remain unknown (Crais & Scully 2009). For the sake of simplicity, here only the family name Baartman, most commonly used, is employed without a first name.

Despite the abundance of the literature, there are two aspects of the Hottentot Venus that have not been specifically addressed and are the focus of this essay, pairing the artistic and scientific exploitation of the Venus Hottentot. First, there is the exploitation of her image by the artists of caricatures, greatly exaggerating features of her morphology, especially her buttocks, thereby transforming her into a fantastic creature, and subsequently the use of the caricatured morphology of the Hottentot Venus to represent generic African females. The second neglected aspect is the long history of the scientific use of features of her anatomy as evidence of her 'otherness', especially as evidence of her intellectual inferiority, and by extension, the inferiority of most indigenous peoples relative to Europeans. A brief summary of the life of the Venus Hottentot, underlining the lacuna of our knowledge, is given below. This is followed by an "exhibition" of the caricatures of the Hottentot Venus beginning in 1810 and ending in 1913. The scientific exploitation of the Hottentot Venus is then traced ", in a second "exhibition", beginning with her paid visit to the Professors of the Natural History Museum in 1815, to the use of her image, dating from that visit, in John Baker's controversial 1974 book, "Race".

## 2. A Brief Biography of Baartman

The following highly abridged account of Baartman's life is based on that of Crais and Scully (2009) as the best (but insufficiently) documented biography of Baartman, unless otherwise noted. She was born sometime in 1770's among the Khoekhoe people who were nomadic cattle herders. However, her family lived on the farm of a Dutch colonist who named his land Baartman's Fonteyn, Dutch for "bearded man's (or savage's) spring". Native peoples, working on a colonist's farm adopted the name of the farm as the family name. Her first name was Saartje, Sara in Dutch, thus on the farm, her name was Saartje Baartman. Her Khoekhoe name is unknown. When the owner of Baartman's Fonteyn died, The Baartmans moved to another farm, owned by another farmer but retained their family name. Baartman grew up on the farm as a servant, as was her mother, while her father tended the livestock and was occasionally charged with herding cattle to Cape Town.

By the time she was a young adult, both her father and mother had died. She was a slave on the farm in all but name. When the farmer faced financial troubles, he sold Baartman to a passing trader, Pieter Cesars, as there was strong demand for servants in Cape Town, and he delivered her to his employer, a wealthy Cape Town butcher in whose home she became a house servant. In about 1800, the wealthy butcher died, ending the employment of both Pieter Cesars and Baartman. She moved first into the home of Pieter Cesars, as a servant and wet nurse, and a few years later to the house of Pieter Cesar's brother, Hendrik Cesars, again as a servant and wet nurse.

In a very unclear sequence of events, Hendrik Cesars (Baartman's master of sorts), and Alexander Dunlop, a former Ship's Surgeon, hatched a plan to solve their common financial problems by exhibiting Baartman in England as the exotic Hottentot Venus, with promises to her of returning to Cape town in a few years as a wealthy woman. The trio of Baartman, Cesars, and Dunlop left Cape Town in April and arrived in England in July of 1810. To maximize interest, Dunlop had Baartman exhibited in what Crais and Scully termed an "ethnopornographic freak show". Dunlop had handbills made announcing the exhibition and posters made showing a caricature of her, nude, with very large buttocks (fig. 1). The show began in late September of 1810. On the stage, Baartman was first in a suspended cage, dressed in a tight skin-colored costume, and then lead out by Cesars, as a trained animal. Members of the audience were allowed to approach Baartman and touch her body, with her buttocks drawing the most attention. By October, the show had drawn the attention of an anti-slavery group who publically questioned its legality and morality. Coincidentally or not, Hendrik Cesars parted company with Dunlop and Baartman. The status of Baartman as a free agent, as Dunlop argued, or under coercion, was brought before the court. Baartman was interviewed and stated that she was a free agent. The exhibition of Baartman, albeit with deletions of the animalistic behavior, and revealing costume, continued in London until April of 1811. In July of 1812 Dunlop passed away. Subsequently, there appears to be no information concerning Baartman's whereabouts or activities until announcements in the French press report her exhibition in Paris in late September of 1814 (Anon. 1814b).

In Paris, she was apparently first in the company with one Henry Taylor, about which nothing is known. In late January, a report appeared in the press stating that the Hottentot Venus had "changed owners" (Anon 1815). The new owner/manager was a man named Réaux, a dealer and exhibitor of wild animals in Paris, and a personality known to the Professors of the Natural History Museum (Patin 2013a). He exhibited Baartman in Paris during most of the year of 1815 and arranged for her to be viewed and interviewed by the Professors of the Natural History Museum in March of 1815. Baartman contracted an unknown illness in late December 1815, and died on December 30th. Réaux aided in the arrangements made by the Professors of the Natural History Museum to obtain her corpse that was dissected by George Cuvier in early January 1816.

**JUST ARRIVED**  
**FROM LONDON,**  
*And, by Permission, will be Exhibited here for a few Days,*  
 At Mr. James's Sale Rooms, Corner of Lord-street,

THAT MOST WONDERFUL  
**Phenomenon of Nature,**  
 THE  
**HOTTENTOT**  
**VENUS,**  
*The only One ever exhibited in Europe.*

In viewing this Wonderful LIVING Production of Nature, the Public have a perfect Specimen of that most extraordinary Tribe of the Human Race, who have for such a Length of Time inhabited the most Southern Parts of Africa, whose real Origin has never yet been ascertained, nor their Character, which has been so differently described by every Traveller who has visited those remote Regions of the World; and considering the natural morose Disposition of those People (who are scarcely ever observed to laugh) she is remarkably mild and affable in her Manners. She has had the Honor of being visited by His Royal Highness the PRINCE REGENT, and several Branches of the ROYAL FAMILY, also the principal NOBILITY, of both Sexes, in England, and declared to be a great natural Curiosity, well worthy the Attention of the Public. She is particularly obliged to the Female Sex who have so liberally patronized her Exhibition, and more especially after the malicious Reports circulated to her Disadvantage after her Arrival in this Kingdom; but which have been long since proved to be groundless. Over her Clothing, which is suitable to this Climate, is worn all the rude Ornaments used by that tribe on Gala Days.

N. B. Elegant Engravings of the Venus, by Lewis, sold at the Room.  
**ADMITTANCE—ONE SHILLING.**

CHESTER, PRINTED BY J. FLETCHER.



**Figure 1.** The 1810 advertisement of the exhibition of Baartman in Chester, England (left panel), actual size 29 cm tall, and, as mentioned at the bottom of the advertisement, the "Elegant Engraving of the Venus" by William Lewis (right panel), cm, available for purchase at the exhibition. The print was published by Baartman's exhibitor, Hendrik Cesars who brought Baartman to England in 1810. Actual print is size 35.7 x 22.1 cm. The 1810 print was the basis for most of the depictions of Baartman in satirical prints. The morphology depicted bears little resemblance to her actual morphology (for comparison see fig. 9 in section 4). Advertisement source: Wellcome Collection. Source: British Museum.

### 3. Baartman in satirical prints

Not well known today, satirical prints, also known as "drolls", were a British peculiarity, said to have reached their peak in quality and quantity of production in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (O'Connell 2004). The prints were very popular, modestly priced (for middle class incomes), and sold in print shops, many of which specialized in satirical prints (McCreey 2004). They often featured well-known personalities of the day, such as politicians or society figures, with exaggerated features and in embarrassing or compromising scenes. The prints served as decorations in homes and businesses, and were collected in albums. Notable collectors of satirical prints included Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820), longtime president of the Royal Society, and also his sister Sarah (1774-1818). According to Smith (1984), a copy of the print shown in figure 1 was sent to Joseph Banks by Hendrick Cesars, with an invitation to a "private viewing" of Baartman. In London alone, there were 71 print shops in the early 1800's and they displayed the latest prints in their windows turning print shops into attractions, especially for those unable to purchase them (McCreey 2004). Through their prints, some satirical print publishers, such as Hannah Humphrey, became "influential tastemakers" of their time (Torbert 2004).

