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## The Pleasures of Taxonomy: Casta Paintings, Classification and Colonialism

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‘The number of these natural productions is so great, their forms are so varied, the connections between them so loose and sometimes so difficult to perceive, that one is often uncertain how to determine the characteristics that constitute a Genus . . . and one is confronted by Species that do not fit into any established Genus, or that seem to belong to several at once.’<sup>2</sup> These were the challenges facing the Ecuadorean savant Pedro Franco Dávila as he sought to organize his vast collection of stones, minerals, fishes, plants and other natural objects into a coherent classification. Franco Dávila, born in Guayaquil in the early eighteenth century to wealthy parents, devoted much of his life to amassing a vast, and vastly admired, collection of natural objects, which later came to form the core of the Royal Cabinet of Natural History in Madrid, of which Franco Dávila was the first director. In the 1760s he composed a three-volume catalogue of some of his collection; it was here that he offered his thoughts on the difficulty of reducing the diversity of the earth’s myriad productions to a single taxonomic system. A ‘simple, well ordered distribution’ of each species into its correct genus and each genus into its family illuminated the relationship between the different elements, but was no simple task.<sup>3</sup>

The challenges posed by classification were expressed with equal clarity, in both visual and textual format, by the distinctive Spanish American artistic genre known today as the casta painting. These remarkable paintings depict a different sort of family from the ones whose organization troubled Franco Dávila, but there are deep cultural lodes that connect the two. Indeed, Franco Dávila’s Cabinet of Natural History held an important and oft-visited collection of casta paintings. Casta paintings show family groupings consisting of a man, a woman and their child (or, occasionally, children), each helpfully labeled with their ‘caste’, as shown in Image 1. Most casta paintings come from Mexico and were produced in the eighteenth century. Individual paintings usually formed part of a larger set

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<sup>1</sup> This article has changed ‘through a diverse range of almost imperceptible occurrences’ to such a degree that colleagues who commented on earlier incarnations might not recognize this version. I however know how much I am indebted to Trevor Burnard, Sharon Fermor, Lauren Kassell, Elizabeth Kuznesof, Laura Lewis, Dana Leibsohn, and Carolyn Steedman, as well as to Joshua Piker and the anonymous *WMQ* readers: thank you.

<sup>2</sup> Pedro Franco Dávila, *Catalogue systématique et raisonné des curiosités de la nature et de l’art, qui composent le cabinet de M. Davila*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1767), vol. 1, pp. viii-x.

<sup>3</sup> Franco Dávila, *Catalogue systématique et raisonné*, vol. 1, pp. viii.

encompassing up to sixteen paintings (by the same artist), which depicted families comprising a ‘Spaniard’, an ‘Indian’ and their child, a ‘Spaniard’, a ‘black person’ and their child, and an ‘Indian’, a ‘black person’ and their child. The remaining paintings in a set generally traced the outcome of liaisons between the diverse offspring of these couples, as well as between these offspring and more Spaniards, Indians and black people. Casta paintings catalogued the human heterogeneity of Spain’s new world empire by organizing its inhabitants into families, and these families into larger series. A typical set might comprise individual paintings with captions similar to those shown in Table 1.

IMAGE 1 AND TABLE 1 HERE.

The complex vocabulary—*tente en el aire*, *albarazado*, *zambaiga*—used in the captions that are diagnostic of casta painting maps imperfectly onto the terminology more commonly employed in the archival record, and many scholars have shown that the taxonomies offered by casta artists cannot be read as straightforward snapshots of the socio-racial hierarchies that actually characterized colonial Spanish America.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Franco Dávila’s lament about the difficulty of placing objects into the right families captures all too well the challenges confronting anyone who sought to organize the colonial population into a ‘simple, well ordered distribution’. A substantial scholarship now demonstrates that colonial Spanish American families were flexible structures, that socio-racial categories were fluid, and that the vocabulary used to classify the colonial population was highly contextual. Women were often described by different caste terms at baptism and marriage. Family members sometimes disagreed about the caste of their own relatives. One study of late eighteenth-century Chile indeed found that over a twelve year period nearly half the male heads of household in Valparaíso were ascribed different caste statuses in different official documents. The family, theoretically the basis of Spanish, Catholic society, was scarcely a reliable bulwark against disorder. Spanish legislation regularly deplored the ‘disturbance to the good order of the state and the continual discord and damage to families’ caused by

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<sup>4</sup> Important work on casta paintings includes María Concepción García Sáiz, *Las castas mexicanas. Un género pictórico americano* (Milan, 1989); Ilona Katzew, ed., *New World Orders. Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America* (New York, 1996); Natalia Majluf, ed., *Los cuadros de mestizaje del Virrey Amat: la representación etnográfica en el Perú colonial* (Lima, 2000); Magali Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin, 2003); Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-century Mexico* (New Haven, 2004); Susan Deans-Smith, ‘Creating the Colonial Subject: Casta Paintings, Collectors, and Critics in Eighteenth-Century Mexico and Spain’, *Colonial Latin American Review* [henceforth *CLAR*]14:2 (2005); María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, 2008); Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith, eds., *Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican America* (Stanford, 2009); and Daniela Bleichmar, *Visible Empire: Botanical Expeditions and Visual Culture in the Hispanic Enlightenment* (Chicago, 2012).

ill-advised unions.<sup>5</sup> Many colonial officials would therefore have sympathized with Franco Dávila's call to 'bring a little order to the families . . . to bring more order and coherence to our system'.<sup>6</sup>

This similarity between the languages of scientific classification and colonial control is not coincidental, for neither natural history nor the power dynamics shaping new world colonialism operated in a vacuum. The classifications that underpinned early modern systems of knowledge in the Atlantic world embraced both plants and people, and reflect a yearning for order that transcended any division between science and statecraft. Casta paintings reflect these entangled, overlapping epistemologies in a number of ways.

Scholars have done an exceptional job of interpreting the casta genre, all the more so given the paucity of contextualizing information. Although these paintings number in the hundreds the archival record contains relatively little material on commissions and prices. A few series were produced by well-known colonial artists whose careers are documented, but many are anonymous works with scanty provenance. While scholars such as Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith have identified important documents related to patronage and contracts, it remains difficult to construct a detailed account of how most series came to be produced. We know that several Spanish viceroys ordered sets, as did other colonial and church officials, and we may assume that most paintings were owned by members of the colonial and metropolitan elite, but the circumstances leading to the production of the majority of the paintings are unknown. Similarly, while the occasional critic left written comments about the genre, such remarks are surprisingly rare. Nor do we know how many series ended up where they are, which

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<sup>5</sup> The 1776 Royal Pragmatic on Marriage (quoted here) is discussed in Steiner Saether, 'Bourbon Absolutism and Marriage Reform in Late Colonial Spanish America', *The Americas* 59:4 (2003). For Valparaíso see Robert McCaa, Stuart Schwartz and Arturo Grubessich, 'Race and Class in Colonial Latin America: A Critique', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 21:3 (1979), p. 422. See also Magnus Mörner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America* (Boston, 1967); Verena Martínez Alier, *Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba* (New York, 1974); Patricia Seed, 'Social Dimensions of Race: Mexico City, 1753', *Hispanic American Historical Review* [henceforth *HAHR*] 62:4 (1982); Robert McCaa, 'Calidad, Clase, and Marriage in Colonial Mexico: The Case of Parral, 1788-90', *HAHR* 64:3 (1984); Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720* (Madison, 1994); Elizabeth Anne Kuznesof, 'Ethnic and Gender Influences on "Spanish" Creole Society in Colonial Spanish America', *CLAR* 4:1 (1995); Laura Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft, and Caste in Colonial Mexico* (Durham, 2003); Joanne Rappaport, *The Disappearing Mestizo. Configuring Difference in the Colonial New Kingdom of Granada* (Durham, 2014); and Ann Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness: Pardos, Mulattos, and the Quest for Social Mobility in the Spanish Indies* (Stanford, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Franco Dávila, *Catalogue systématique et raisonné*, vol. 1, xiii-xiv. As the historian Bianca Premo has shown in her study of the colonial family, 'because authority in the colonial Spanish American household contained gendered, racial, and generational dimensions simultaneously, patriarchy could never be rigid or stable': *Children of the Father King: Youth, Authority, and Legal Minority in Colonial Lima* (Chapel Hill, 2005), p.10. Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán, *Propriety and Permissiveness in Bourbon Mexico*, trans. Sonya Lipsett-Rivera and Sergio Rivera Ayala (Wilmington, 1999) offers a clear discussion of the Bourbon state's frustrated desire for order and coherence.

is, in most cases, in museums and private collections Mexico and Spain. Such lacunae notwithstanding we now benefit from convincing interpretations of the stylistic origins of the genre, compelling debates about whether the images reflect local pride or imperial disdain, careful readings of individual series, and a much fuller understanding of their significance and relation to colonial culture more broadly. All analyses of casta paintings are indebted to this essential body of research.

Nonetheless, one ambiguity at the heart of the casta painting remains under-theorized. This is the tension between the well-documented flexibility of colonial caste categories and the manifestly genealogical nature of caste itself. Despite the ample evidence of individual movement from one caste category to another, the categories themselves have long been defined in entirely genealogical terms. In his seventeenth-century dictionary the Spanish lexicographer Sebastián de Covarrubias for instance defined a mulatto quite unambiguously as ‘the son of a black woman and a white man, or the reverse’.<sup>7</sup> The neat labels of the casta painting similarly give the impression that this is how caste categories operated: ‘From a Spanish man and a black woman comes a mulatto’; ‘An *albina* and a Spanish man produce a throwback’. How is it possible for a condition to be both a straightforward reflection of ancestry, and changeable over one’s lifetime? Sometimes scholars have tried to square this circle by employing a vocabulary of ‘passing’ whereby individuals possessed a caste identity derived from their parentage, but might ‘pass’ as something else.<sup>8</sup> While this approach explains well the daily negotiations that comprised the social fabric of everyday life in the colonial Indies, it leaves unexplored the underlying body concepts that made caste fluidity anything more than a set of subterfuges, or, at best, social conventions unconnected to the bodies they governed.

Perhaps we need a different model for thinking about the socio-racial categories visualized in the casta painting that takes seriously both their fluidity and their genealogical character. Neither in casta paintings nor in colonial society was caste simply an inflexible, permanent attribute; it was nonetheless understood to be an embodied, genealogical condition. Caste was simultaneously genealogical and mutable not only in practice but also in theory because it was premised on an

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<sup>7</sup> Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (Madrid, 1674 [1611]), fols. 108v, 117v (quote); Benito de Peñalosa y Mondragón, *Libro de las cinco excelencias del español que despueblan a España para su mayor potencia y dilatación* (Pamplona, 1629), 4th excelencia, chap. 5, p. 80v; Juan de Solórzano Pereira, *Política indiana*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1736 [1647]), book 2, chap. 30, pp. 217, 219; and Estéban de Terreros y Pando, *Diccionario castellano con las voces de ciencias y artes y sus correspondientes en las tres lenguas francesa, latina e italiana*, 4 vols. (Madrid, 1786-8), vol. 2, p. 636.

<sup>8</sup> This is the model employed for instance by Ann Twinam in *Purchasing Whiteness*, her magisterial study of the *gracias al sacar* legislation. On this see Rappaport, *The Disappearing Mestizo*, pp. 24-25, 32-33.

understanding of the human body that allowed inherited conditions to change both within an individual's lifetime and across generations. Approaching caste from this direction clarifies the underlying epistemologies that structured colonial society, and helps connect casta paintings more explicitly to the broader debates about human difference that so captivated enlightenment thinkers. Both reflected concerns about race, classification and colonial power that were fundamental to the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, at the same time as they drew on longstanding ideas about corporeality and the body.

Ultimately, however, these paintings were produced and collected in their hundreds not simply because they visualized Atlantic debates about classification and human difference, but because these visualizations were interesting and pleasant to contemplate. They possessed a taxonomic and also a narrative power, which together agreeably roused the pleasures of the imagination. We need, in short, to reconnect the casta painting to the importance accorded to pleasure in both the scientific and the colonial imagination.