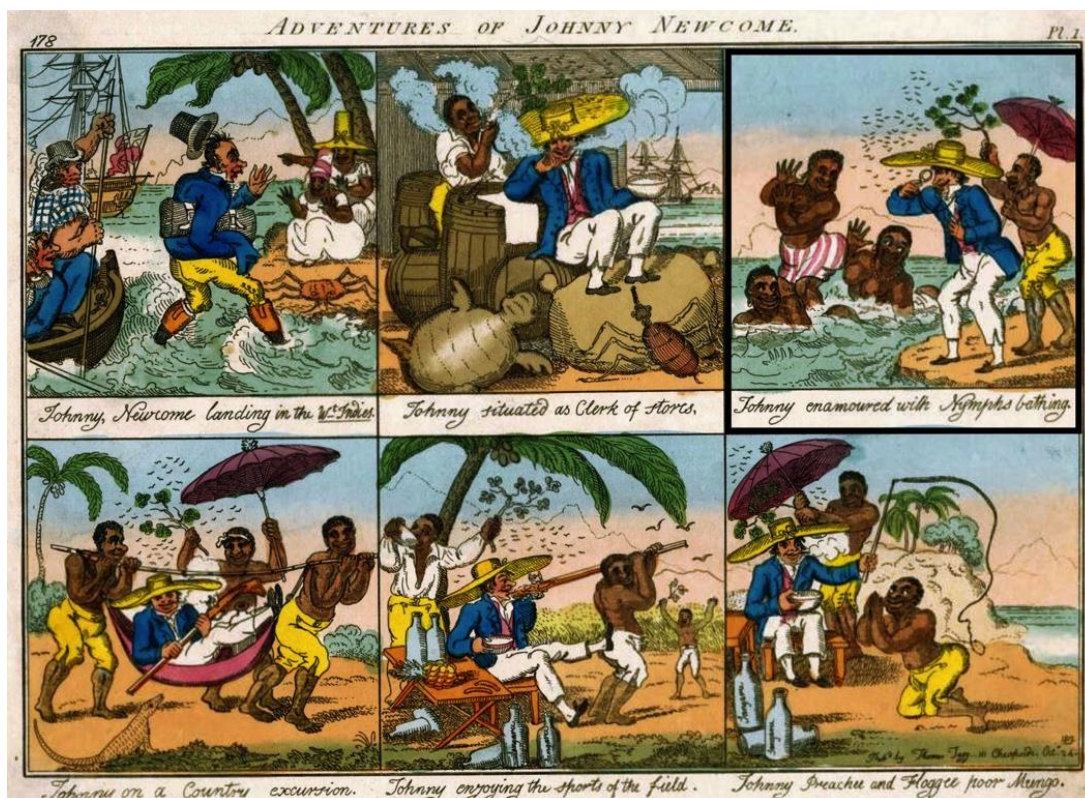
In his *"An Historical Sketch of the Art of Caricature"* Malcolm truthfully stated that "The Hottentot Venus exhibited for some time in London, has been a fruitful source of profit to the Caricaturist" (Malcolm 1813). Today, there are 30, more or less distinct, satirical prints concerning Baartman available online in the collections of the British Museum, the Wellcome Collection, and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. The prints fall into three categories with regard to how a caricature of Baartman was used: The caricature is one of the main subjects, or the caricature appears prominently in the background, or lastly, a gross exaggeration of Baartman's morphology (as shown in fig. 1) is used to depict Africans in general. In all three categories, the caricature of Baartman shows Africans as completely and utterly distinct from Europeans, the canonical "other". A selection of satirical prints with representatives of all three categories follows showing that caricaturists have exploited Baartman, greatly exaggerating her morphology, for over one hundred years.



**Figure 2.** "The Three Graces" by William Heath, published by S.W. Fores (1810). Actual size of print is 24.1 x 32.7 cm. Baartman towers over the midget Miss Ridsale at her left, and the albino Miss Harvey, at her right, both were exhibited at Whigley's Rooms in London. In reality, Baartman was only about 140 cm tall. The Baartman caricature says "Vat Uggerly tings no like a fine voman no grease about dem like I", suggesting that she spoke English with a Dutch accent. Source: British Museum.

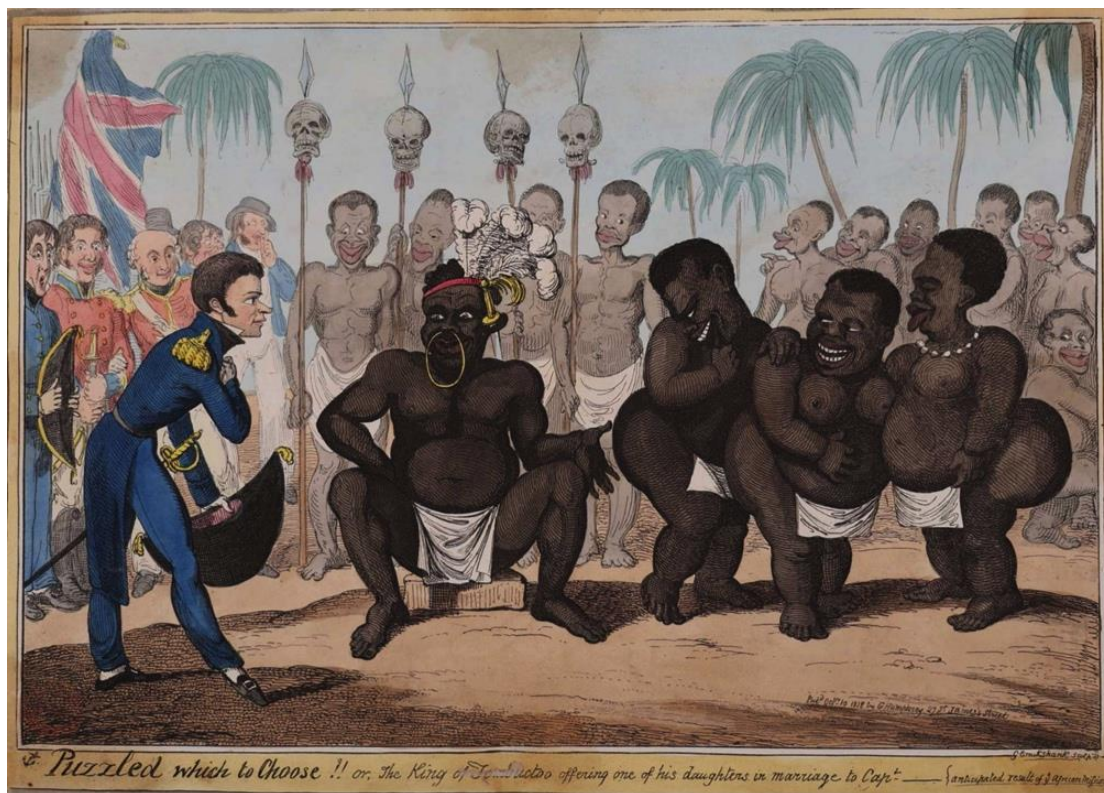


**Figure 3.** "Neptune's Last Resort or the Fortune Hunter Foiled. a sketch from Heathen Mythology" by Charles Williams, published by Walker (1811). Actual print size is 25.3 x 35 cm. It shows Neptune proposing marriage to a Baartman caricature and trying to take her money; it is a parody of the Duke of Clarence's several refused proposals of marriage. This is one of the few clothed caricatures of Baartman. Source: British Museum.



**Figure 4.** "The Adventures of Johnny Newcome", (traveling to the West Indies) Plate 1 by William Elmes, published by Thomas Tegg (1812). Actual print size is 24.9 x 33.9 cm. The top right panel (square added), "Johnny enamoured of nymphs bathing", shows Johnny viewing with a spyglass a trio of black women with the exaggerated buttocks attributed to Baartman. Africans in the West Indies of the time were slaves, transported from West Africa, not from the regions of South Africa of Baartman, to provide the labor for sugar plantations. Source: British Museum.





**Figure 7.** "Puzzled which to choose!! Or the King of Tombuctoo offering one of his daughters in marriage to Capt- } anticipated result of ye African Expedition" by George Cruikshank, after Captain Frederick Marryat, published by George Humphrey (1818). Actual size of the print is 25.5 x 35 cm. Marryat was supposed to have traveled to central Africa, not South Africa. The 'three daughters' are shown with the exaggerated buttocks attributed to Baartman. Note their similarity to the 'nymphs' in Elmes' 1812 print, including the far right of the trio wearing a necklace, as shown in fig. 4.



**Figure 8.** "Love and Beauty - Sartjee the Hottentot Venus" by Charles Williams, publisher unknown (1822). The cupid figure is saying "Take care of your Hearts!". The caricature of Baartman is clearly based on that shown in fig. 1. Actual size of print is 28.8 x 21.8 cm. Source: British Museum.



MISSION PARASITOLOGIQUE

**Figure 9.** "Mission Parasitologique" by Munro Orr, publisher unknown (1913). A parody of "Puzzled Which to Choose" shown in fig. 7 with a cupid added as in Fig. 8, "Love and Beauty - Sartjee the Hottentot Venus". The Wellcome Collection catalogue describes the print as showing an Italian bandit offering a French gentleman one of three 'hottentot' (steatopygous) women with the faces shown representing professors and students of tropical medicine at an international medical conference. Actual size of print is 25 x 17.2 cm.

Source: Wellcome Collection.

#### 4. Baartman in scientific publications

The first stage of the "scientific examination" of Baartman was in March 1815, six months before her death at the end of December. She was brought to the Natural History Museum by S. Réaux, Baartman's manager/employer/owner (his status relative to Baartman remains unclear), to be examined by Professors of Anatomy and Physiology, at the request of Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and there was drawn by artists of the Museum, unclothed, and questioned by George Cuvier, Henri-Marie Ducrotay de Blainville, and Saint Hilaire over three days, and paid the sum of 100 Francs (Patin 2013a,b). Blainville read an account of the morphology of Baartman at meeting of the Société Philomatique de Paris on March 18th 1815, remarking that her jaws resembled those of an orangutan. His report also mentioned that she did not smoke tobacco, but chewed it. Thus, Baartman frequently depicted in caricatures smoking a pipe (see Figs. 1, 2, 5, 8), appears to be an invention. No illustrations accompanied the account of Blainville's report, published in December of 1816 (Blainville 1816).

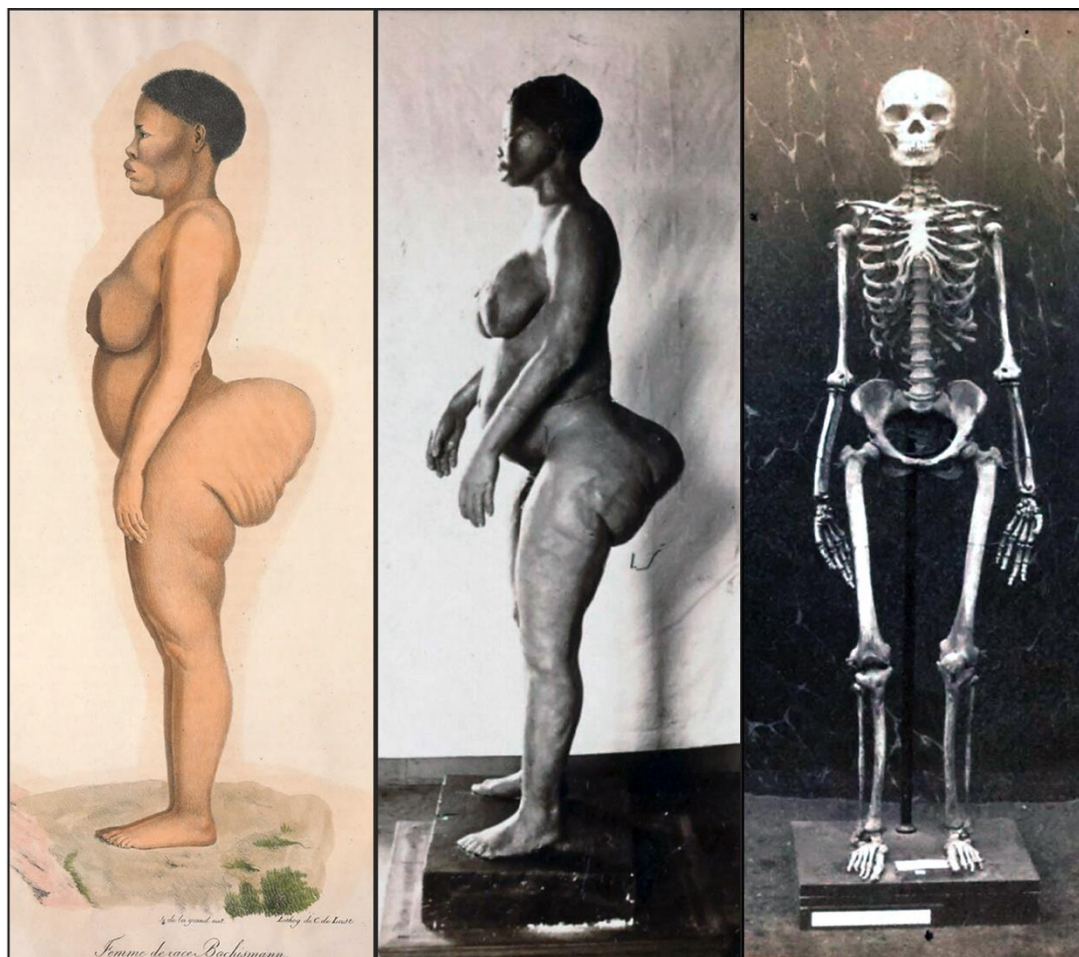
When Baartman died at the end of December of 1815 (exact date and cause of death still unclear), her body was transported to the Museum at the request of Saint-Hilaire, to be dissected by George Cuvier, in the interest of science (Patin 2013a). A press report, dated January 2, 1816 stated that at the Natural History Museum, Baartman's body was being used to make a complete plaster cast of her corpse before proceeding to a dissection of the body (Anon. 1816b).

Cuvier's report on the dissection of Baartman's body, "Extrait d'observations faites sur le cadavre d'une femme connue à Paris et à Londres sous le nom de Vénus Hottentote" was published in the Mémoires du Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in 1817 and is today infamous. It was translated into

English with Cuvier's actions described as an obscenity, "...particularly his rendering of her as a specimen - both during her life and after her death - as well as the most reprehensible act of autopsy" (Johnson & Rolls 2023). Quite recently, 29 experts on marine mammals published a call, repeatedly citing the Johnson & Rolls paper, to remove the name Cuvier from the common name "Cuvier's beaked whale" because "Cuvier considered Baartman and other people of African descent as inhuman, inferior, and unworthy of the same respect as white Europeans" (Rogers et al. 2024).