To begin, it is worth looking closely at two aspects of caste that seem to mitigate against the possibility of moving from one caste category to another. These are its genealogical nature and its corporeal attention to physical appearance. Neither is as straightforward as it might appear. Early modern Hispanic culture was underpinned by a profound commitment to genealogy as a crucial component of personal identity, but genealogy was by no means a rigid system of fixed relationships. Definitive family trees were elusive, in part because of what the historian Robert McCaa called 'racial drift'—the tendency of individuals to move from one caste category to another over their own lifetime—and also because, as one seventeenth-century Spanish writer noted, 'very few people know who their great-grandparents were, or what they were called'.<sup>9</sup> For this reason statements about lineage were usually couched in the language of reputation and public opinion. Thus the witness in one eighteenth-century dispute affirmed that a woman was 'accepted and held to be Spanish', even though her mother was Amerindian, which should, in theory, have excluded her from that category. A declarant in another case stated that he considered Mercedes Cabrera to be Spanish 'because he had *heard it said* that her

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<sup>9</sup> Peñalosa y Mondragón, *Libro de las cinco excelencias del español*, 4th excellence, chap. 13, p. 99r; and Rappaport, *The Disappearing Mestizo*, pp. 38-9.

parents were Spanish'.<sup>10</sup> In a sense an individual's ancestry was often provisional, because it was based on what others believed. As one Central American cleric explained in 1811, whether someone was of African origin, for instance, could be determined only by 'public opinion'. Consequently, he explained, 'as public opinion is dependent on interests and passions this causes much discord'. 'Perhaps', he continued, 'one might imagine that it would be easy to classify people by using church records, which state the class to which one belongs, but these documents are evidence only of the person's age and Christian faith, and absolutely not of 'quality', since any assertions on this front are only the opinion of the godfather, sacristan or priest who completed the entry'.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, even the certificates of blood purity issued by the Inquisition did not remain valid indefinitely, in a tacit acknowledgement that an individual's ancestry was always provisional, reliant as it was on reputation.<sup>12</sup>

The centrality of reputation to determining caste reflects its relational character. That is, reputation was crucial not simply because it was difficult to construct accurate family trees. More profoundly, caste was a language for discussing an individual's place within the networks of power that structured colonial society, as the anthropologist Laura Lewis has demonstrated. Caste, in her words, is best understood as 'an integrated system of relations and dispositions rather than a series of distinct stations'.<sup>13</sup> Caste terms were claims about an individual's proximity to colonial power, expressed through a language of lineage. As Lewis has shown, individuals regularly claimed or were ascribed caste identities derived not from their actual parentage but rather from their close association with 'symbolic genitors' such as godparents or their network of acquaintances. Since many people were embedded in multiple networks of association, it was quite possible to possess multiple, overlapping caste identities, all of which nonetheless drew meaning from an idea of genealogical relationship.

Nor did colonial actors necessarily agree on how to characterize someone's appearance. To be sure, appearance played an important role in early modern technologies of identification. Passports, registers and other identity documents usually included some description of the individual's physical

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<sup>10</sup> Verónica Undurraga Schüller, 'Españoles oscuros y mulatos blancos: Identidades múltiples y disfraces del color en el ocaso de la colonia chilena. 1778-1820', *Historias de racismo y discriminación en Chile*, eds. Rafael Gaune and Martín Lara (Santiago, 2010), p. 356 (my emphasis). For a concise statement on the centrality of reputation to determining caste see Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness*, p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> Florencio del Castillo, in *Diario de las discusiones y actas de las Cortes*, vol. 8 (Cadiz, 1811), p. 162.

<sup>12</sup> Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions*, pp. 61-87, 174-5.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors*, p. 33 (quote); and Rappaport, *The Disappearing Mestizo*, esp. pp. 5, 25, 95, 115.

characteristics. These tended to focus on distinctive features such as scars, moles and similar marks on the skin, in addition to height and perhaps hair color. For instance, the documents issued by the Spanish state authorizing travel to the Indies usually noted the color and fullness of beard, and whether the individual had any identifying marks such as missing teeth or birthmarks. When the bishop of Puebla travelled to Mexico in 1640 his entourage included Pedro García Ferrer, described in the official paperwork as ‘forty years old, with a blond beard, and the sign of a wound to the face below his mouth’, and Antonio Lanzos, ‘nineteen, small and pockmarked’.<sup>14</sup> Other features, including skin color, proved more difficult to capture in words. Even the ‘experts’ asked to pronounce on the identity of defendants in legal cases often found it difficult to be precise about why they thought someone looked like an Amerindian or a Moor. Statements along the lines of ‘he is of a Moorish color’ or ‘she looks Indian’ were often the best these men could do. The historian Joanne Rappaport has observed that people found it easier to itemize an individual’s clothing than to describe their skin color or overall appearance.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, scholars have discovered many cases such as the one from 1548 in which a woman initially described as ‘loro’—a term roughly translatable as ‘brownish’—was later labeled first as ‘white’ and then as both ‘morena’ [dark] and ‘Indian-colored’.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the historian Nancy van Deusen has suggested that ‘color’ terms such as *loro* actually described not an individual’s appearance but rather their status. By the sixteenth century *loro* and its cognates were the words most commonly used to describe the color of ‘newly conquered or enslaved peoples’, regardless of where they originated; the term was not used consistently to characterize the color of people from any particular region. *Loro* thus seems to have been associated with servile status, rather than with a specific appearance. As the Spanish doctor Francisco del Rosal explained in his 1611 dictionary, ‘we used to call slaves *loro* but now we say mulatto’.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, *loro* referred clearly to color: Spanish sources defined it as a brownish color intermediate between black and white. In short, Spaniards employed a

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<sup>14</sup> Expediente de información y licencia de pasajero a Indias de Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, 15 March 1640, Archivo General de Indias, Seville [henceforth AGI], Contratación 5422, N. 39, fols 4v, 5r (quotes); Bernhard Siegert, ‘Pasajeros a Indias. ‘Auto’-biographische Schrift zwischen Alter und Neuer Welt im 16. Jahrhundert’, *Wege des Kybernetes: Schreibpraktiken und Steuerungsmodelle von Politik, Reise, Migration*, eds. Anja K. Maier and Burkhardt Wolf (Münster, 2004); Valentin Groebner, *Who Are You? Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 2007); Nancy E. van Deusen, ‘Seeing *Indios* in Sixteenth-Century Castile’, *WMQ* 69:2 (2012); and Rappaport, *The Disappearing Mestizo*.

<sup>15</sup> Rappaport, *The Disappearing Mestizo*, p. 198.

<sup>16</sup> Van Deusen, ‘Seeing *Indios*’, provides an illuminating discussion of the historical contingency of appearance. This example is from pp. 227-8.

<sup>17</sup> Francisco del Rosal, *Orígen y etymología de todos los vocablos originales de le lengua castellana*, 1611, Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, Ms. 6929, fol. 396; and Deusen, ‘Seeing *Indios*’, p. 229.

vocabulary of color to describe people, but they did not necessarily agree on what someone looked like if their color was, say, ‘loro’. Ancestry and appearance were thus central elements of caste but neither was easily determined. Nor were color or lineage necessarily permanent.

In practice, as many scholars have shown, colonial actors relied on an individual’s clothing, overall lifestyle, and social networks to perform the difficult work of translating their existence into the language of caste. For example, the importance of both clothing and reputation in the diagnosis of caste can be seen clearly in a court case from 1759 New Granada. When asked to describe a certain Clara Reina, one witness responded that ‘because her clothes were red he asked others about her quality and they said she was a mestiza-quadroon’.<sup>18</sup> Indigenous garb, in turn, might in itself make the wearer into an Indian. Diet played a similar role; people who ate like Amerindians were often considered Indians, whatever their ancestry.<sup>19</sup> For this reason the colonial archive is full of complaints about individuals who changed their clothing or living habits, and thereby ‘became’ a different caste.<sup>20</sup> It is worth noting that such documents use a language of transformation, not of ‘passing’.

This fluid world might appear different from the universe depicted in casta paintings, but in fact these paintings capture well caste’s reliance on cultural practices such as eating and dressing, both in their detailed depictions of clothing and in the settings in which different castes are represented. For example, certain castes routinely wear characteristic items of clothing—or perhaps it would be better to say that certain characteristic garments determine the caste of their wearer. The indigenous *huipil*, or smock, shown in Image 2 is one such. Anyone wearing a *huipil* in a casta painting is either an Indian or the daughter of an indigenous woman. This garment in itself makes these women into Indians, or close relatives. Certain tasks such as preparing chocolate are performed only by specific castes. (See Image 3.) In these paintings clothing and activities are often a better indication of caste than appearance; despite the rich variety of skin tones employed by casta artists it would be difficult to

**Commented [R1]:** DELETED: ‘Likewise anyone sporting the circular cloak shown in Image 3 is either a mulata or a mulata’s daughter.’

<sup>18</sup> Jaime Jaramillo Uribe, *Ensayos sobre historia social colombiana* (Bogotá, 1969), pp. 195, 211 (quote); Martin Minchom, *The People of Quito: 1690-1810: Change and Unrest in the Underclass* (Boulder, 1994), pp. 158, 190; Christopher Lutz, *Santiago de Guatemala, 1541-1773. City, Caste and the Colonial Experience* (Norman, 1994), pp. 54-62, 79-112; Berta Ares Queija, ‘Mestizos en hábito de indios: ¿estrategias transgresoras o identidades difusas?’, *Passar as fronteiras. Il coloquio internacional sobre mediadores culturais, séculos XV a XVIII*, eds. Rui Manuel Loureiro and Serge Gruzinski (Lagos, 1999); Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions*, pp. 104-5; Van Deusen, ‘Seeing *Indios*’; and Rappaport, *The Disappearing Mestizo*, p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Pilcher, *¡Que vivan los tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque, 1998); and Mary Weismantel, *Food, Gender and Poverty in the Ecuadorian Andes* (Philadelphia, 1998).

<sup>20</sup> For a typical complaint about Amerindians changing their dress and hairstyle, thereby ‘becoming mestizos’ see Bernabe Nuñez de Paez, Informe, Doctrina de San Pablo, 4 July 1692, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Historia, vol. 413.

distinguish between different castes on the basis of appearance alone. Overall, casta paintings demonstrate very clearly the centrality of context, lifestyle and relational networks to colonial caste categories, at the same time as they employ a language of genealogy and appearance to communicate these classifications. [IMAGES 2-3 HERE](#). [LINKS HERE TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES](#).

How, however, could an embodied condition mutate through a simple change in clothing or lifestyle? In what ways was this mutability consistent with the belief—affirmed not only in the straightforward captions of the casta painting but also in the authoritative statements of generations of officials—that caste was essentially genealogical? To explain this we need to consider the underlying ideas that provided the foundation for all forms of embodied identity in early modern Europe, which shaped the meaning of caste identity in the Hispanic world, enabling it to be both genealogical and fluid.