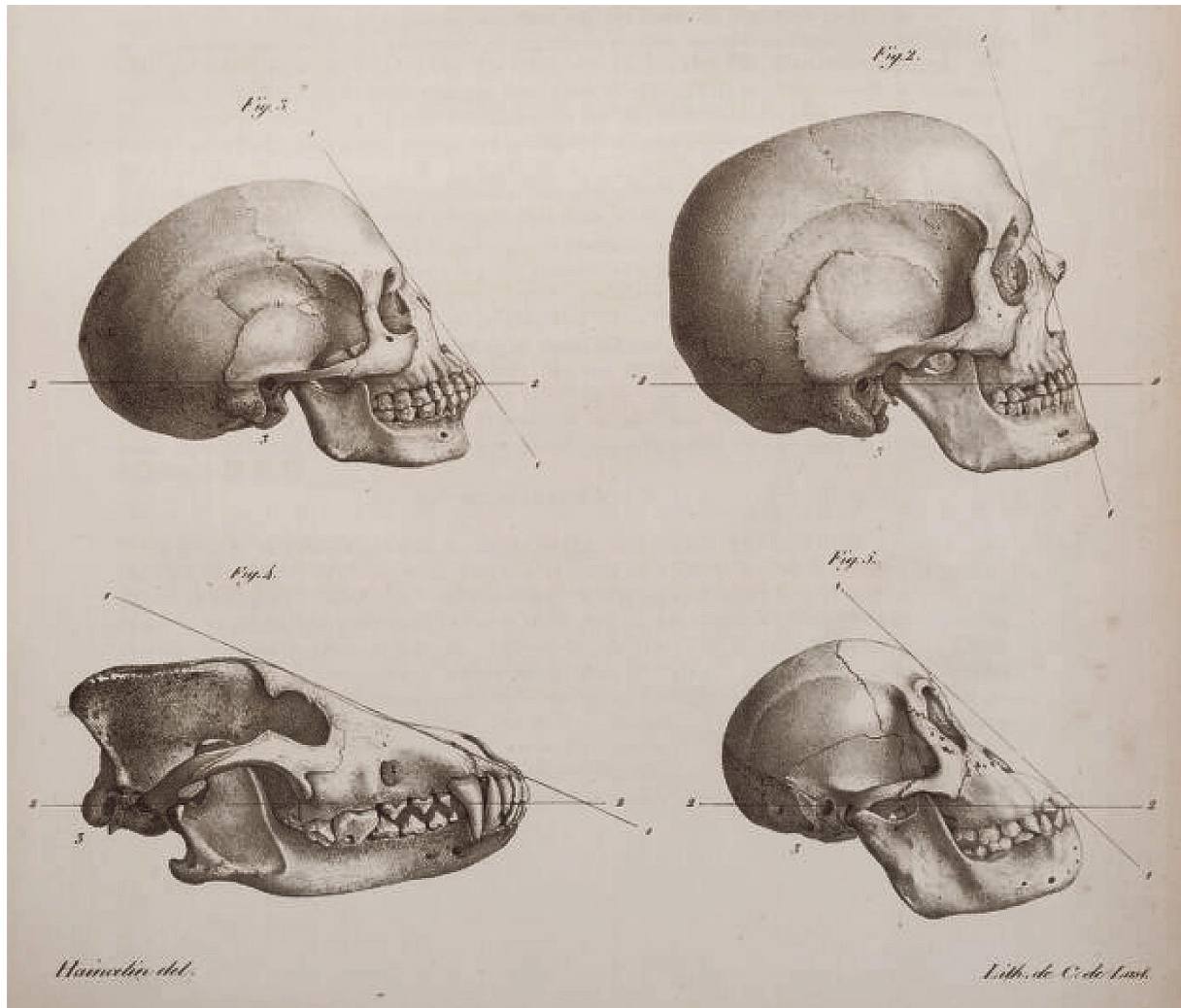
Cuvier's belief in the intellectual superiority of Europeans was nearly universally held in the 18th and early 19th century, especially in regard to the Hottentots. For example, in 1874, Edward Long stated that "*Ludicrous as the opinion may seem, I do not think that an oran-outang husband would be any dishonour to an Hottentot female; for what are these Hottentots? They are, say the most credible writer, a people certainly very stupid, and very brutal. In many respects they are more like beasts than men....*" (Long 1774, pg. 364). Such extreme negative stereotyping was quite common in the 19th century (see Guenther 1980; Favelle 1999). A newspaper report on Cuvier's dissection, while lamenting the death of the Hottentot Venus, described her as an animal and a monstrosity (Anon. 1816c). However, Cuvier in his report on the dissection of Baartman's cadaver, appears to have the first to have argued scientifically that the "Hottentot" was animal-like, remarking, for example, that "he had never seen a human head more resembling that of the apes".

What follows is a chronology and exhibition of the "scientific" use of Baartman, the exploitation, to show the inferiority to the white race.

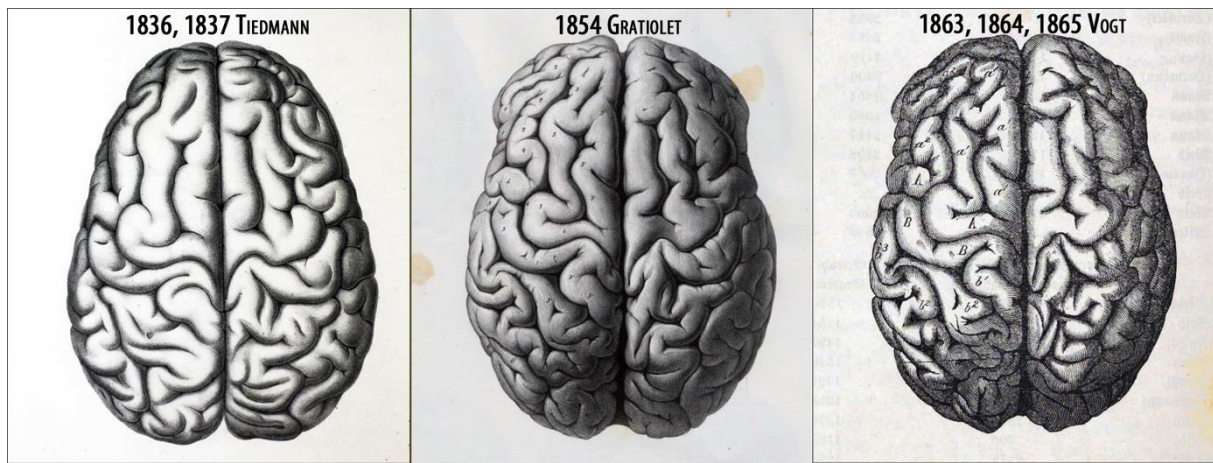


**Figure 10.** The beginnings of Baartman's exploitation by scientists. The left panel shows one of the only two "scientific illustrations" published of Baartman from life. It was based on drawings of her made in March 1815 for George Cuvier, and published, along a copy of his 1817 report on the dissection of Baartman, by Saint-Hilaire & Cuvier (Charles) in 1824 in the first volume of their "Histoire Naturelle des Mammiferes...". The middle panel shows a photograph of the plaster cast Cuvier had made of Baartman's corpse, shortly before dissection of the body in early January 1816. The right panel is a photograph of her mounted skeleton.

Beginning in 1817, both the plaster cast and the skeleton were periodically on display in the French National Museum of Natural History, first in the Jardin des Plantes, and later in the Muséum de l'Homme, until the late 1970's. According to Verneau (1916) Baartman's contract with Dunlop and her baptismal certificate were also displayed. For a complete history of the dissection, including a list of the body parts retained for the Museum collections (and the disposing of her other remains), as well a history of the display of the cast and skeleton see Patin (2013a,b). Photographs are from the 1873 "Vues Stéréoscopiques" of Jules and Alfred Molteni. Note that the 1824 illustration from life in 1815, compared to the plaster cast of her corpse, exaggerates her morphology considerably. She is shown with thicker legs, a larger head, breasts, buttocks, and marked curvature of the spine. A contemporary newspaper report of Cuvier's production of the plaster cast (dated January 2, 1816), stated, without mentioning the source, that death had not affected her morphology (Anon. 1816b).



**Figure 11.** In 1821, the first depiction of one of Baartman's body parts was her skull shown in the first volume of Cloquet's "Anatomie de l'Homme...". In plate 28 four skulls are shown, all the same scale, 'half natural size': a Caucasian male represented by the skull of the anatomist Xavier Bichat (top right), Vénus Hottentote (top left), an orangutan (bottom right) and a wolf (bottom left). The lines show the "facial angle" of each skull, thought by Cuvier to be metric of primitivism (Gould 1981). Note that Baartman's skull is considerably smaller than that of Bichat. However, the fact that Baartman was very likely considerably smaller in stature than Bichet (she was only about 140 cm tall) was not mentioned in Cloquet's text, he merely stated that that Baartman's skull resembled that of the organatan more than the Caucasian (Cloquet 1821, p. 97). Jules Cloquet (1790-1883) was a well known anatomist, scientific illustrator, and surgeon in his time; his Anatomie de l'Homme (Cloquet 1821-1836) is classic of medical illustration (Loukas et al. 2007).



**Figure 12.** In early January of 1816, Cuvier removed Baartman's brain from her skull, preserved it, using unknown reagents, likely a solution of alcohol, and added it to the collections of the Natural History Museum. It appears to have been first characterized and illustrated (left panel) by Friedrich Tiedemann (1781-1861), head of the Institute of Anatomy at the University of Heidelberg and the author of classic anatomical studies (Wysiadecki et al. 2024). His study compared the brains of the "Negro", the "European", and the "Orang-outang". Baartman's brain was one of three "Negro" brains he examined and compared with those of 7 male and 6 female "Europeans". He concluded that there existed no substantial differences between "Negro" and "European" Brains. However, he did note that Baartman's brain showed surface morphologies of the hemispheres to be remarkably symmetric in contrast to European brains. He published his findings in both English and German (Tiedemann 1836, 1837). The second to study and illustrate Baartmann's brain was Pierre Gratiolet (1815-1865), an anatomist of the Natural History Museum, in his major work (Parent 2014), *Mémoire sur les plis cérébraux de l'homme et des primates* (Gratiolet 1854). Gratiolet compared the surface morphology of Baartman's brain (shown in the middle panel) with that of a European male, and stated that the surface morphology of Baartman's brain was much less convoluted, clearly inferior, resembling the brain of an idiot, or of a child. Gratiolet's conclusions concerning the inferiority of Baartman's brain, and his illustration of it (right panel), were very widely disseminated by Carl Vogt (1817-1895) in his "Lectures on Man: His place in Creation, and in the History of the Earth" as it was first published in German (Vogt 1863), then in English (Vogt 1864), and also in French (Vogt 1865). Vogt, first a professor of Geology and later Professor of Zoology, at the University of Geneva was a very influential naturalist who energetically defended the view that humans had evolved from primates (Blanckaert 1998). In Vogt's description of Baartman's brain, based solely on Gratiolet's illustrations, and he concludes that the brain "... comparing it to the brain of a German, I find a remarkable resemblance between the ape and lower human type" (Vogt 1864 pg. 183). The German brain was supposedly that of the mathematician Gauss, illustrated by Rudolph Wagner (1860). Actually, in recent years, it was discovered that Gauss's brain and that of the physician Conrad Heinrich Fuchs (1803– 1855), who died in the same year as Gauss, were mislabeled and Wagner studied the brain of Fuchs (Schweizer et al. 2014). Gratiolet's illustration was also used by John Marshall in his 1864 article "On the brain of a bushwoman; and on the brains of two idiots of European descent" in which he stated that both the new bushwoman brain and Baartman's "...showed common inferiority to the European brain" (pg. 520).

# Collection d'Exemplaires, en plâtre,

DES

## CRÂNES

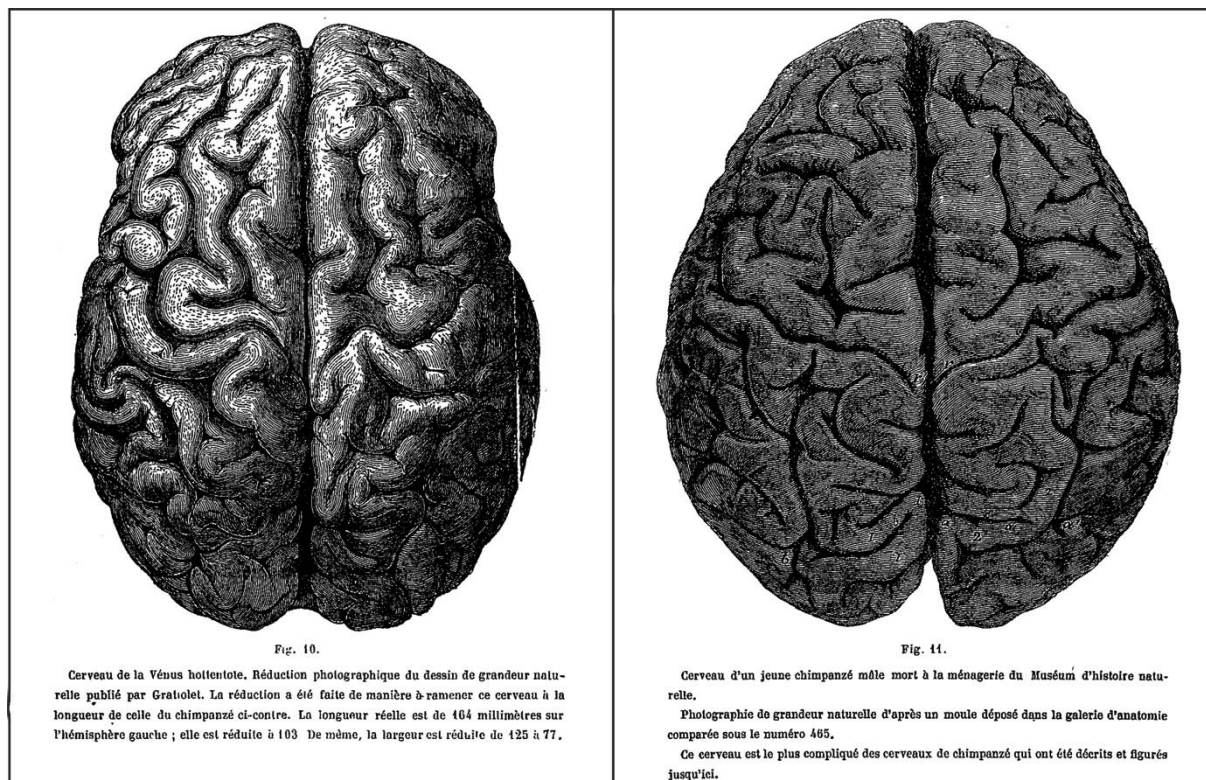
DES DIFFÉRENTES RACES HUMAINES,

A 5 FRANCS LA PIÈCE.