Corporeal identity in the early modern era was inherently mutable. All bodies were understood by early modern Europeans (who were the ones who created the colonial language of caste) to comprise a balance of humors which was responsible for an individual's 'complexion' or 'temperament', terms that jointly described both appearance and personality. Spanish writers thus attributed both the splendid beards and the energetic personality they considered characteristic of the nation's men to a predominance of yellow bile, for instance.<sup>21</sup> Each person's complexion was determined in large measure by the qualities they inherited from their parents, but these qualities were neither fixed nor permanent. Changes in behavior, thought patterns, air, water, levels of activity and foods could result in dramatic changes to the individual body and its humors. This, in turn, would produce a change in the person's overall character and appearance. One could for example develop a phlegmatic complexion either 'by eating phlegmy foods, or by living in a very damp region, or through being old', as the Spanish doctor Juan de Cárdenas noted in 1591.<sup>22</sup> An individual's complexion was therefore

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<sup>21</sup> For an introduction to humoralism with a focus on Spain see Luis García Ballester, *La búsqueda de la salud: sanadores y enfermos en la España medieval* (Barcelona, 2001); and Carmen Peña and Fernando Girón, *La prevención de la enfermedad en la España bajo medieval* (Granada, 2006). For vernacular and learned humoralism in Spanish America (and for the Spanish temperament) see Rebecca Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492-1700* (Cambridge, 2012); and for early modern Europe more generally, Nancy Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago, 1990); and Lawrence Conrad, Michael Neve, Vivian Nutton, Roy Porter and Andrew Wear, *The Western Medical Tradition, 800 BC to AD 1800* (Cambridge, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> Juan de Cárdenas, *Problemas y secretos maravillosos de las Indias* (Madrid, 1945 [1591]), book 3, chap. 3 (p. 183).

likely to change over their lifetime. Even the characteristics that a man passed on to his children might depend on the foods he had recently consumed, because these could alter the quality of his semen. Similarly, the unruly forces of a pregnant woman's imagination might imprint themselves firmly on her baby; many writers discussed how a woman could affect the appearance of her child by thinking very hard about a certain thing during pregnancy or conception.<sup>23</sup> As the historian Silvia de Renzi notes, 'nothing was so fixed in the inherited temperament that it could not be altered'.<sup>24</sup> Corporeal identity was naturally fluid, both during an individual's lifetime and across generations.

These ideas, originating in classical antiquity, powerfully shaped European views about human nature and the human body through the middle ages and early modern era, as many scholars have shown. Although the transformation of scientific enquiry underway in the eighteenth century is sometimes said to have demolished this earlier understanding of the human body, belief in the agency of what learned people called the 'six non-naturals'—environment, diet, levels of activity, sleeping patterns, ingestion and excretion, and emotional state—persisted. For example, eighteenth-century scholars frequently evoked these familiar forces to explain the evolution of dark skin, just as had occurred in earlier centuries. The Spanish philosopher Benito Jerónimo Feijoo for instance observed in the 1730s that dark skin was due to the effects of climate, or more specifically the vaporous exhalations of the earth, which both darkened the body directly and also affected the region's waters and foodstuffs, whose consumption reinforced the climate's impact on the body's humors.<sup>25</sup> Most eighteenth-century savants agreed that beyond climate, lifestyle played a powerful role in shaping the body. Jews, for example, owed their pallid faces and hooked noses partly to their diet and sedentary

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<sup>23</sup> Juan Huarte de San Juan, *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias*, ed. Eséban Torre (Barcelona, 1988 [1575]), chap. 15, part 3; Juan de Pineda, *Primera parte de los 35 dialogos familiares de la agricultura cristiana*, 2 vols. (Salamanca, 1589), vol. 1, dialogue 5, section 9; Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, 'Sobre el influjo de la imaginación materna, respecto del feto', 1742, *Cartas eruditas y curiosas*, 3 vols. (Madrid, 1777), vol. 1, pp. 56-71; José Gumilla, *El Orinoco ilustrado y defendido, historia natural, civil, y geographica de este gran rio y de sus caudalosas vertientes* (Madrid, 1745), vol. 1, chap. 5, pp. 95-100; Allen Grieco, 'The Social Politics of Pre-Linnaean Botanical Classification', *I Tatti Studies* 4 (1991); Joan Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1993); Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, 1993); and Staffan Müller-Wille and Hans-Jörg Rheinburger, eds., *Heredity Produced: At the Crossroads of Biology, Politics, and Culture, 1500-1870* (Cambridge, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Silvia de Renzi, 'Resemblance, Paternity, and Imagination in Early Modern Courts', *Heredity Produced*, eds. Müller-Wille and Rheinburger, p. 63.

<sup>25</sup> Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, 'Color etiópico', 1736, *Teatro crítico universal*, vol. 7 (Madrid, 1778), discurso 3. For theories about the origins of dark skin in previous centuries see Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, 2003); or Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador*.

ways, in the view of the French abolitionist and revolutionary the Abbé Grégoire.<sup>26</sup> Food in particular was considered fundamental to determining physical appearance, including skin color. As Denis Diderot explained in the *Encyclopédie*, ‘color depends a lot on climate, but not entirely. There are different causes which must influence color, and even the form of features; among these are food and customs’.<sup>27</sup> In a typical eighteenth-century blend of anatomical and humoral language, another French essayist, writing about the origins of black skin, observed: ‘transport black men and women to temperate climates, give them healthy food and appropriate clothing; the friction of this environment will no longer take place; . . . the nature of the blood and the bodily humors will change; the children that will be born to these people, or at least their grandchildren, will have the reticular membranes a few shades less black than those of the people from whom they came’.<sup>28</sup> (The reticular membrane was a layer of skin identified by the seventeenth-century Italian physician Marcelo Malpighi as containing a dark substance said to be responsible for black skin.) The French naturalist the Comte de Buffon likewise affirmed in his enormously influential *Histoire Naturelle* that the descendants of a black person transported to a colder climate would eventually become white, especially if they ate the local foods and adopted local customs. Overall, he explained, physical appearance was caused by three forces: ‘the first is, the influence of the climate; the second is, the nourishment; and the third is, the manners’.<sup>29</sup> To be sure, not all participants in these enlightened discussions agreed on all particulars—whether dark-skinned people could become paler was a matter of specific debate—but the conviction that the human body and its humors were materially shaped by climate, diet and lifestyle formed the background against which all argument was framed.<sup>30</sup>

Colonial writers turned to these concepts to explain the origins of Amerindians, and to account for the transformations that many believed occurred in European bodies after extended residence in the New World. People both learned and untutored for example maintained that although

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<sup>26</sup> Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, ‘Eliminating Race, Eliminating Difference: Blacks, Jews and the Abbé Grégoire’, *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, eds. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (Durham, 2003), pp. 34-5.

<sup>27</sup> Denis Diderot, ‘Humanity (Type)’, 1765, *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d’Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Naomi Andrews, 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science and Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore, 2011), pp. 84-5.

<sup>29</sup> Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, *The Natural History of Animals, Vegetables, and Minerals; with The Theory of the Earth, in General*, trans. W. Kenrick and J. Murdoch, 6 vols. (London, 1775-6), vol. 1, pp. 185, 227-8 (quote), 253-5, 283-6, 290-1, 401-2. Or see Cornelius de Pauw, *Recherches philosophiques sur les américains*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1794), vol. 1, p. 240.

<sup>30</sup> Roxanne Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia, 2000); Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness*; and Christina Malcolmson, *Studies of Skin Color in the Early Royal Society: Boyle, Cavendish, Swift* (Farnham, 2013).

the ancestors of Amerindians originated in the old world, centuries of living in the Indies slowly altered their physical appearance so that they no longer resembled their progenitors. As one seventeenth-century writer put it, this change in their ‘color, size, gestures and faces’ was caused by the very different food and climate of the Indies, which over time produced beings who looked and behaved very differently from their old world ancestors.<sup>31</sup> Such belief in the transformative effect of climate, diet and lifestyle on the body persisted to the end of the colonial era. Throughout the eighteenth century writers across the Atlantic world discussed the impact of the American environment, including its foodstuffs, on old world bodies, and explored the ways in which a change in regimen could provoke a change in physical appearance and character. This hemispheric discourse provided a unified and long-lasting framework that was employed to explain human diversity and transformation throughout the Americas. The Spanish military officials Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa, who undertook a tour of South America in the 1740s, for example noted that the new world’s climate corrupted the humors of Spaniards who lived there, so that they came to resemble locals in color, particularly if they also consumed local foods.<sup>32</sup> In roughly the same years, 5,000 kilometers to the north, Virginian planter William Byrd recorded that the local diet explained why ‘so many People in this Province are markt with a Custard Complexion [and . . . ] full of gross humours’.<sup>33</sup> In his 1806 *Observations on Lima’s Climate* the Peruvian savant Hipólito Unanue similarly discussed in some detail the ways in which the local climate and an individual’s lifestyle shaped their physical appearance, and particularly the color of their skin. Employing an entirely humoral frame, Unanue, who studied medicine at Lima’s Universidad de San Marcos, explained how differences in environment, diet and customs resulted in

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<sup>31</sup> Diego Andrés Rocha, *El origen de los indios*, ed. José Alcina Franch (Madrid, 1988 [1681]), p. 212. Or see Cárdenas *Problemas y secretos maravillosos de las Indias*, book 3, chaps. 2, 3, 9, 11 (pp. 179, 184, 210, 219); Gregorio García, *Origen de los indios del Nuevo Mundo*, ed. Franklin Pease (Mexico City, 1981 [1607/1729]), book 2, chap 5, book 3, chap. 4 (pp. 148-76, 243-54); Bernardo de Lizana, *Devocionario de nuestra señora de Izamal y conquista espiritual de Yucatán*, ed. René Acuña (Mexico, 1995 [1633]), libro 1, part 1, chap. 3 (p. 61); José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez, ‘Un indio de la Nueva España’, 1791, *Memorias y ensayos*, ed. Roberto Moreno (Mexico City, 1985), p. 162; and Francisco Antonio de Ulloa, ‘Ensayo sobre el influxo del clima en la educación física y moral del hombre’, *Semanario del Nuevo Reyno de Granada*, 7 August 1808, pp. 283-4.

<sup>32</sup> Antonio de Ulloa and Jorge Juan, *Relación histórica del viaje a la América Meridional*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1748), book 1, chap. 5 (vol. 1, pp. 58-9). Or see Gumilla, *El Orinoco ilustrado*, vol. 1, chap. 5, pp. 85-96; and José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez, ‘Historia natural’, 1787, *Gacetas de Literatura de México*, vol. 4 (Puebla, 1831), pp. 223-7.

<sup>33</sup> William Byrd, *Histories of the Dividing Line betwixt Virginia and North Carolina*, ed. William Boyd (Raleigh, 1929 [c. 1738]), p. 54; Janet Lindman and Michele Tarter, eds., *A Center of Wonders: The Body in Early America* (Ithaca, 2001); Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 239-45; and Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, 2006).

the varied appearance of people both around the globe and in Peru itself. It is clear that Unanue saw no contradiction between his emphasis on the mutability of the humoral body and the use of genealogical caste terminology, since he also classified Peru's population according to caste and explained categories such as 'mulatto' and 'zambo' entirely in terms of lineage.<sup>34</sup>

The mutable, humoral nature of colonial caste categories is likewise revealed in the persistent anxiety provoked by the figure of the black or indigenous wet nurse. In Europe wet nursing had long been a source of concern because breast milk was regarded as a super-concentrated form of the lactating woman's own humors. The nursing child was therefore likely to take on the qualities of their nurse. As the Spanish Jesuit Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro explained in an eighteenth-century text, individual character was rooted in the humors, 'and these are transplanted through the breast milk into the nursing child'.<sup>35</sup> In the case of creole children nursed by indigenous or black women the effect was to endow these children with indigenous or African characteristics. In the words of one Spanish priest, creole boys raised on Indian milk 'differ little from Indians'.<sup>36</sup> The French naturalist Antoine Simon le Page du Pratz similarly warned that colonists in Louisiana should under no circumstances permit their children to be breastfed by black women; since milk was a purified form of blood it inevitably transmitted the worst qualities of 'this species'.<sup>37</sup> Such concerns endured throughout the colonial era, not only because of the broader anxieties evoked by the intimacy that often arose between elite child and subaltern nurse, but also because body concepts premised on the transformative impact of diet continued to hold sway. Colonial writers warned against ill-chosen nurses and their 'pernicious breast milk' up to the eve of independence.<sup>38</sup> It is therefore no coincidence that elite mothers contentedly

<sup>34</sup> Hipólito Unanue, *Observaciones sobre el clima del Lima y sus influencias en los seres organizados, en especial el hombre* (Lima, 1806), esp. pp. 66-76.