Nos

- 1 Tête d'ancien Imar ou Quichua (république de Bolivie).
- 2 Tête d'un jeune indien Aimara des anciens tombeaux de Carangas (Bolivie).
- 3 Tête d'indien prise dans les anciens tombeaux de la Bolivie.
- 4 Tête de Madura (Java).
- 5 Orang-Outang de Calcuta.
- 6 Makoca, peuple au-delà des Cafres des cimetières du Cap (Mozambique).
- 7 Namaquois (les Namaquois sont tous morts au Cap).
- 8 Tête de Caraïbe.
- 9 Femme Bochisman (Vénus hottentote).
- 10 Crâne de négresse portant un anneau à la lèvre.
- 11 Tête de Mozambique.
- 12 Tête de Malabar.
- 13 Tête de Bengali.
- 14 Tête de Patagon.
- 15 Tête de Bédouin.
- 16 Tête d'homme de la terre de Van Diémen.
- 17 Tête de race Caucasienne ou race blanche.
- 18 Tête du golfe du Mexique.
- 19 Tête de Zélandais.
- 20 Tête de Mongol.
- 21 Tête de femme Malaise.
- 22 Tête de Chinois pur.
- 23 Tête de Malgache.
- 24 Tête de Druide (anciens celtes) supposée celle d'un homme.
- 25 — — supposée celle d'une femme.

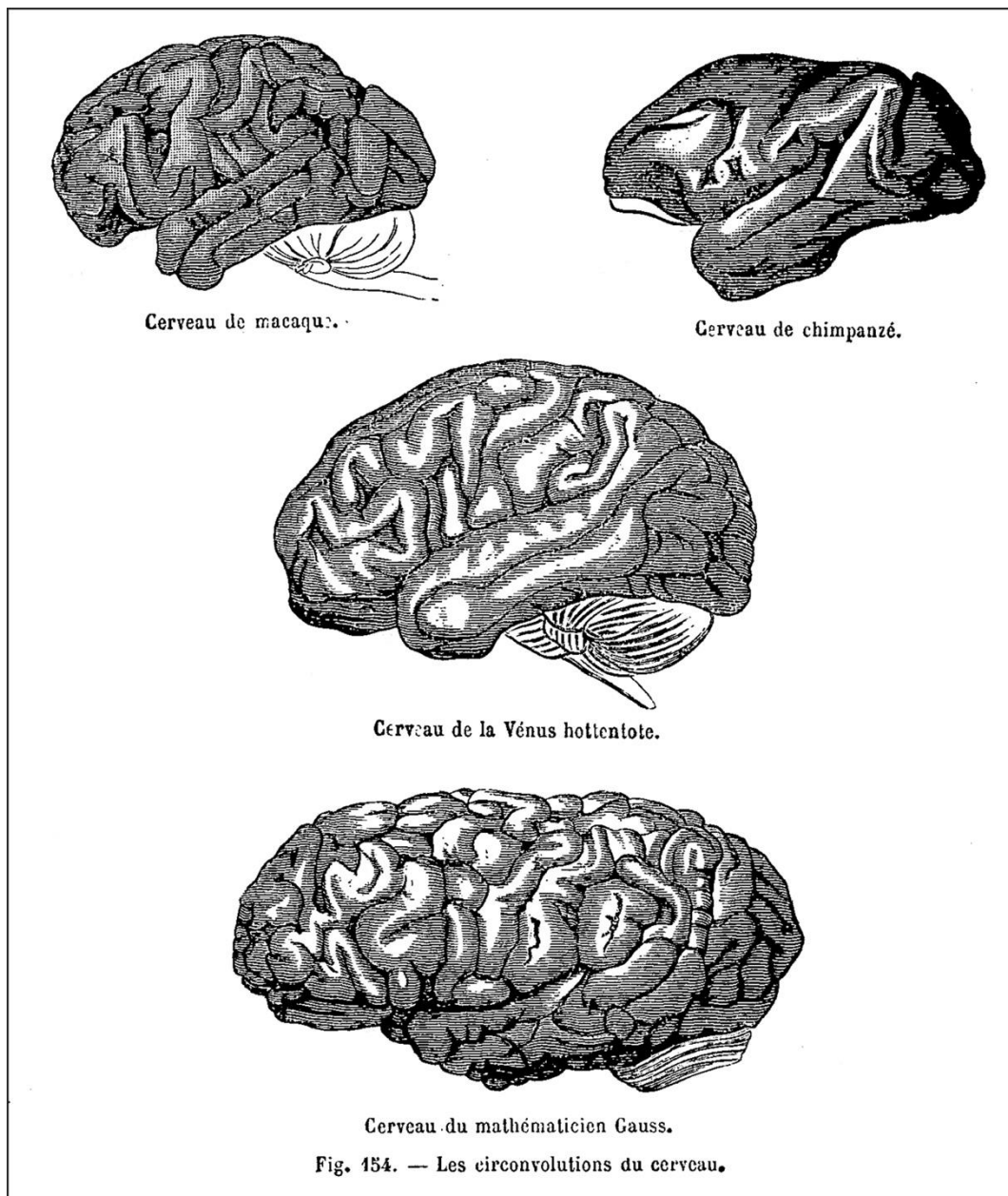
**Figure 13.** In 1850, anyone who wished could purchase a model of Baartman's skull. Above is shown part of page 26 of Guy's 1850 catalogue of anatomical models (Guy 1850) which offered 25 plaster models of the skulls of "different human races", including both an Orangutan (5) and the Hottentot Venus (9), for 5 Francs. On the cover of his catalogue, Guy described himself as "Naturaliste, Préparateur d'Anatomie Artificielle de la Faculté de Médecine de Paris et du Val-de-Grace; Modeleur de l'Académie de Médecine." No information was provided as to how he gained access to the specimens he modeled. Note that the Hottentot Venus was the only skull model of a named individual. It may have been a popular model. An 1837 guide to the Natural History Museum mentioned that Baartman's skull had, at some point been stolen, and returned to the Museum in 1827 (Rousseau & Lemnier, 1837, pg. 86).