<sup>35</sup> Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro, *Historia de la vida del hombre*, vol. 1 (Madrid, 1789), pp. 215-6 (quote); Martín Sarmiento, 'Discurso sobre el método que debía guardarse en la primera educación de la juventud', *Semanario Erudito*, ed. Antonio Valladares, vol. 19 (Madrid, 1789), pp. 171-3; Marie France Morel, 'Théories et pratiques de l'allaitement en France au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Annales de démographie historique* 1976:1 (1976); Emilie Bergmann, 'Milking the Poor: Wet-nursing and the Sexual Economy of Early Modern Spain', *Marriage and Sexuality in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, ed. Eukene Lakarra Lanz (London, 2002); and Mónica Bolufer, 'Medicine and the *Querelle des Femmes* in Early Modern Spain', *Health and Medicine in Hapsburg Spain*, eds. T. Huguet-Termes, J. Arrisabalaga and H. Cook (London, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Miguel de Sigüenza to the King, Manila, 24 May 1605, AGI, Audiencia de Filipinas 84, N. 132, fol. 3 (quote); and Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador*, pp. 51-3, 111-13.

<sup>37</sup> Antoine Simon le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de Louisiane* (Paris, 1758), vol. 1, p. 343; and Jean Bernard Bossu, *Nouveaux voyages aux Indes Occidentales* (Paris, 1768), vol. 1, pp. 201-2.

<sup>38</sup> See for example the repeated discussion throughout 1806 in the *Diario de México*; Ulloa, 'Ensayo sobre el influjo del clima en la educación física y moral del hombre', pp. 314-5 (quote); José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, *El Periquillo Sarniento*, vol. 1 (Mexico City, 1842 [1812]), p. 7; Premo, *Children of the Father King*, p. 168-70; and Mariselle Meléndez, *Deviant and Useful Citizens. The*

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nursing their offspring appear regularly in casta series.<sup>39</sup> (See Image 4.) These scenes of appropriate maternity deflect the fear, endlessly repeated on both sides of the Atlantic, that mothers who failed to breastfeed both risked the health of their infant and allowed their lineage to be contaminated with the lowly humors of the nurse. IMAGE 4 HERE. LINKS HERE TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES.

Caste was thus a complex, embodied process in which cultural practices of eating and bodily comportment materially altered both an individual's constitution and, potentially, that of their children. It was simultaneously an embodied, genealogical condition, and the result of cultural practice. Too much indigenous breast-milk would Indianize the body of a Spanish baby, just as too much local food changed the color and character of the creole children born of Spaniards in the Indies. Amerindians themselves were evidence of the transformative power of the new world's climate and foodstuffs, since how else had they acquired their distinctive character and appearance? This is why diet and overall lifestyle were so important in determining an individual's caste status. Of course clothing and eating habits proclaimed the wearer's wealth and social position, themselves closely associated with caste. More profoundly, the clothing that draped the individual body, the foods it ingested, and the way it moved through space were likely to affect its overall complexion, transforming it into a different sort of body.

The dynamic impact of lifestyle and upbringing is particularly evident in the creation of the mestizo body. Although both casta paintings and many other colonial documents might appear to suggest that any child of a European and an Amerindian was a mestizo, the category in fact reflects this modulated, humoral understanding of caste. The term 'mestizo' first appeared around the 1530s.<sup>40</sup> Prior to that the children of Europeans and Amerindians were usually classified as either European or Amerindian; they were not accorded a separate status.<sup>41</sup> Even after the term came into widespread use in the early

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*Cultural Production of the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Peru* (Nashville, 2011), pp. 160-9. On intimacy see Ann Laura Stoler, 'Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies', *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham, 2006).

<sup>39</sup> Katzew, *Casta Paintings*, pp. 113-4, 219.

<sup>40</sup> Mörner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America*, pp. 28-9, 54-5; Bernard Lavallé, *Las promesas ambiguas. Criollismo colonial en los Andes* (Lima, 1993); and María Elena Martínez, 'The Language, Genealogy and Classification of "Race" in Colonial Mexico', *Race and Classification*, eds. Katzew and Deans-Smith, p. 32.

<sup>41</sup> For example, a 1514 document from Hispaniola refers simply to 'children of Christians' whose mothers are 'natives of the said islands'. These 'mixed' children were not labeled with a distinctive nomenclature: 'Repatriamiento de la Isla Española', 1514, *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y colonización de las posesiones españolas en América y Oceanía*, eds.

seventeenth century not all children of mixed Spanish and indigenous ancestry were labeled mestizos. As the historian Stuart Schwartz has argued, colonial society generally recognized as Spanish children of mixed ancestry who were ‘born legitimately and who lived according to accepted colonial norms’.<sup>42</sup> Thus the children of Amerindians and Spaniards were often classified on the basis of the culture into which they were absorbed. This absorption of ‘mestizas’ into the Spanish community probably explains why in the sixteenth century the number of recorded marriages between ‘Spaniards’ exceeds the number of available Peninsular women.<sup>43</sup>

These children were not simply passing themselves off as Spanish. Writing in 1607 the Dominican priest Gregorio García insisted that the legitimate offspring of Spaniards and Indians *were* Spanish, ‘and as such are permitted to occupy distinguished positions, including in the administration, and other honorable and holy posts and are not excluded from them for having partial indigenous ancestry’.<sup>44</sup> In his view this was because the honor that such individuals gained from their Spanish heritage greatly outweighed the insignificance of their indigenous heritage. As García indicated, legitimate ‘mestizos’ were not really mestizos at all. 140 years later another cleric, José Gumilla, maintained that it took several generations to accomplish this return to Spanishness, but he agreed that a certain amount of indigenous ancestry did not prevent an individual not simply from being regarded as Spanish but from being, as he put it, ‘perfectly white, just like a Frenchwoman born and raised in Paris’.<sup>45</sup> This view is reflected in casta paintings; there too the great-grandchildren of Spaniards and Amerindians are labeled as Spanish. (See Image 5.) [IMAGE 5 HERE](#). [LINKS HERE TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES](#).

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Joaquín Pacheco, Francisco de Cárdenas and Luis Torres de Mendoza, 42 vols. (Madrid, 1864), vol. 1, pp. 80-235 *passim*; and Stuart Schwartz, ‘Spaniards, ‘Pardos’, and the Missing Mestizos: Identities and Racial Categories in the Early Hispanic Caribbean’, *New West Indian Guide/ Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 71:1-2 (1997), p. 11. Or see Richard Konetzke, ed., *Colección de documentos para la historia de la formación social de Hispanoamérica, 1493-1810*, 3 vols. (Madrid, 1953), vol. 1, pp. 147, 168.

<sup>42</sup> Schwartz, ‘Spaniards, ‘Pardos’, and the Missing Mestizos’, p. 10 (Schwartz here referred specifically to the Spanish Caribbean).

<sup>43</sup> Mörner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America*, pp. 28-9, 54-5; John Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca* (Stanford, 1978), pp. 65-6, 97-8; Minchom, *The People of Quito*, p. 178; Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination*, p. 18; Kuznesof, ‘Ethnic and Gender Influences on “Spanish” Creole Society in Colonial Spanish America’; Elizabeth Anne Kuznesof, ‘More Conversations on Race, Class and Gender’, *CLAR* 5:1 (1996); Stuart Schwartz, ‘Colonial Identities and the *Sociedad de Castas*’, *CLAR* 4:1 (1995); and Berta Ares Queija, ‘Mestizos, mulatos y zambaigos (Virreinato del Perú, siglo XVI)’, *Negros, mulatos, zambaigos: derroteros africanos en los mundos ibéricos*, eds. Berta Ares Queija and Alessandro Stella (Seville, 2000).

<sup>44</sup> García, *Origen de los indios del Nuevo Mundo*, book 3, chap. 4, sect. 1 (p. 240).

<sup>45</sup> Gumilla, *El Orinoco ilustrado*, vol. 1, chap. 5, p. 85; and Katzew, *Casta Painting*, pp. 48-9. Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions*, p. 268, discusses the convergence of ‘whiteness’ and ‘Spanishness’.

As García intimated, legitimate children of mixed Spanish and indigenous ancestry (which in most cases meant children of Spanish fathers) scarcely qualified as mestizos because the very term ‘mestizo’ presupposed illegitimacy. This is why the jurist Juan de Solórzano Pereira felt obliged to clarify in his seventeenth-century compendium of colonial law that restrictive anti-mestizo legislation should be understood as applying *only* to illegitimate mestizos; legitimate mestizos were to be treated as Spaniards.<sup>46</sup> Solórzano assumed that illegitimate individuals were unlikely to be brought up in the household of their Spanish father; their physical environment was therefore that of their indigenous mother. Since the environment left a profound imprint on the individual complexion, individuals raised as indigenous were likely to take on the physical characteristics of Amerindians, whatever their personal ancestry, all the more if they had the misfortune to be breastfed by their indigenous mother. The essential difference between a mestizo taken from his indigenous mother to be raised by his Spanish father, and one brought up among Amerindians, can be seen clearly in the contrasting assessment of these two different types of mestizo in colonial documentation. The first type of mestizo ‘always follows their Spanish side’, in the view of the Mexican viceroy Martín Enríquez.<sup>47</sup> In contrast, mestizos who were raised by their indigenous mothers were practically indigenous themselves, and so were exempted from the regulations prohibiting non-Amerindians from residing in indigenous villages.<sup>48</sup>

The reason why upbringing was important to determining caste was not simply that caste was performative. Much more profoundly, the physical body, and its very ancestry, were themselves the product of its cultural milieu. That is why the cultural world with which an individual associated helped determine their caste status, including its embodied, physical dimensions. This, in turn, is why many colonial writers insisted that possessing some indigenous ancestry did not necessarily stop a person from being Spanish, and why, whatever the dictionary definition, the children of Spaniards and Amerindians were not consistently classified as mestizos in censuses and other official records. By way of example we may recall the case mentioned earlier of the daughter of an Amerindian woman

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<sup>46</sup> He further indicated that only illegitimate mestizos were ‘stained’ with a confusing, mixed skin colour; colour depended on the parents’ marital status: Solórzano Pereira, *Política indiana*, book 2, chap. 30, pp. 217-22. Or see Antonio de Ulloa, *Noticias americanas: entretenimientos físico-históricos sobre la América Meridional, y la Septentrional Oriental* (Madrid, 1772), entretenimiento 19, p. 346. Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness*, p. 201 provides a clear statement of the links between illegitimacy and the category of mestizo.

<sup>47</sup> Martín Enríquez to Felipe II, Mexico City, 9 Jan. 1574, *Cartas de Indias*, eds. Juan Zaragoza et al (Madrid, 1877), pp. 298-9.

<sup>48</sup> Libro VI, título III, law xxi, *Recopilación de leyes de los reinos de las Indias, mandadas imprimir y publica por la magestad católica del rey Don Carlos II*, vol. 2 (Madrid, 1841), p. 231.

who was nonetheless ‘accepted and held to be Spanish’. The genealogical language of caste captures well this fluid early modern understanding of heredity, which was less an inflexible legacy than a set of predispositions that might or might not be activated during one’s lifetime.<sup>49</sup>

As regards the category of mulatto, one of the most striking features of *casta* series is the different treatment that they accord lineages that combine Spanish and indigenous people, and those that combine Spanish and black people. As we have seen, *casta* paintings present people with an indigenous great-grandparent as Spanish. This is not the case in paintings showing people with one black great-grandparent. Such individuals are usually labeled *chinos* or *albinos*, and their children with a Spaniard are often termed—in the paintings—a *saltatrás* or *tornatrás*: a ‘throwback’. (See Image 6.) Subsequent generations are depicted as departing even more definitively from the Spanish prototype. Black ancestry, such paintings imply, utterly prohibits any return to whiteness or Spanishness. Certainly this view is consistent with the outspoken denunciations of ‘black blood’ emanating from both Spain and its colonies in the eighteenth century. In 1773, for example, the Mexican Inquisition affirmed that ‘blackened blood [*sangre denegrada*] never disappears, because experience shows that by the third, fourth, or fifth generation it pullulates, so that two whites produce a black, called *tornatrás* or *saltatrás*’.<sup>50</sup> It similarly resonates with the increasing concern of eighteenth-century science to isolate the black body as fundamentally different from other bodies, whether that concern was expressed through the language of humors, anatomy or scripture. Physicians began to probe the inner recesses of cadavers in search of the physical origin of black skin, and philosophers devoted ever-greater attention to whether, in Voltaire’s words, ‘bearded whites, woolly-headed blacks, yellow people with hair like horses, and beardless [Amerindian] men’ could truly descend from the same original ancestors.<sup>51</sup> *Casta* paintings might therefore be seen as reflecting this broader urge to segregate black bodies as inherently different from white bodies, and to insist on the intransigent, immutable nature of blackness. IMAGE 6 HERE. LINKS HERE TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES.

<sup>49</sup> See Müller-Wille and Rheinburger, eds., *Heredity Produced*.

<sup>50</sup> Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain*, pp. 12-13; Katzew, *Casta Painting*, pp. 39-61; Evelina Guzauskite, ‘Fragmented Borders, Fallen Men, Bestial Women: Violence in the *Casta* Paintings of Eighteenth-century New Spain’, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 86:2 (2009); and Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions*, p. 247 (quote). Or see Pedro Alonso O’Crouley, *A Description of the Kingdom of New Spain*, 1774, trans. Seán Galvin (Dublin, 1972), pp. 20-1.

<sup>51</sup> Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race*; Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge, 2006); Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness*; and Malcolmson, *Studies of Skin Color in the Early Royal Society*. The quotation is from Voltaire, ‘*Traité de Métaphysique*’, 1734, *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, vol. 6 (Paris, 1847), p. 4.

At the same time, merely by representing the children and grandchildren of mulattoes, casta artists implicitly contested a potent polemic against the fundamental unity of humankind circulating during the enlightenment. This was the claim that mulattoes and their descendants were sterile. Eighteenth-century scholars agreed that different species could not produce fertile offspring. As the doyen of enlightened science the Comte de Buffon explained, the axiom that members of a single species can reproduce, whereas those of different species cannot, 'is the most fixed point that we have in natural history'.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, if the children born to a couple consisting of one black and one white parent were themselves unable to reproduce, this would suggest that black and white people were fundamentally different. Many eighteenth-century writers considered this issue. Buffon for his part insisted that 'since all men can communicate and produce together, all men come from the same stock, and are of the same family'; he therefore did not believe that black and white people constituted separate species. Other scholars in contrast claimed variously that such couples could not reproduce at all, or their children would themselves be sterile, or at least very feeble.<sup>53</sup> The reproductive capacity of the mulatto was therefore freighted with scientific and theological significance.

Eighteenth-century scholars were equally captivated with the question of whether white children might be born to black parents. During the eighteenth century a number of such 'nègres blancs' or 'albino' children toured Europe to the amazement of the public and scientists alike. These people fascinated both through their unusual appearance and also because they prompted questions about the reasons for their unexpected coloring. (See Image 7.) Although many writers endorsed the view that maternal imagination alone was sufficient to produce such dramatic alterations in skin color and overall physical form, for some philosophers these unsettling figures provided reassuring evidence that humanity had originally been white. After considering such children Buffon for instance deduced that 'white then appears to be the primitive color of Nature, which climate, food, and manners, alter, and even change into yellow, into brown, or into black and which, in certain circumstances, re-appears, though by no means equal to what is was, on account of its corruption from the causes here

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<sup>52</sup> Buffon, *The Natural History of Animals, Vegetables, and Minerals*, vol. 1, p. 431; and Paul Farber, 'Buffon and the Concept of Species', *Journal of the History of Biology* 5:2 (1972).

<sup>53</sup> Pierre Barrère, *Dissertation sur la cause physique de la couleur des nègres* (Paris, 1741), p. 11; Feijoo, 'Sobre el influjo de la imaginación materna'; Buffon, *The Natural History of Animals, Vegetables, and Minerals*, vol. 1, p. 434 (quote); Gumilla, *El Orinoco ilustrado*, vol. 1, chap. 5, pp. 109-15; Claude Blanckaert, 'Of Monstrous Métis? Hybridity, Fear of Miscegenation, and Patriotism from Buffon to Paul Broca', *The Color of Liberty*, eds. Peabody and Stovall; Doris Garraway, 'Race, Reproduction and Family Romance in Moreau de Saint-Mery's *Description . . . de la Partie Française de l'Isle Saint-Domingue*', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38:2 (2005); and Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness*, pp. 83-107.

mentioned'. From this he concluded that 'Nature, in her full perfection, has made men white, and Nature, reduced to the last stage of adulteration, renders them white again'.<sup>54</sup> This 'return' to whiteness demonstrated the residual power of humanity's original color, all the more so given that, as a number of eighteenth-century scholars insisted, it was vastly more common for black parents to give birth to white children than the inverse.<sup>55</sup> In sum, the fertility of couples comprising black and white people, and the ability of parents of one color to engender children of a different color, interested eighteenth-century scientists on both sides of the Atlantic because these topics were believed to illuminate fundamental questions about the origins of humanity's physical diversity. Those who maintained that black people differed fundamentally from whites were particularly insistent that mulattoes were sterile, and that white people seldom or never engendered dark-skinned children.

IMAGE 7 HERE.

Casta paintings, in contrast, invariably depict both the children born to mulattoes and the offspring of these children: the mulatto of the casta series is unquestionably able to engender generations of descendants. (See Images 1, 10.) These paintings therefore disrupt assertions that black and white people are so distinct as to constitute separate species unable to reproduce together. Nor do they endorse the view that because humans were originally white, light-skinned parents cannot engender dark-skinned children. Casta paintings never depict 'white' children born to black parents—the *nègres blancs* who so fascinated eighteenth-century Europe such as the young woman shown in Image 7. In contrast, the 'throwback' is a familiar figure in casta series. These dark children born to apparently white parents were represented in multiple ways; most often they are shown as the privileged offspring of bemused but loving parents, who dandle their dark-skinned sons on their knees or dress them in expensive clothing. (See Image 6.) Casta series therefore do not visualize the claim that because humanity was originally white-skinned, white parents cannot give birth to black children, but black parents can give birth to white children. On the contrary, they implicitly deny that very dark-skinned people can engender any sort of white person: there are no *nègres blancs* in these paintings. (The 'albinos' shown in casta paintings such as Image 6 are the children of Spaniards and other lighter-skinned people, not the mysteriously pale offspring of very black parents discussed by Buffon and his

<sup>54</sup> Buffon, *The Natural History of Animals, Vegetables, and Minerals*, vol. 1, p. 268-270.

<sup>55</sup> Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouvelle relation de l'Afrique Occidentale*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1728), vol. 2, p. 268; Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis, *Vénus physique*, 1745, *Vénus physique, suivie de la lettre sur le progrès des sciences*, ed. Patrick Tort (Paris, 1980), part II, chaps. 5-6, pp. 140-3; Diderot, 'Humanity (Type)'; Gumilla, *El Orinoco ilustrado*, vol. 1, chap. 5, pp. 109-15; and Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness*, pp. 87-105.

interlocutors.<sup>56</sup>) In other words, although some casta paintings mirror the hostility towards the black body expressed in other fora, these images do not merely reproduce the attitudes expressed by racial philosophers in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Rather we might view them as visual interventions in their own right into debates about science and natural history, comparable to the botanical illustrations produced by new world illustrators.<sup>57</sup> Certainly contemporary viewers appear to have regarded them in this way. The English traveller Richard Twiss, who viewed a set of casta paintings in Malaga in the 1770s, was struck by the ‘remarkable circumstance of the children of almost white parents . . . being quite black’. He was so surprised that he specifically noted his inability to verify whether such a thing ever occurred in reality.<sup>58</sup> [LINKS HERE TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES.](#)

Nor does the rigid distinction between ‘redeemable’ Amerindian blood and ‘tainted’ African blood depicted in casta paintings simply reflect scholarly consensus on this matter, for eighteenth-century colonial writers did not agree that ‘black blood’ could never be whitened. For instance Gumilla, who affirmed that indigenous ancestry could be ‘overcome’ in four generations, maintained that exactly the same process applied to people of black ancestry. As he described it:

- I. From a European man and a black woman comes a mulata (*two quarters from each side*)
- II. From a European man and a mulata comes a quadroon (*one quarter mulata*)
- III. From a European man and a quadroon comes an octoroon (*one eighth mulata*)
- IV. From a European man and an octoroon comes a ‘puchuela’ (*completely white*)<sup>59</sup>

Other writers from across the Indies believed this process took five generations, but concurred that after that descendants should be considered Spanish.<sup>60</sup> Overall, as with the category of ‘mestizo’, the

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<sup>56</sup> Buffon’s *nègres blancs* were born to parents explicitly described as possessing extremely dark skin, whereas the albino of the casta painting is conventionally depicted as being one-eighth black, born to parents who do not themselves appear black.

<sup>57</sup> Bleichmar, *Visible Empire*, offers an extremely suggestive model for how we might read such eighteenth-century colonial images in light of enlightened debates about science, truth and the natural world.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Twiss, *Travels Through Portugal and Spain, in 1772 and 1773* (London, 1775), p. 332; and Deans-Smith, ‘Creating the Colonial Subject’, p. 190.

<sup>59</sup> Gumilla, *El Orinoco ilustrado*, chapter 5, part I, pp. 86-7 (quote); Unanue, *Observaciones*, p. 98; and Katzew, *Casta Painting*, pp. 48-9.

<sup>60</sup> Juan and Ulloa, *Relación histórica*, book 1, chapter 4 (vol. 1, p. 41); Gregorio de Cangas, *Descripción en diálogo de la ciudad de Lima entre un peruano práctico y un bisoño chapetón*, ed. Camilo Vicente and José Lenci (Lima, 1997 [c.1780]), p. 59; and Joaquín de Finestrada, *El vasallo instruido en el estado del Nuevo Reino de Granada y en sus respectivas obligaciones*, ed. Margarita González (Bogotá, 2000 [1789]), p. 135. This is the timescale depicted in the 1770 casta series reproduced in Majluf, ed., *Los cuadros de mestizaje del Virrey Amat*. Five was the number of generations breeders believed necessary to transform one variety of sheep into another: Roger Wood, ‘The Sheep Breeders’ View of Heredity Before and After 1800’, *Heredity Produced*, eds. Müller-Wille and Rheinberger, p. 231. The Mexican savant José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez affirmed that this

classification of mulattoes and their descendants did not conform to a singular genealogical model even in the abstract theories of eighteenth-century scholars.

Far from conforming to a single taxonomic model, not all children of mixed African and European ancestry were considered mulattoes, nor was the term used solely to refer to such people. Indeed, the very idea that there was a difference between mestizos and mulattoes emerged only slowly. Writing in the 1570s, the Spanish doctor Francisco Hernández, who served as the ‘protomédico’ or chief medical officer in Mexico for a number of years, for instance referred to the children of Spanish fathers and Indian mothers indiscriminately as ‘mestizos and mulattoes’.<sup>61</sup> For Hernández, the categories were apparently interchangeable. Similarly, John Minsheu’s early seventeenth-century Spanish-English lexicon defined the offspring of ‘a Blackamoor and a Christian’ not as a mulatto but as a mestizo.<sup>62</sup> The historian Jack Forbes has moreover demonstrated very convincingly that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ‘mulatto’ generally meant someone with a mixture of African and indigenous (rather than European) ancestry. In some regions this terminology persisted until the end of the colonial era, while elsewhere the term came to include anyone with any African ancestry whatsoever.<sup>63</sup> Such flexibility is reflected in the 1811 Mexico City census, where, as the historian Ben Vinson III has shown, census takers varied widely in their classification of the children of ‘Spaniards’ and ‘moriscas’. (*Moriscas* were ostensibly the offspring of a Spaniard and a mulata.) In this census the children of Spaniards and *moriscas* were sometimes listed as mestizos, sometimes as mulattoes and sometimes as Spanish.<sup>64</sup> According to the categories employed in casta paintings these children ‘should’ have been labeled as *chinos* or *albinos*, and certainly never as Spanish. Moreover, as was the

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process would lead definitively to the ‘extinction’ of blackness, although he did not specify the number of generations required: ‘Historia natural’, pp. 223-4.