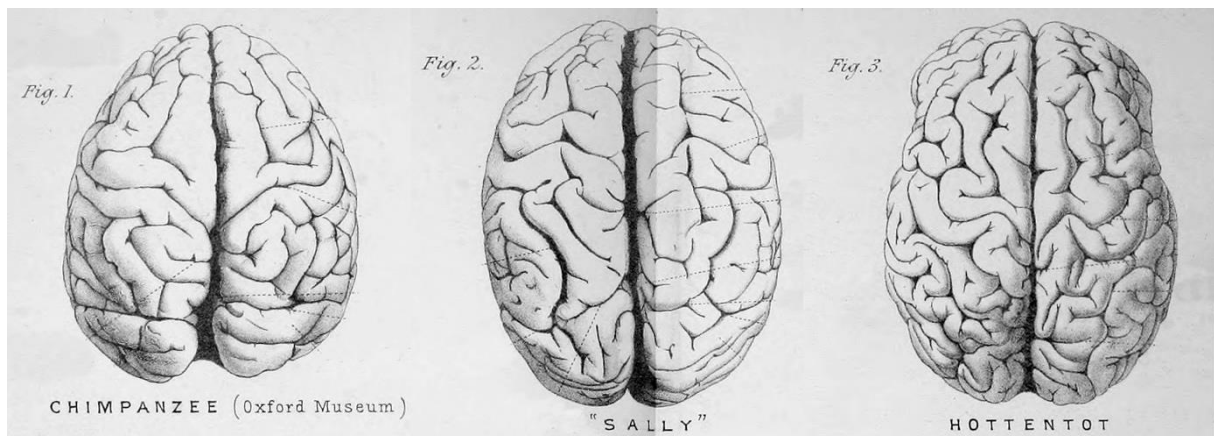
**Figure 14.** In 1869 Paul Broca first presented images of Baartman's brain and that of a 'new complex' chimpanzee brain, scaled to the same length, in facing pages of an article in the *Bulletins de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris "L'Ordre des Primates : Parallèle Anatomique de l'Homme et des Singes"* to show that a chimpanzee brain could be as complex as that of a primitive race of man, i.e., Baartman. According to the figure legends, he used Gratiolet's image of Baartman's brain and a new image of a 'new complex chimpanzee' brain, not previously described (Broca 1869). The article was reprinted in 1870 in book form (Broca 1970) and again, in facing pages, with same legends in the third volume of his monographic series, *"Mémoires d'Anthropologie"* (Broca 1877a). It is interesting to note that Broca's comparison of the brains of Baartman and a "new" chimpanzee, involved comparing a relatively fresh chimpanzee brain with Gratiolet's illustration of Baartman's brain that had been in a preservative for nearly 40 years. Broca was well aware of the difficulties involved in preserving and conserving brains to avoid changes in morphology (e.g. Broca 1877b) but made no mention of the fact that Gratiolet had examined and illustrated a literally 'old' brain. Broca was a powerful figure in his time. He was the founder of the *Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, and a pioneer neurologist (Finger 2004). He is also known today for his overtly racist views concerning the superiority of the white races due to the size and morphological characteristics of their brains, in direct opposition to the views of Friedrich Tiedemann (Gould 1981).



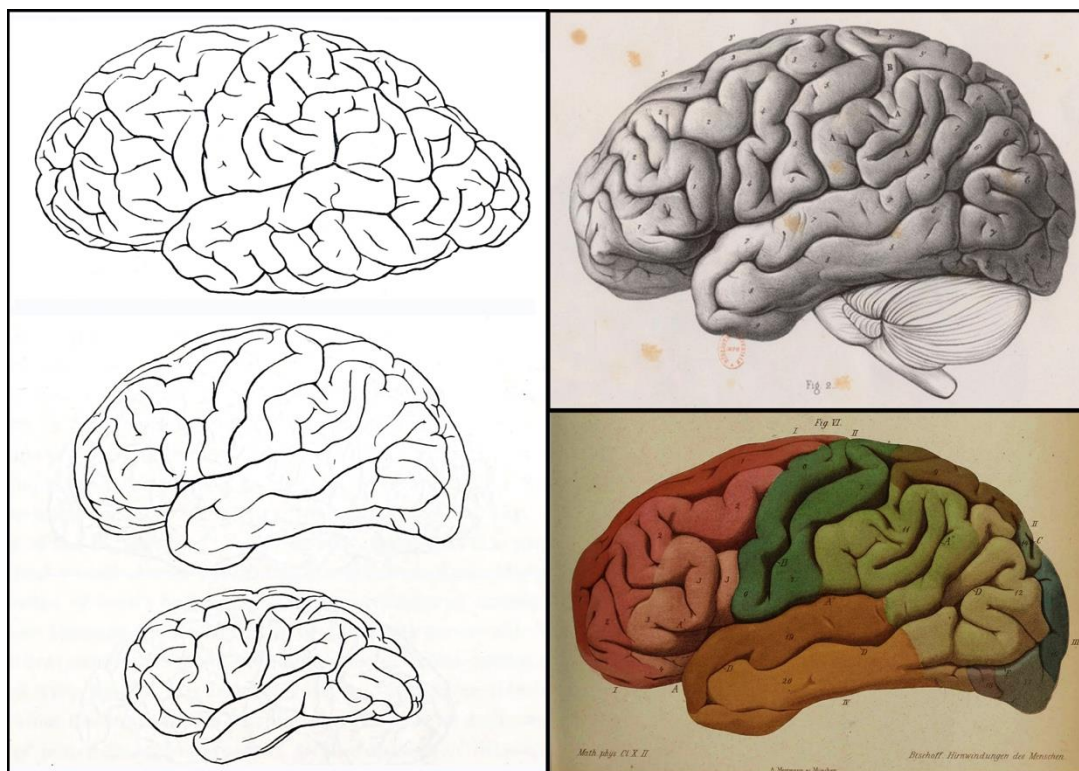
**Figure 15.** In 1882, an illustration of the skull of Baartman was shown in plate 28 of *Crania Ethnica*, by Quatrefages & Hamy 1882, Atlas). In their text comparing the skull to others, Quatrefages and Hamy stated that the Hottentot skull morphology indicates an inferior intellectual state (Quatrefages & Hamy 1882, text vol., pg 400). Armand de Quatrefages (1810-1892), and his assistant and eventual successor in the Paris Natural History Museum, Ernest Hamy (1842-1908), were both followers of Broca's views with regard to the superiority of the European (Cartailhac 1892).



**Figure 16.** From Charles Brogniart's 1892 book for the general public "Histoire Naturelle Populaire l'Homme et les Animaux". The figure 154, "The convolutions of the brain" showed the brain morphologies of a Macaque ape (top left), a chimpanzee (top right), the Hottentot Venus (center), and again, supposedly the mathematician Gauss (bottom). The images represent then, apes, 'primitive' human, and the modern mathematician. The origins of the figures were not given. The text (pg. 247) describes the Hottentot and Boschimans, along with Australian indigenes, as the most degenerate peoples that exist that are, among other things, miserable and lazy.



**Figure 17.** In 1895, William Blaxland Benham (1860-1950) published a study on the brain of a chimpanzee, named "Sally" that appeared to differ considerably from previously studied chimpanzee brains, as it resembled a human brain (Benham 1895). In plate 7, accompanying the article, the top part showed brain of a chimpanzee from the Oxford Museum (left), the unusual chimpanzee brain of "Sally" (center), and Gratiolet's Hottentot Venus brain (right), all re-scaled to similar lengths. In the text, the "Hottentot" brain is simply referred to as "a human brain" with no explanation as to the choice of using an illustration of Baartman's brain. Benham's 1894 publication is unusual as it appears to be the only work he published on the brain. According to his Royal Society obituary notice (Benson 1951), which included a list of Benham's publications, Benham's expertise was clearly on earthworms.