<sup>61</sup> Francisco Hernández, *Quatro libros de la naturaleza, y virtudes de las plantas, y animales que estan recibidos en el uso de medicina en la Nueva España*, trad. Francisco Ximénez (Mexico City, 1615), book 3, part 1, chap. 40 (p. 135). Or see Konezke, ed., *Colección de documentos*, vol. 1, pp. 436-7, 623-4.

<sup>62</sup> John Minsheu, *A Dictionary in Spanish and English* (London, 1599).

<sup>63</sup> Jack Forbes, *Black Africans and Native Americans: Color, Race and Caste in the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (Oxford, 1988). See also Juan López de Velasco, *Geografía y descripción universal de las Indias*, ed. Justo Zaragoza (Madrid, 1894 [c.1574]), p. 43; O’Crouley, *A Description of the Kingdom of New Spain*, p. 20; Félix de Azara, *Descripción e historia del Paraguay y del Río de la Plata*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1847 [c.1806]), vol. 1, p. 294; Konezke, ed., *Colección de documentos*, vol. 1, p. 435, vol. 2, p. 1, p. 480; Ares Queija, ‘Mestizos, mulatos y zambaigos’; Martínez, ‘The Language, Genealogy and Classification of “Race”’, p. 32; Robert Schwaller, ‘Mulata, hija de negro y india’: Afro-Indigenous Mulatos in Early Colonial Mexico’, *Journal of Social History* 44:3 (2011); Kathryn Burns, ‘Unfixing Race’, *Histories of Race and Racism*, ed. Laura Gotkowitz (Durham, 2011), p. 62; and Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness*.

<sup>64</sup> Ben Vinson III, ‘Studying Race from the Margins: The ‘Forgotten Castes’—*Lobos*, *Moriscos*, *Coyotes*, *Moros*, and *Chinos* in the Colonial Mexican Caste System’, *International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 32-3.

case with mestizos, mulatto status was transmitted unevenly depending on whether it was the mother or the father who was black.<sup>65</sup> [LINKS HERE TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES.](#)

In sum, far from descending uniquely from an African and a European, mulattoes could have different ancestries, and the children of Africans and Europeans were not necessarily mulattoes. Scholars have long argued that caste categories were fluid in practice; they were also fluid in theory. It was not simply that in the messy reality of colonial life the firm categories of the caste system dissolved, but rather that these categories themselves reflected the transformative impact of culture. This is why colonial writers employed varying terminology to describe ostensibly identical genealogical combinations and overall insisted that lifestyle played a crucial role in shaping the body, so that it was impossible to separate caste from context.

In fact, casta paintings reveal this. The terminology used to describe the child of a particular ‘mixing’ is not consistent across the corpus of paintings, or, at times, even within a single series. For example, in the Breamore House series by Juan Rodríguez Juárez the child of a *lobo* man and an Indian woman is labeled a ‘mulato es tornatrás’ [‘mulatto or throwback’], whereas a *loba* woman and an Indian man produce a ‘grifo que es tente en el aire’ [‘griffin or hover-in-the-air’]. (See Images [8-9](#).) In other words, the children of Indians and *lobos* are categorized differently depending on whether the mother or the father is the Indian. The very different settings surrounding the two families make plain the gulf separating these children, which amply justifies their divergent labels. The world of the little *grifo* in Image [9](#) is materially and culturally distant from Hispanic influence. Nothing in the painting suggests that this child will ever be able to leave the cultural milieu into which it has been born. The environment welcoming the daughter of the *lobo* man and the indigenous woman, in contrast, teams with the accouterments of upward mobility; her father, dressed in a blue cloak and lace cravat, holds a pair of high-heeled shoes and a cobbler’s last. Silver buttons gleam on his coat, and a broad-brimmed hat honorably covers his head. His child will possess the tools necessary to leave the indigenous world of her mother, unlike the little *grifo*, confined to material and corporeal marginality. In casta paintings as in colonial culture more generally caste terms attached themselves differently to different bodies depending on their life circumstances, because those life circumstances themselves shaped the

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<sup>65</sup> On the intersectionality of sex and race see Kuznesof, ‘Ethnic and Gender Influences on “Spanish” Creole Society’; Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors*; and Peter Wade, *Race and Sex in Latin America* (London, 2009).

individual body. The power of the casta painting lies in part in this exceptional ability to visualize this dynamic relationship between bodies and their broader environment. IMAGES 8-9 HERE.

Moreover, individual caste terms are ascribed quite divergent ancestries in different series. For instance, in different casta sets an *albarazado* is variously described as the child of a *cambujo* and a mulata, a *morisco* and a *coyote*, or nine other possible pairings. Such variability in the meaning of individual caste terms undermines any argument that the paintings simply record 'real', universally accepted taxonomies, or served as aides-memoires for officials, as some scholars once claimed.<sup>66</sup> The inter-changeability, or permeability, of different caste categories is further suggested by the recurrence of particular settings, such as a cobbler's workshop, a poultry stall or a pulque stand, which are peopled by different castes in different series.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps it doesn't matter very much whether the inhabitants of this particular workshop or stall are *barcinos* or *albarazados* or *chinos*. The important things for the viewer to understand, perhaps, are that these people possess highly mixed ancestries, are involved in a sexual relationship, and are undertaking visually engaging activities. Casta paintings emphasise certain combinations as significant and silence others, to produce representations of human diversity that highlight its underlying unity, while at the same time stressing the differences between blackness and whiteness. Casta paintings may thus be seen both as reflections of the embodied yet mutable nature of colonial caste categories, and as interventions in an enlightened debate about the origins and meaning of skin colour. Why, however, did so many people wish to own such images? The final section addresses the powerful narratives about colonialism, sexuality and pleasure inherent in the genre. It concludes by revisiting the opening discussion of classification, to offer an interpretation of the casta painting's complex appeal that emphasises both its taxonomic and its narrative power. LINKS HERE TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES.

Paintings such as José Joaquín Magón's *From the Spanish Man and the Indian Woman is Born the Mestizo*, which depicts an elegantly-dressed indigenous women together with her Spanish husband in a comfortable setting, create a scenario that in the eighteenth century was almost an ontological

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<sup>66</sup> Efraín Morales Castro, 'Los cuadros de castas de la Nueva España', *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft, und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas* 20 (1983), pp. 676-7; and Teresa Castelló Yturbe, 'Los cuadros de mestizaje y sus pintores', *De la historia: Homenaje a Jorge Gurría Lacroix* (Mexico City, 1985), pp. 192, 199-200.

<sup>67</sup> García Sáiz, *Las castas mexicanas*, pp. 24, 44; and Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain*, p. 37.

impossibility.<sup>68</sup> There is abundant evidence to suggest that the act of marrying a wealthy Spaniard was often sufficient to establish a woman in or near the category of Spaniard, whatever her previously ascribed caste. That is, these images do not show us how a couple comprising an elite Spaniard and a wealthy Amerindian woman might appear, because in reality late colonial society would not have read such a woman as ‘Indian’ in the first place. Rather, they represent flights of imagination. They show us both probable and improbable liaisons, for which they attempt to construct plausible social contexts. ‘This’, such images suggest, ‘is how it would be if a Spanish man fathered a child with a black woman’. ‘This might happen when a black man gets together with an Indian woman.’ (See Image 3.)

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Casta paintings, in essence, are works of imaginative fiction. By this I mean not simply that these images are display artifice and imagination, but that they contain elements of narrative. The paintings tell *stories* about the intimate life of imagined colonial subjects, whose sexual and reproductive practices are displayed for our viewing. Paintings such as Andrés de Islas’ 1774 *From a Spaniard and an Albina is born a Throwback* invite us to imagine the emotions surrounding the birth of this dark-skinned child to his pale parents, just as the ~~caption title to of~~ José Joaquín Magón’s *Quadroon and Mestiza, Always Fighting, Engender the Strong, Bold Coyote* prompts questions about what has recently passed between the dismayed mestiza and her knife-wielding partner. ~~to whom she clings anxiously as he strides determinedly away from her and their distressed daughter.~~ (See Images 6, 10–11.) This sort of imaginative response is indeed precisely what eighteenth-century Spanish art critics encouraged viewers to develop, because the ability to convey a narrative lay at the core of painting’s appeal.<sup>69</sup> ~~IMAGES 10–11 HERE. LINKS HERE TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES.~~

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The sense of narrative is powerfully reinforced by the idea—articulated in a letter by the Viceroy of Peru—that the child represented in one painting may be understood as a parent in the subsequent painting. ‘The key’, he explained, ‘is that the son or daughter depicted in the first couple is, depending on their sex, the father or mother in the second couple, and child of these is the father or mother in the third couple, and so on’.<sup>70</sup> In other words, in some series we perhaps witness not only a moment in the life of an imagined domestic unit, but also an individual’s progression through life. The little mestiza baby depicted in the fourth painting of the Peruvian series to which the viceroy referred

<sup>68</sup> I am grateful to Alejandra Irigoin for this elegant turn of phrase.

<sup>69</sup> See for example Esteban de Arteaga, *Investigaciones filosóficas sobre la belleza ideal, considerada como objeto de todas las artes de imitación* (Madrid, 1789), pp. 37–58.

<sup>70</sup> Manuel de Amat to Julian de Arriaga, Lima, 13 May 1770, AGI, Audiencia de Lima 652, no. 57; and Pilar Romero de Tejada, ‘Los cuadros de mestizaje del Virrey Amat’, *Los cuadros de mestizaje del Virrey Amat*, ed. Majluf, p. 22.

thus grows into the mestiza woman shown with her own child in the fifth painting. She has evidently inherited her mother's hair ornament (shown in the fourth painting) as a similar decoration adorns her baby's head in the fifth painting. She wears finer clothing and jewelry than did her mother, so we may assume that her marriage—we see the ring—to a Spaniard has improved her fortunes.<sup>71</sup> This is a narrative as much as it is a taxonomy. [LINKS HERE TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES.](#)

It is worth remembering that although they are not explicitly erotic, casta paintings are specifically about inter-racial sexuality. They represent, as the Viceroy put it, 'the successive generations of the mixing of Indians and blacks'. Viewers evidently found this the genre's most striking feature, which they highlighted by describing the paintings as depictions of 'the intermarriages of the Spaniards and Indians, with their offspring' or 'the union of whites with people of color'.<sup>72</sup> The diversity of castes, colors and conditions in colonial Spanish America is—these paintings remind us—the result of sexual activity between men and women, whose genealogical connection to their children forms the defining characteristic of the genre. We know that in colonial contexts issues of race and sexuality are intertwined with the construction of colonial power itself. Ideas about race were embedded in the regulation of sexual behaviour and marriage typical of European colonialisms, which in turn helped buttress its central hierarchies.<sup>73</sup> Regulation, race and sexuality are moreover intimately connected to issues of both colonial power and colonial knowledge. Michel Foucault's observations on the disciplining power of official description surely resonate with the endless cataloguing of casta paintings, visualized so powerfully in their authoritative captions. 'There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations', he insisted.<sup>74</sup> Power, Foucault reminds us, cannot exist separately from a system of knowledge that is able simultaneously to create truth and to shape the

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<sup>71</sup> I am grateful to Don Cruickshank for his guidance on the history of wedding rings.

<sup>72</sup> Manuel de Amat to Julian de Arriaga, Lima, 13 May 1770 (first quote); Twiss, *Travels Through Portugal and Spain*, p. 332; *A Tour Through the Principal Provinces of Spain and Portugal, Performed in the Year 1803* (London, 1806), p. 48 (second quote); *Paseo por Madrid, ó Guia del forastero en la Corte* (Madrid, 1815), p. 49; Fernando Cagigal, *La educación, Comedia en tres actos y en prosa* (Barcelona, 1818), p. 80; Ramón de Mesonero Romanos, *Manual de Madrid. Descripción de la corte y del la villa* (Madrid, 1833), p. 228 (third quote).