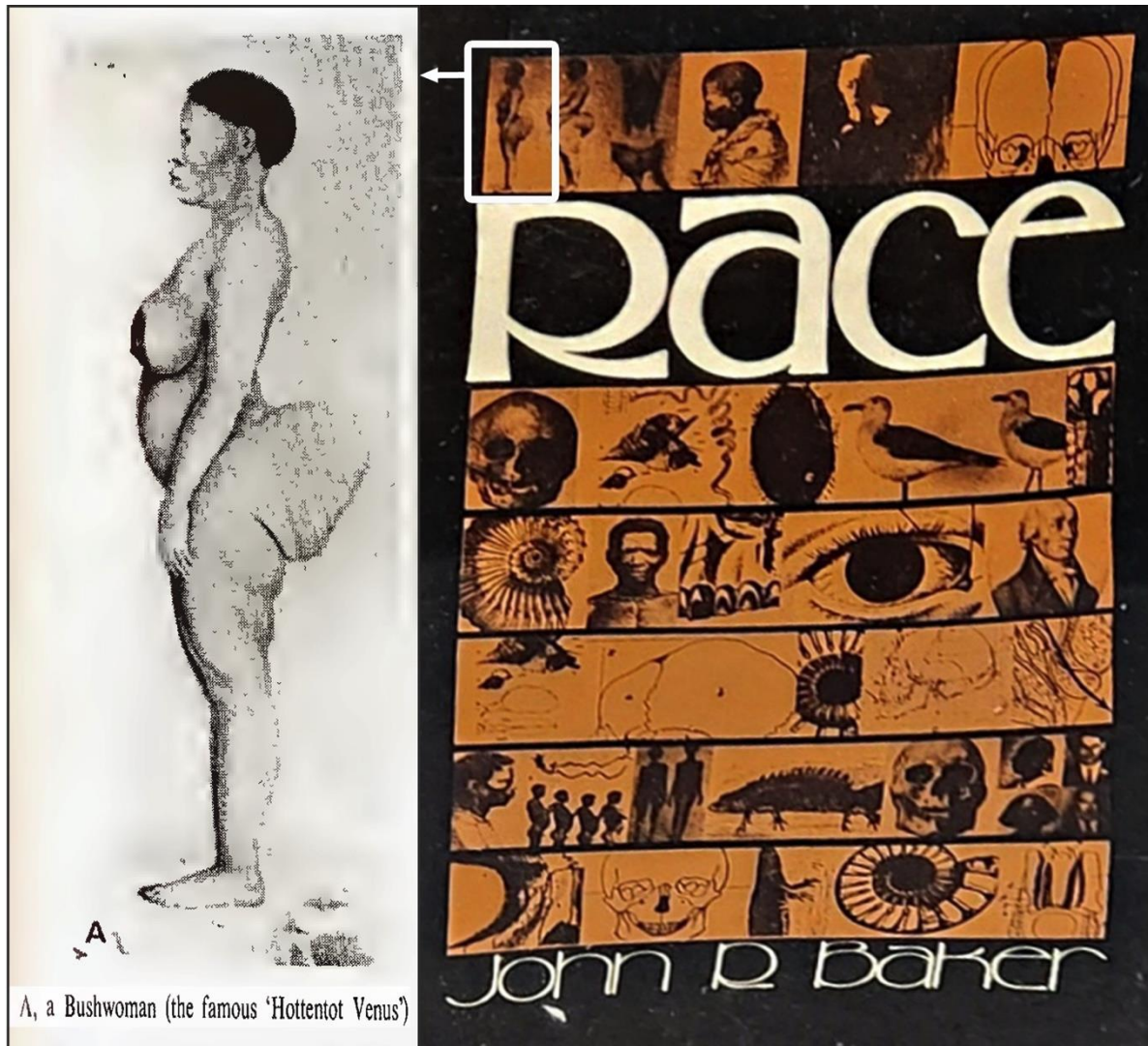
**Figure 18.** In 1907 Edward Anthony Spitzka published his study of the brains of "six eminent scientists and scholars" in a monograph of 164 pages (Spitzka 1907). It was not his first foray into trying to characterize the brains of remarkable men. He had a few years before, published an article entitled "A study of the brain-weights of men notable in the professions, arts and sciences" in which he concluded "intellectual status is in some way reflected in the mass and weight of the brain" (Spitzka 1903a), published a few days before another article entitled "Brain-weight, cranial capacity and the form of the head, and their relations to the mental powers of man" appeared in *Science* (Spitzka 1903b). In his 1907 article he went beyond comparing brains by weight or volume to include surface morphology through figures showing the "simply constructed brains of lower forms and the complex thought-apparatus of man". Above, in the left panel, is Spitzka's figure 9. He

placed at the top, the brain of a physicist, Siljeström, the illustration said to be after Retzius, was described by Spitzka as displaying remarkably complex surface morphology. The middle brain is "Sartjee or Hottentot Venus" said to be after Gratiolet and Bischoff, the bottom brain is said to be an original illustration of an orangutan brain. The illustration of Siljeström's brain is faithful reproduction of Retzius' (Retzius 1902, plate 2, fig. 3) but Retzius made no mention of the size of the brain. The illustration of Braatman's brain by Spitzka, showing a brain surface morphology less complex than either that of Siljeström or of the orangutan is deceptive. Labeled 'after Gratiolet and Bischoff' it only vaguely resembles Gratiolet's figure of the profile of Baartman's brain (Gratiolet 1856, plate 1, fig. 2), shown above in the top right panel. Spitzka's illustration is actually a rough line drawing of Bischoff's illustration of her brain, shown above in the bottom right panel, depicting distinct zones of Baartman's brain (Bischoff 1870, plate 3 fig. 6), not the surface morphology. In Spitzka's figure legends no scales are mentioned. Spitzka was a renown anatomist in his time. He edited the 1908, 1910, and 1913 American editions of the key reference work 'Grey's Anatomy' (Clement 1985).



**Figure 19.** In 1938, a black and white reproduction of the 1824 illustration of Baartman in Saint-Hilaire & Cuvier, which exaggerated her morphology (see fig. 9), appeared in an article by Guidi Landra, a young anthropologist, "On Bastards". The article warned of the danger of racial mixing, oddly describing the "Hottentot Venus" as the result of crossing Boer and Bushman races (Sorgoni 2003). It was in the first issue of

the official publication of the Italian fascist regime on race "La Difesa della Razza". In early 1938, Landra, a devoted eugenicist, was chosen by Mussolini to be the racial propaganda chief and head of the "Racial Office"; that same year, Landra was awarded the "Order of the Knight's Cross, First Class" by Adolph Hitler himself for "scientific merit" (Gillette 2002).



**Fig. 20.** John R. Baker's 1974 book "Race", as in Landra's 1938 article, used a black and white reproduction of the 1824 illustration of Baartman in Saint-Hilaire & Cuvier that exaggerated her morphology (see fig. 9). It appeared as part of his figure 56, "Khoisand female anatomy" (left panel), as well as in miniature on the dust cover jacket of the book (right panel, square and arrow added). He remarked on the curvature of the spine shown in the 1824 illustration, and not evident in the plaster cast made of Baartman's corpse. John R. Baker (1900-1984) was an Oxford University zoologist, and nearly life-long eugenicist, who considered "Race" to be his major achievement, and it was quite controversial (Kenny 2004). As pointed out in one of the reviews (Ladimeji 1974), bushmen fared particularly poorly in his descriptions on races: "Although mankind as a whole is paedomorphous (morphologically child-like), those ethnic taxa (the Sanids among them) that are markedly more paedomorphous than the rest have never achieved the status of civilization, or anything approaching it, by their own initiative. It would seem that when carried beyond a certain point, paedomorphosis is antagonistic to purely intellectual advance." (pg. 324). Baker's book was published by a prestigious academic publisher, the Oxford University Press. Baker's use of the 1824 illustration of Baartman in 1974, based on drawings made of her in 1815, marked 150 years of the "scientific exploitation" of Baartman.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

Today, it seems quite improbable that one could consider a woman who was said to speak three languages, that is her native tongue, Dutch, and English (Anon. 1814c) be considered a piece of property (Anon. 1815), and be described as an animal, a monster, after her death (Anon. 1816c). However, that is exactly what happened to Baartman. We like to think that our concepts of humanity, in all its diversity, has changed for the better, relative to the past. However, wars are still being fought between ethnicities and nations. To wage war on a nation or a people, the enemy must be categorized as an "other", unworthy. Let Baartman remain with us to remind us that trivial differences among peoples such as language, race, religion, politics, diet, sexual orientation, gender identification, or even clothing, still elicit reactions of an "other" and need to be consciously battled against.

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