<sup>73</sup> For the interconnections between race, gender and colonial power see for example Ramón Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford, 1991); Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, 1996); and Jennifer Spear, *Race, Sex and Social Order in Early New Orleans* (Baltimore, 2009).

<sup>74</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan, Routledge (London, 1972); and Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London, 1991), p. 27 (quote).

articulation of authority. Given casta paintings' intense and explicit concern with micro-classification, proclaimed with particular clarity in its characteristic captions, it is easy to see how the genre could function as a form of both knowledge and power.

Yet if it is about regulation and colonial power, then it is also about desire. As the anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler has demonstrated, the very mechanisms of colonial regulation and control themselves help eroticize colonial space and the people who inhabit it. Drawing on Foucault's assertion that 'desire follows from, and is generated out of, the law, out of the power-laden discourses of sexuality', she (and others) have shown how particular regimes of desire have been created by the regulatory discourses of colonialism themselves.<sup>75</sup> Regulation itself creates desire. In particular, as Stoler's writings on the colonial education of desire reveal, the pleasure of imagining inter-racial sex—and the sentimental ties that grew out of it—was one of the luxuries of colonial power. Colonialism, and its efforts to control and manage sexuality, helped convert the intimate lives of colonial subjects into a topic of persistent, and pleasurable, imaginative speculation.

Many eighteenth-century European writings about 'race' were punctuated with romantic imaginings of the intimate pleasures available in distant colonial spaces. Thus in a 1745 treatise on race and human reproduction the French savant Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis found himself speculating on whether 'bored sultans' ever tried to create new, particularly beautiful races of women by systematically fathering children with their many, diverse concubines.<sup>76</sup> Maupertuis mused that if, like these sultans, he were forced to spend his life in the pleasant contemplation of women's beauty, he would surely have recourse to such experiments. (Of course, he insisted immediately after reporting his erotic daydream, these men would never know the deeper pleasure gained through true affection.) Satirical prints of Britons newly arrived in the West Indies enumerated the mixed-race children such

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<sup>75</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, 1995), pp. 165, 169 (quotes); and Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, 2010). See also Regina Harrison, 'The Theology of Concupiscence: Spanish-Quechua Confessional Manuals in the Andes', *Coded Encounters: Writing, Gender and Ethnicity in Colonial Latin America*, eds. Francisco Javier Cevallos-Candau, Jeffrey Cole, Nina Scott and Nicomedes Suárez-Araúz (Amherst, 1994); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London, 1995); Homi Bhabha, 'The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism', *The Location of Culture* (London, 2012); and Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London, 1995): 'the traces of miscegenation were tracked with a furtive but obsessive interest and attention and marked with a taxonomic fervour through which we can glimpse an extraordinary ethnography of colonial desire' (p. 174).

<sup>76</sup> Moreau de Maupertuis, *Vénus physique*, 1745, part II, chap. 3, p. 134. Or see Julien-Joseph Virey, *Histoire naturelle du genre humain*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1824), vol. 2, p. 184.

men were certain to father with exotic 'sable Venuses'.<sup>77</sup> Race, romance, sexuality, power and pleasure were intimately linked in the European imagination. This linkage likewise explains the popularity of the colonial romance as a literary genre. As the Earl of Shaftesbury complained, such novels were devoured by 'a thousand Desdemonas' who spent their days longing for 'a hero of the black tribe'.<sup>78</sup> Tales of tragic inter-racial romances set in colonial spaces allowed readers to imagine themselves into this thrilling world, without any actual loss of selfhood. They affirmed the differences that separated colonizers and colonized at the same time as they offered an emotional framework for managing those differences. The literary critic Lynn Festa thus notes that 'empire begets sentimentality' as a mode of negotiating and taming the unsettling forces unleashed by colonialism.<sup>79</sup> It provided a language built around emotion through which to articulate the experience of empire.

LINKS HERE TO ADDITIONAL IMAGES.

Casta paintings are imagined narratives of inter-racial colonial sexuality, and of the intimate, imagined domestic worlds it engenders. Therefore, they are about pleasure as much as they are about control, or, perhaps it is better to say that they are therefore about the interconnections between pleasure and control. That is surely why they were reportedly viewed with 'amusement and pleasure' by colonial elites.<sup>80</sup> It is striking that this observation, from one of the rare eighteenth-century sources to comment on the genre, should highlight precisely the pleasure derived from viewing casta paintings. In an anonymous tract from 1759 the author described disapprovingly the fascination the New World's 'great diversity of people' held for Spaniards, who—he complained—enjoyed reading descriptions of the many different castes inhabiting Mexico. For 'yet greater amusement and pleasure', some even commissioned paintings showing the castes resulting from the 'union of a mestizo with an Indian' and other mixes. The anonymous author lamented this prurient interest, while at the same time making clear that the paintings were seen, fundamentally, as a source of enjoyment.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See for example *Johnny Newcome in Love in the West Indies*, 1808, British Museum. I am grateful to Meleisa Ono-George for drawing this image to my attention.

<sup>78</sup> Anthony Earl of Shaftesbury, 'Advice to an Author', *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, With A Collection of Letters*, vol. 1 (Basle, 1790), p. 300.

<sup>79</sup> Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore, 2006), p. 7. See also Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley, 1991); and Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race*, pp. 138-75.

<sup>80</sup> 'Diversas castas que se hallan entre los havitadores de Nueva España', 1759, *Recolección de varios curiosos papeles*, vol. 5, Archivo del Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City, MS. Colecciones especiales, fol. 63; and Katzew, *Casta Paintings*, p. 217.

<sup>81</sup> European enthusiasm for these images unsettled other colonial writers as well; Morales Castro, 'Los cuadros de castas de la Nueva España', pp. 679-80, discusses a 1746 text whose creole author likewise deplored the indecent interest Europeans showed in the genre.

We should recall that the eighteenth-century pleasures of the imagination included the contemplation not only of the beautiful and the tasteful, but also of the novel and the unusual. As one Spanish writer explained, in a translation of a Scottish treatise on taste:

The imagination is not delighted only by those objects that appear sublime or beautiful, since the ability to please also derives from other principles. Addison and all those who have written on this topic describe novelty, for example, as one of the sources of pleasure. An object that lacks any other merit can induce a lively and pleasant commotion in the soul simply through being unique and new. This arouses curiosity, which is so deeply rooted in all men. Very familiar ideas and objects make too weak impression to be able to exercise our faculties agreeably, but new and strange objects pleasantly stimulate our spirits.

This, he added, was ‘the source of much of the enjoyment we find in novels and romances’.<sup>82</sup> Many Spanish writers concurred that variety and novelty were important elements of a successful work of art, because they stimulated the imagination and prevented tedium. The overly familiar, as the Spanish savant Antonio de Capmany noted in a treatise on eloquence, ‘never can please us’.<sup>83</sup> Paintings that did not please failed to fulfill a central aim of all works of art, which was, after all, to cause delight and give pleasure. ‘The object of painting’, insisted one of the many eighteenth-century Spanish writers to consider this matter, ‘is to please the soul and the senses, delighting, and never tiring them’.<sup>84</sup> An identical view was expressed by some of Mexico City’s most prominent artists, including a number noted for their casta series, in a 1753 letter defending the dignity of their profession. The signatories insisted that painting, like other liberal arts, must ‘delight’ as well as instruct.<sup>85</sup> Critics discussed the ways in which the fine arts might accomplish this fundamental goal and debated the physiology of how these processes worked on the mind. All however agreed that their value lay precisely in their ability to stimulate the imagination and provoke pleasure. In the words of the orator at a prize-giving ceremony for pupils of the Madrid academy of fine art, art causes ‘real pleasure through imaginary

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<sup>82</sup> Hugo Blair, *Lecciones sobre la retórica y las bellas artes*, trans. Joseph Luis Munarriz (Madrid, 1798), vol. 1, p. 121. See also Munarriz’s translation of Addison’s *Pleasures of Imagination*: Joseph Addison [sic], ‘Ensayo sobre los placeres de la imaginación’, *Variedades de Ciencias, Literatura y Artes* (Madrid, 1805), vol. 2, pp. 29-46, 82-99, 159-76.

<sup>83</sup> Antonio de Capmany, *Filosofía de la elocuencia* (Madrid, 1777), pp. 73-4 (quote); Feijoo, ‘Razón del gusto’, *Teatro crítico universal*, vol. 6, discourse 11; Diego Antonio Rejón de Silva, *La pintura: poema didáctico en tres cantos* (Segovia, 1786), p. 34; Arteaga, *Investigaciones filosóficas sobre la belleza ideal*, pp. 164-75; and Charles Batteux, *Principios filosóficos de la literatura: ó curso razonado de bellas letras y de bellas artes*, trans. Agustín García de Arrieta, vol. 1 (Madrid, 1797), p. 255.

<sup>84</sup> Arteaga, *Investigaciones filosóficas sobre la belleza ideal*, p. 113.

<sup>85</sup> Mina Ramírez Montes, ‘En defensa de la pintura: Ciudad de México, 1753’, *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 32:78 (2001).

invention'.<sup>86</sup> Paintings of whatever sort thus aimed, fundamentally, to please and delight the viewer, which they could accomplish not only through being beautiful, but also through being unusual, imaginative, surprising and unexpected.

Costa paintings, as we have seen, pleased and delighted their viewers. They did this by combining the 'lively and pleasant commotion' provoked by the unusual and the new with the pleasurable contemplation of colonial sexuality, producing an aesthetic experience entirely comparable to that offered by 'novels and romances' and other works of art. 'What is the most curious and interesting thing in the Royal Cabinet of Natural History?', asks one character in an early nineteenth-century Spanish play. 'The pictures in the room with the precious stones that represent the different castes that result from the union of blacks, whites and Indians', replies her interlocutor.<sup>87</sup> Little wonder that these paintings were produced on a commercial scale for the delectation and amusement of the colonial elite, who perhaps understood how to read their intimate narratives in ways that later viewers, concerned with classification and taxonomy, sometimes overlook.

And of course taxonomy too had its pleasures. While eighteenth-century advocates of different classificatory systems quarreled over the nomenclature and principles that ought to guide particular schema, the practice of classification itself was a source of pleasure.<sup>88</sup> The Portuguese naturalist and sailor Antonio Parra for instance explained that during his posting to Cuba in the 1760s, 'the multitude of admirable productions in the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdom, of which the island of Cuba and its surrounding seas abound, inspired in me from the moment I arrived *a great desire to enumerate a collection*'.<sup>89</sup> He therefore began collecting fish and other wildlife in his spare time, and subsequently produced an extensive catalogue of engravings and descriptions, organized

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<sup>86</sup> See for example Antonio Rafael Mengs, *Obras*, ed. Joseph Nicolas de Azara (Madrid, 1780); Juan Francisco de Masdeu, *Historia crítica de España, y de la cultura española*, vol. 1 (Madrid, 1783), pp. 223, 266; Arteaga, *Investigaciones filosóficas sobre la belleza ideal*; and *Distribución de los premios concedidos por el rey nuestro señor á los discípulos de las tres nobles artes hecha por la Real Academia de San Fernando en la junta pública de 13 de julio de 1796* (Madrid, [1796]), pp. 68-73 (75-6 quote).

<sup>87</sup> Cagigal, *La educación*, p. 80. See Terreros y Pando, *Diccionario*, vol. 1, p. 583 for the complex meaning of 'curioso'.

<sup>88</sup> On such disputes see Phillip Sloan, 'The Buffon-Linnaeus Controversy', *Isis* 67:3 (1976); Roberto Moreno, ed., *Linneo en México: las controversias sobre el sistema binario sexual, 1788-1798* (Mexico City, 1989); Emma Spary, *Utopia's Garden: French Natural History from Old Regime to Revolution* (Chicago, 2000); Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago, 2002), pp. 227-81; Parrish, *American Curiosity*, pp. 234-5; Helen Cowie, *Conquering Nature in Spain and its Empire, 1750-1850* (Manchester, 2011), pp. 122-46; and, for the underlying continuities, Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London, 1970), pp. 125-165.

<sup>89</sup> Antonio Parra, *Descripción de diferentes piezas de historia natural, las mas del ramo marítimo, representadas en sesenta y cinco láminas* (Havana, 1787), 1-2 (my emphasis).

according to his own system, which focused equally on anatomy and edibility. For Parra, as for many others, the ordering of the nature into a visual catalogue was a source of satisfaction and enjoyment in its own right. Pedro Franco Dávila described the formation and ordering of his extensive collection as his ‘strongest passion’, the greatest pleasure of his life.<sup>90</sup> Truly, passion was the only possible response when contemplating the delightfully female Nature, ‘who awakens man’s pleasure and curiosity with sweet charms’, in the words of one enamored botanist.<sup>91</sup>

Why must scientific classification rely on different axioms, or entail different practices, from the sentimental appreciation of a novel or a painting? Eighteenth-century natural philosophers would not have recognized this notion. On the contrary, as the historian Jessica Riskin has shown, eighteenth-century savants were certain that science itself originated in emotions and feelings. After all, the philosophical baron d’Holbach observed, from ‘sensibility flow all the faculties that we call *intellectual*’.<sup>92</sup> For eighteenth-century thinkers knowledge resulted from a combination of sensations and sentiments; Riskin thus refers to the ‘sentimental origins of knowledge’. Feelings informed science and science nourished noble sentiments. Taxonomies and novels were not so different, as both drew on the deep reservoirs of sensibility that animated the human spirit. The physiocrat Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours did not rely on charts and treatises to popularize the new economic doctrines he supported but also composed poems, plays and other literary works on this theme—and, as the historian Robert Darnton demonstrated, a pornographic novel could offer incisive political critique at the same time as it captivated the senses.<sup>93</sup>

Let us end where we began, with the intimate links connecting the families in casta paintings with the families and classes displayed in taxonomic tables by botanists and other savants. The same language, and underlying structures of knowledge, supported both systems of classification. These connections were acknowledged in the very metaphors that animated, and drew together, the two fields. ‘Just as plants are improved by grafting, so too are the American castes improved by mixing’

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<sup>90</sup> Franco Dávila, *Catalogue systématique et raisonné*, vol. 1, pp. iii-iv.

<sup>91</sup> Joseph Quer, *Flora española, ó historia de las plantas, que se crian en España*, vol. 1 (Madrid, 1762), pp. 4-5.

<sup>92</sup> Paul-Henri Thiry, Baron d’Holbach, *La morale universelle ou les devoirs de l’homme*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1776), vol. 1, p. 3; and Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>93</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Bestsellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York, 1996); and Liana Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2012).

insisted one delegate to the Spanish Cortes in 1810.<sup>94</sup> Natural history and the understanding of humanity more generally derived from the same historical *a priori*, from the same fundamental arrangement of knowledge, that ‘provides men’s everyday perceptions with theoretical powers, and defines the conditions in which he can sustain a discourse about things that is recognized to be true’.<sup>95</sup> This is why Pedro Franco Dávila’s call to ‘bring a little order to the families . . . to bring more order and coherence to our system’ could express equally a scientific dismay over the challenges of constructing a taxonomy of nature, or the social anxieties aroused by the impossibility of fixing identity in the colonial world.

The similarity of the language used for classifying plants and classifying people is equally clear in comments by Joseph Quer y Martínez, the first professor of botany at the Royal Botanical Garden of Madrid and author of an admired treatise on botanical classification. Indeed, Quer was trained not only in botany but also medicine; prior to occupying his post at the royal gardens he served as a surgeon in the Spanish military. His learning thus embraced both people and plants. In his 1762 *Flora española* Quer explained that nature regularly produced ‘monstrous’ or ‘hybrid’ beings, but that these ‘bastard varieties’ could often be returned to their original form. ‘Bastard varieties’ resulted when a living thing was moved from its homeland and subjected to unfamiliar airs and nourishment: as he noted, ‘everything is engendered with most grace and elegance and thrives best in its natural location, removed from which, and placed in an alien land, it changes its nature and degenerates, because of the difference in substance and climate’.<sup>96</sup> Nonetheless, this process of degeneration could be reversed. This required only that the plant be tended with appropriate care, and provided with the right micro-environment. The same processes, as we have seen, applied to people, whose unsettling hybridity could likewise be reversed through suitable upbringing and cultivation. Nature itself allowed for movement and transformation, among both people and other living things.

Perhaps it was for this reason that Spanish scientists expressed grave doubts about whether it was possible to form a general taxonomy that could accommodate the earth’s great variety of flora and fauna. Linnaeus had insisted that each natural body could be assigned ‘its own peculiar name . . . so that amidst the greatest apparent confusion, the greatest order is visible’, but not all shared his

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<sup>94</sup> Adolfo de Castro, ed., *Cortes de Cádiz: Complementos de las sesiones verificadas en la isla de Leon y en Cádiz: extractos de las discusiones, datos, noticias, documentos y discursos publicados en periódicos y folletos de la época*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1913), vol. 1, p. 177.

<sup>95</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp. 157-8.

<sup>96</sup> Quer, *Flora española*, vol. 1, pp. 341-3.

confidence.<sup>97</sup> Quer indeed was certain that such a system could not exist. It was impossible, he stated, ‘to form a general system, and perfect Method, not only for Natural History in its entirety, but even for one part of it’.<sup>98</sup> Nature was too complex to be captured in taxonomy. ‘Thus we see’, he observed, ‘that one species changes into another species, and often one genus into another, subtly, through a diverse range of almost imperceptible accidental occurrences’. In this way Nature sustained her magisterial incomprehensibility, and frustrated any project of forming a ‘general system’. Nature’s captivating variety meant that the quest for a ‘general method’ to classify living things could prove no more successful than the search for the philosopher’s stone. Perhaps ultimately desire and narrative were the only ways to make sense of the new world.

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<sup>97</sup> Charles Linné, *A General System of Nature*, trans. William Turton, vol. 1 (Swansea, 1800), p. 3.

<sup>98</sup> Quer, *Flora española*, pp. 275-6 (quote); or José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez, ‘Carta satisfactoria a un literato’, 1788, *Gacetas de Literatura de México*, pp. 399-413.

## The Pleasures of Taxonomy: Casta Paintings, Classification and Colonialism

### Captions for Images

#### Image 1

José Joaquín Magón, *De Mulato y Mestiza, nace Cuateron* [*From a Mulato and a Mestiza is Born a Quadroon*], c.1770, Museo de Antropología, Madrid.

Caption: In this typical casta painting the parents are shown as both loving and industrious; the mulatto father has paused in his work as a cobbler to distract his child. (Shoemaking is one of the professions most often represented in such series.) The pair of love-birds at the front of the composition reinforce the air of domestic harmony. Although a number of savants on both sides of the Atlantic claimed that mulattoes were sterile, the caption tells us that this mulatto has fathered the little baby.

#### Image 2

Anon., *De Español, y Yndia, sale Mestiza* [*From a Spanish Man, and an Indian Woman, Comes a Mestiza*], early eighteenth century, Brooklyn Museum, New York.

Caption: The indigenous woman serving *pulque* (a fermented drink made from agave syrup) to her son wears a beautifully woven *huipil*, an garment that in casta paintings is worn exclusively by 'Indias' or their daughters.

#### Image 3

José de Alcívar (attrib.), *De Español y Negra, Mulato* [*From a Spanish Man and a Black Woman, a Mulato*], c.1760-70, Denver Art Museum.

Caption: The mulatto son approaches his Spanish father with the deference appropriate to his likely status as the son of an enslaved woman. He bears a brazier to allow his father to light a cigarette. His mother meanwhile prepares chocolate. The differences in the parents' clothing—he sports a stylish and expensive banyan, or loose house-coat, made of painted cotton imported from India, while she wears a modest laced bodice—further hints at their different social positions, even as this domestic scene reveals the intimate nature of their relationship.

Image 4

Anon., *De mestiza y español, castizo* [*From a mestiza and a Spanish Man, Castizo*], eighteenth century, Museo de América, Madrid.

Caption: This nursing mother is providing her infant with the best possible start in life both because her breast-milk is ideally suited to the baby's constitution and because by feeding it herself she will prevent its humors from being contaminated with 'pernicious' milk from a black or indigenous wet nurse. In casta paintings such breastfeeding scenes are almost always situated in wealthy households in which one of the parents is Spanish, for it was only in such cases that the risks posed to the baby's health and bodily integrity through 'inferior' milk were considered socially meaningful by enlightened writers.

Image 5

José de Ibarra (attributed), *De castizo y española, español* [*From a Castizo Man and a Spanish Woman, a Spaniard*], c. 1725, Museo de América, Madrid.

This happy trinity of Spanish mother, castizo father and Spanish son depict the outcome of a multi-generational process that has eliminated any trace of indigenusness from this boy, who is described unequivocally as 'Spanish'. The Spanish mother caresses her son, whose rosy cheeks and European clothing further reflect his status as a Spaniard.

Image 6

Andrés de Islas, *De Español, y Alvina, nace Torna-atras* [*From a Spaniard and an Albina is Born a Throwback*], 1774, Museo de América, Madrid.

Caption: The unexpectedly dark skin of their son has not deterred these wealthy parents from dressing him in a smart, European-style suit. The pale skin of the mother contrasts strongly with that of her little son in ways that would surely have provoked discussion between her and her husband, who glances quizzically in her direction. Her eyes however remain modestly lowered.

Image 7

Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle, général et particulière, servant de suite à l'Histoire Naturelle de l'Homme* (Paris, 1777), supplement to vol. 4, plate 1.

Caption: This engraving of a naked young woman from Dominica featured in Buffon's enormously influential *Histoire Naturelle*. Although her West African parents were themselves 'perfectly black', she was 'white all over'.<sup>99</sup> Eighteenth-century scientists were fascinated by such 'white negroes' whose unusual coloring appeared to shed light on mankind's original color. Buffon reported that her name was Geneviève and that he had scrutinized her in person.

#### Image 8

Juan Rodríguez Juárez, *De lobo y de india produce lobo que es torna atras [A Lobo Man and an Indian Woman Produce a Lobo-Throwback]*, 1725, Breamore House, England.

Caption: The young daughter of this smiling couple takes after her well-dressed father both in caste label and in future prospects—her indigenous *huipil* is indeed adorned with an image of a dark-skinned man much like her father. She is fortunate that it is her father, and not her mother, who is the *lobo*.

#### Image 9

Juan Rodríguez Juárez, *De indio y loba produce grifo que es tente en el aire [An Indian Man and a Loba Woman Produce a Griffin or Hover-In-The-Air]*, 1725, Breamore House, England.

Caption: This little baby's modest circumstances will provide scant opportunity for social advancement; as its peculiar caste title suggests it is likely to remain in its current environment, and body. Its prospects for developing a different caste identity are slight, lacking as it does any of the accouterments of Hispanic culture.

#### Image 10

Anon., *De Mestiza y Mulato produce Calpamulata [A Mestiza and a Mulatto Produce a Calpamulata]*, eighteenth century, Museum für Volkerkunde, Vienna.

Caption: The empty glass suggests the cause of the mulatto's bloodshot eyes and slumped position, but what has driven him to this sorry pass? His little daughter gestures dramatically at this portrait of despair, while the mestiza looks sadly at her stricken partner.

#### Image 11

<sup>99</sup> Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle, général et particulière, servant de suite à l'Histoire Naturelle de l'Homme* (Paris, 1777), supplement to vol. 4, pp. 559-65.

~~José Joaquín Magón, *Cuarteron, y Mestiza, siempre peleando engendran al Collote fuerte, y osado* [*Quadroon and Mestiza, Always Fighting, Engender the Strong, Bold Coyote*], eighteenth century, Private Collection, Mexico.~~

~~Caption: The mulata clings anxiously to her enraged partner, who strides determinedly towards his destination, clutching a knife, ignoring both her and his distressed daughter. It is hard to imagine that anything good will come of his actions.~~